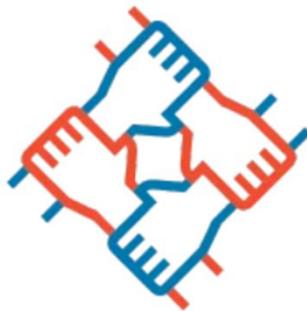


EMPOWERING PARENTS

Advocating with Confidence



SEN Parent Support Group

Intro



WHAT WILL WE COVER?

- ★ Reasons we may struggle to advocate
- ★ The impact of self talk
- ★ Knowledge is power
- ★ Staying in control

HOW WILL IT WORK?

- ★ Cameras on or off – it's up to you
- ★ Post any questions in chat
- ★ Time for a Q&A at the end
- ★ All slides will be shared after the session

SOME SEN PARENT'S REALITY

SHAME

GASLIGHTING

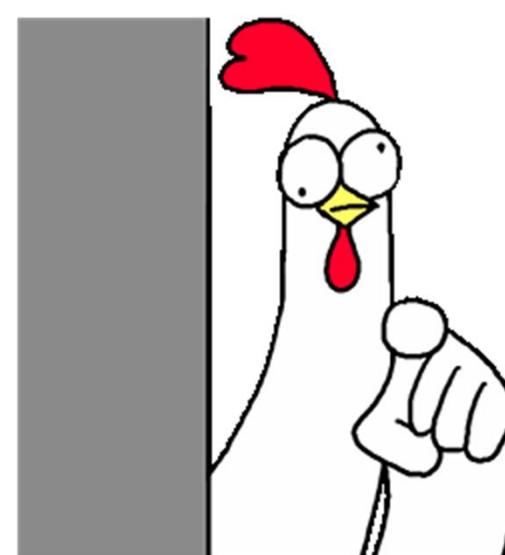
DOUBT

NOT BELIEVED

BLAME



WHO IS THE EXPERT IN YOUR CHILD?



REASONS WE MAY STRUGGLE TO ADVOCATE



SEN Parent Support Group



THE AUTHORITY BIAS

We may assume that professionals know best just because of their title or qualifications.



Example: A school SENCO tells you, *"We don't usually offer 1:1 support at this stage."* You assume they must be right - so you don't challenge it.



Reframe:

A title doesn't mean someone is always right. You have valuable expertise as a parent - your lived experience matters just as much as their qualifications. **You know what YOUR child needs!**



Practical Strategy:

Ask for policies or evidence: *"Can you show me where that's written in guidance?" or "Can you tell me WHY that is the case?"*



GASLIGHTING

Some professionals may dismiss your concerns or make you feel like you're being unreasonable. This may lead to self doubt and concern over being 'THAT parent'.



AI Image created by Gemini

Example: You raise concerns about your child's anxiety at school, and they respond, *"You're worrying too much; lots of kids struggle with transitions."*



Reframe:

Your concerns are valid. If you feel something is wrong, trust yourself. **You know YOUR child best!**



Practical Strategy:

- Keep written records.
- Repeat your key concerns clearly: *"I appreciate your view, but I am asking for X because of A, B, and C."*
- If dismissed, ask for the statement in writing: *"Could you confirm that in an email so I can check guidance?"*



POWER IMBALANCE

Meetings can feel intimidating, with professionals sitting together, using jargon, and controlling the conversation.



Example: You sit across from a table of professionals, feeling 'on trial.' You become overwhelmed and struggle to get your points across.



Reframe:

You have a right to be there. **This is about YOUR child.**
Professionals are there to work with you, not against you.

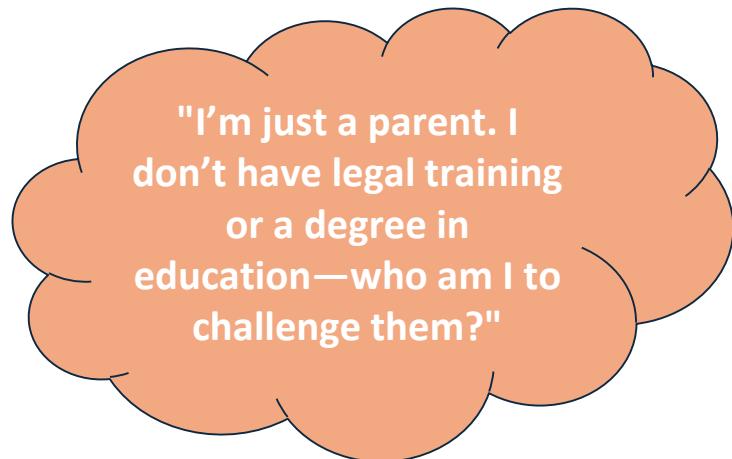


Practical Strategy:

- Bring someone with you (partner, friend, family).
- Change seating arrangements if needed - don't let them box you in.
- Slow things down by asking, *"Can you explain that in another way?"*



IMPOSTER SYNDROME



Example: You feel that the professionals know more than you. You worry you'll say something wrong or not have the right words, so you stay quiet.

