THRIVE EMERGE

Conversation Tips for Parents:

Building Cooperative, Supportive Talks with Your Teen

Purpose: To help parents guide their neurodivergent teen through back-to-school challenges in a way that supports autonomy, identity, and healthy parent-child collaboration.

1. Set the Stage

- Choose the right **time and place**, not during a meltdown or rushed moment.
- Use a calm, non-judgmental tone.
- Let your teen know the goal: *"I want us to figure out together how to make this year less stressful for you."*

2. Lead with Curiosity, Not Control

- Ask **open-ended questions** instead of telling:
  - *"What feels hardest about starting school?"*
  - *"What would make mornings easier for you?"*
- Practice **active listening**, reflect back what you hear:
  - *"It sounds like you're worried about keeping up with assignments."*

3. Validate Emotions

- Acknowledge feelings before moving to solutions.
- Use phrases like:
  - *"I get that this feels overwhelming."*
  - *"It makes sense you're frustrated, school can feel like a lot."*
- Avoid minimizing or "fixing" right away.

4. Share the Role of Problem-Solver

- Frame challenges as **shared puzzles**, not battles.
- Use *we* language:
  - *"How can we make mornings go more smoothly?"*
  - *"Let's test a few ideas and see what works best for you."*
- Encourage small experiments rather than big changes.

5. Encourage Autonomy & Self-Advocacy

- Give choices whenever possible:
  - *"Would you rather use a checklist or set reminders on your phone?"*
- Highlight your teen's strengths:
  - *"You're great at creative ideas, what's one strategy you'd like to try?"*
- Reinforce self-advocacy:
  - *"How could you let your teacher know when you need a break?"*

6. Keep It Collaborative

- End conversations with clear next steps **you both agree on**.
- Write them down.
- Celebrate small successes together.

7. Model Respect & Growth

- Admit when you don't have all the answers.
- Show flexibility: *"That plan didn't work, let's adjust."*
- Reinforce that mistakes are normal and part of learning.

Sample Conversation Flow

Parent: "I've noticed mornings feel really stressful. What's the hardest part for you?"

Teen: "I can't ever find my stuff."

Parent: "That makes sense, it would frustrate me too. What do you think might help?"

Teen: "Maybe if I packed at night…"

Parent: "Great idea. Want me to remind you, or do you want to try a checklist?"

Bottom Line: Your role is not to remove every obstacle, but to **coach your teen into problem-solving skills**, while affirming their growing independence, identity, and voice.