



SPECIAL NEEDS | FIELD GUIDE

When your child says no

Learn what the refusal may be telling you.

A note from Victoria

A “no” can mean discomfort, confusion, fear, fatigue, or a preference. You do not have to guess perfectly; you can slow down and get curious.

What to do

Check safety first. Then ask what part is hard, offer a communication option, and see whether timing or environment can change. Distinguish a required health or safety task from an optional activity. Bring recurring distress to the appropriate clinician, educator, or therapist.

Words you can use

“I hear no. Is it the noise, the task, the person, or something else? Show me or tell me however works for you.”

One useful step I can take today:

I could start with: Name one way your child can signal “pause” that adults will honor.

The strength I see in you

Listening to a refusal can reveal a need that was otherwise hidden.

Educational peer support, not individualized medical, legal, or school advice. Partner with your child and their care or school team; consult a qualified advocate about rights questions.



SPECIAL NEEDS | WORKSHEET

When your child says no

Use this page in your own words. You can leave any part blank.

What the no might be communicating

What must happen for safety, and what can wait

A pause signal adults can honor

My next manageable step

A person, service, or place I can turn to (if useful)

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