💡 **Reframe:**

Lived experience is just as powerful as professional knowledge. You don't need to know everything—you just need to **know your child and their needs**.

💪 **Practical Strategy:**

Write down your main points before the meeting and practice saying them out loud to build confidence. Repeat to yourself what you DO know and stop focussing on what you DON'T know!



THE FAWN AND FREEZE RESPONSE



AI Image created by Gemini

Under stress, our brain can trigger a survival response—fight, flight, freeze, or fawn (appease)

Example: A professional suggests an alternative to your request, and even though it doesn't feel right, you say, *"Okay, that's fine,"* because you don't want to seem difficult.



Reframe:

You are having a discussion about YOUR child. You are not being difficult by helping them get to know what YOUR child needs.



Practical Strategy:

Have a 'pause phrase' ready, such as: *"I need time to think about that—I'll get back to you in writing."*

Have a glass of water handy to allow you time to think & drink.



OVERWHELM

Your child is struggling!

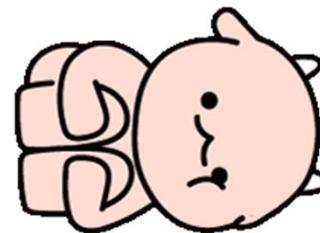
Anxiety

Repeated battles

Sense of urgency

Bureaucracy

Trauma



Feeling powerless

Exhaustion

Repeated dismissals

Being labelled as 'THAT' parent

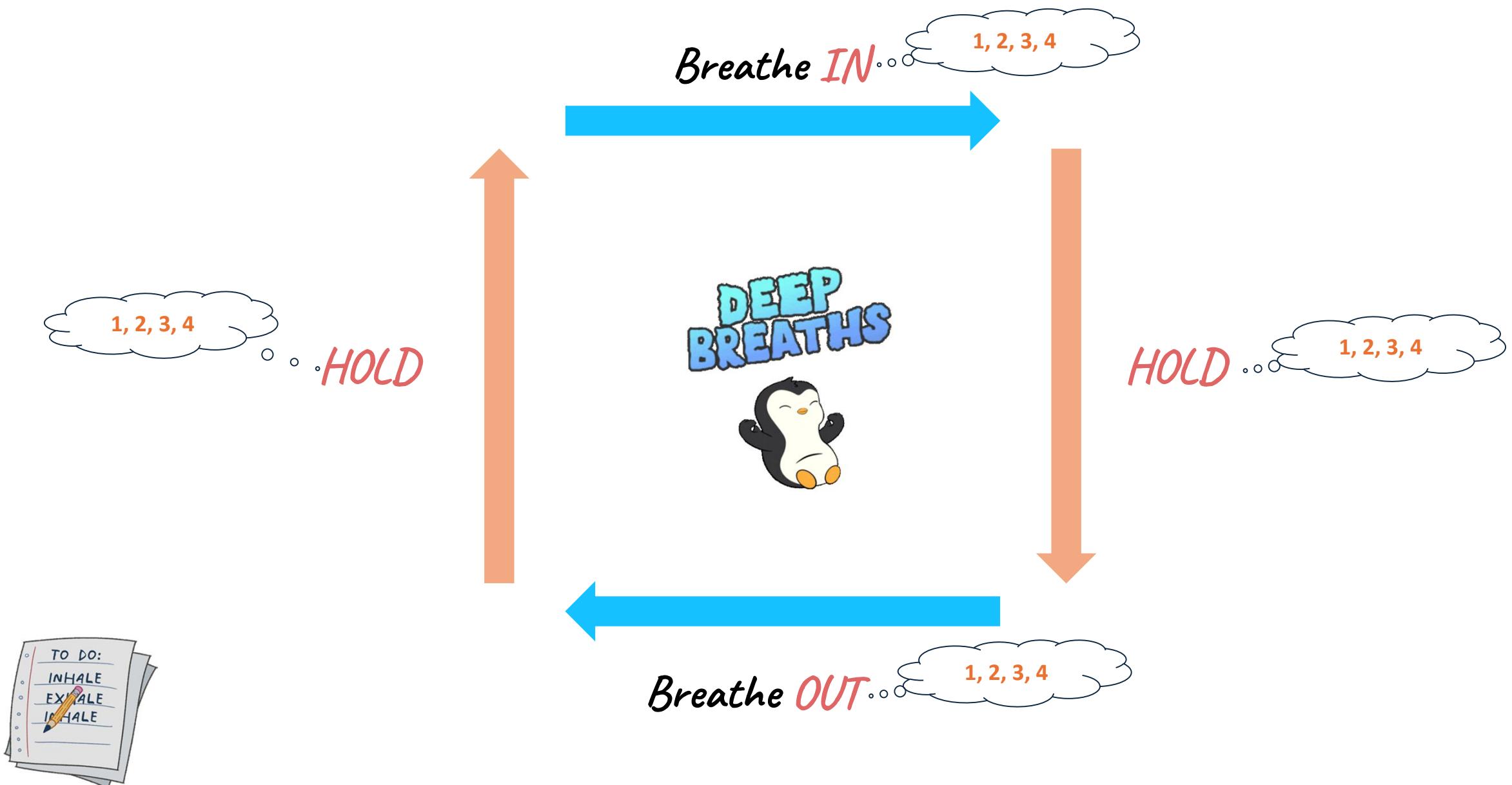
CHANGING YOUR OWN NARRATIVE



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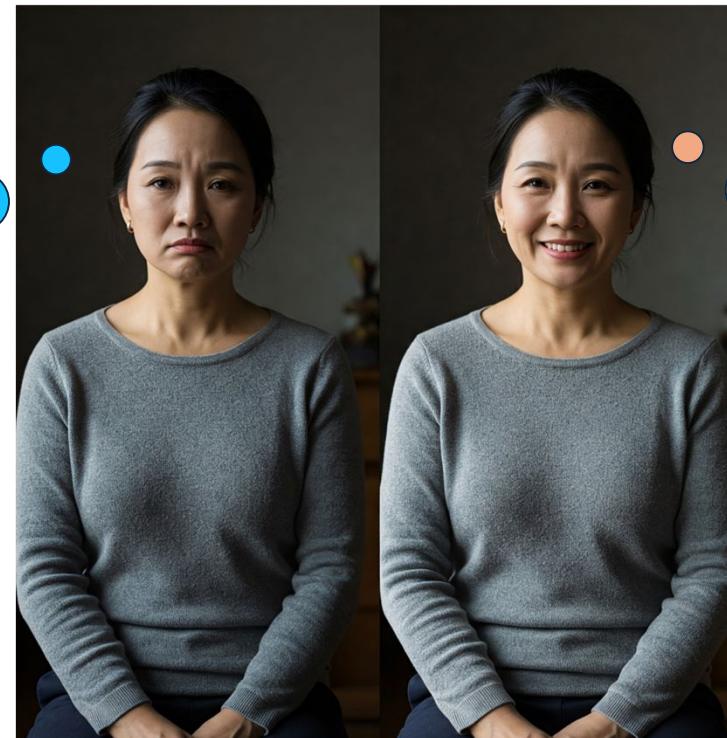
DON'T TAKE BREATHING FOR GRANTED!





SELF TALK

The way we talk to ourselves shapes how we show up in meetings. Negative self-talk fuels anxiety and self-doubt, while positive and realistic self-talk builds confidence and resilience.



*"I don't know what I am talking about"
"I'm not as smart as they are"
"I don't know as much as they do"
"I will sound stupid"*

*"I know what my child needs"
"I have researched this and know more than they will expect"
"I am confident that I know what I am talking about"
"I will sound well informed"*

AI Image created by Gemini



'CRACK' YOUR SELF TALK

Challenge it

Recognise and question negative self talk. *'Would I say this to a friend?' If not, why say it to yourself?*

Reframe it

Turn it into more constructive thought. Instead of *'I don't know enough'* say *'I'm still learning and will ask questions'*

Affirmations

Practice using positive and empowering statements. Create your truth and repeat it *'I am the expert on my child and I have the right to speak up'*

Control focus

Shift attention to facts, preparation, and what you *can* do rather than what you fear. *'I can talk with confidence about my child's needs'*

Keep practicing

Self-talk isn't a one-time fix - consistently challenge, reframe, affirm and control your positive thinking



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Training

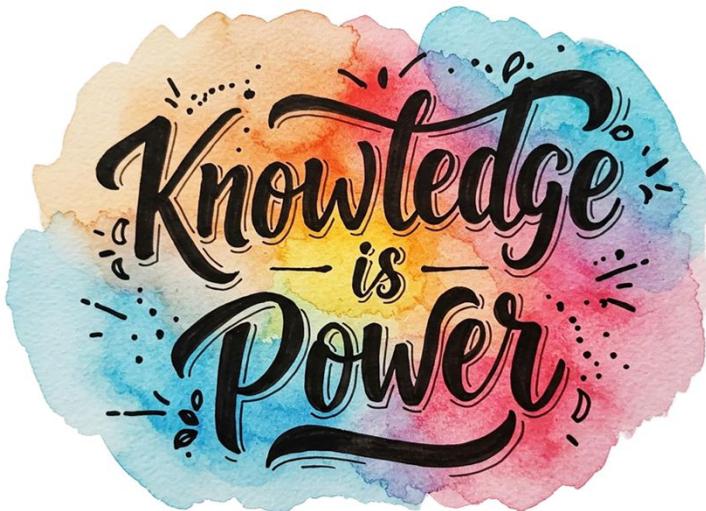
Quick guides

Parental assessments

Letter templates

Snippets of law

Group support



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Navigating The SEND Process

For Better Outcomes, TOGETHER!

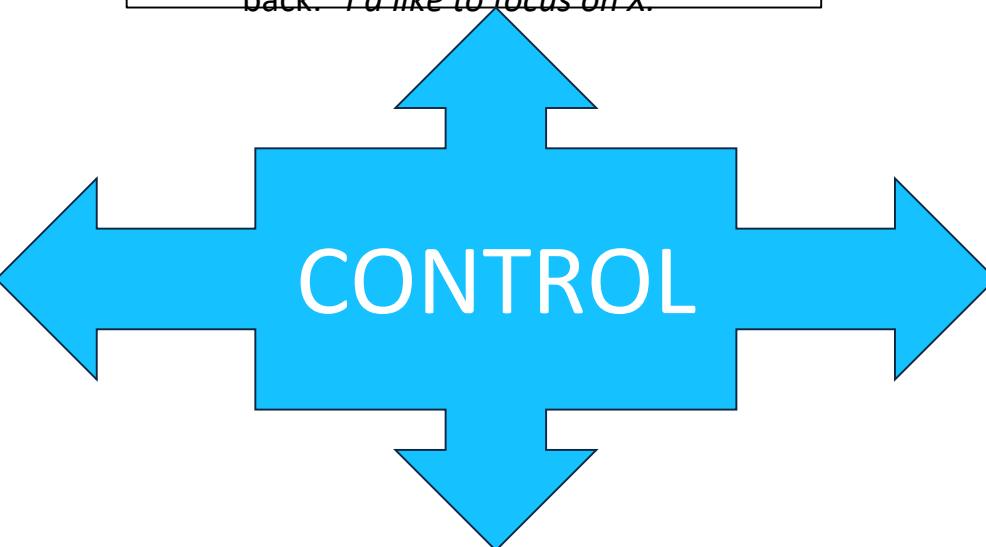
TAKING BACK CONTROL

1. Breathe Before Responding

- Don't take breathing for granted
- Practice ~~your box breathing~~

2. Have a Plan & Stick to It

- Write down **your key points** and **stay on track**.
- If the conversation drifts, bring it back: "*I'd like to focus on X.*"



CONTROL

8. Give Yourself Permission to Follow Up Later

- If you're caught off guard, say: "*I need time to think about this—I'll follow up in writing.*"

7. Control Your Body Language

- Sit **upright**, slow your breathing, and make **eye contact**.
- Project calmness, even if you don't feel it inside.

6. Bring Someone With You

- A trusted friend, partner, or advocate can help you **stay grounded**.

3. Use a Notepad – Write Instead of Reacting

- If emotions rise, **write your thoughts down** first.
- Jot down key points professionals make—helps **slow down reactions**.

4. Pause the Meeting if Needed

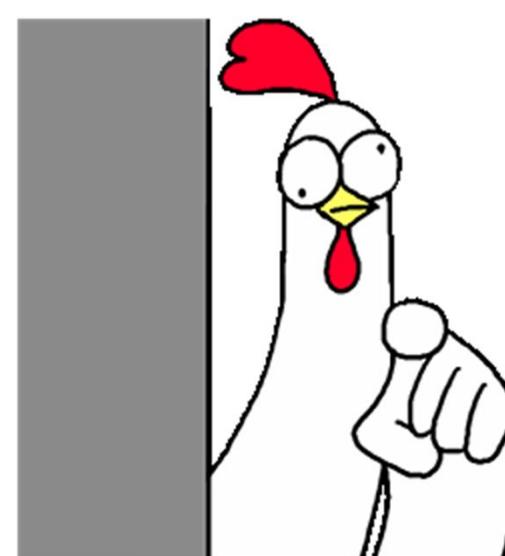
- If you feel overwhelmed, say:
 - "*I need a moment to process this.*"
 - "*Can we take a short break?*"

5. Keep the Focus on Solutions

- Instead of reacting to negativity, ask:
 - "*How can we make this work?*"
 - "*What's the next step?*"



WHO IS THE EXPERT IN YOUR CHILD?





Q&A

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