

Behind the Smile

The Hidden Strength of Mothers
Raising Children with Autism



By Prof (Dr) Priyadarshee Patra

A Mother's Dream



Every parent begins with dreams for their child.

But sometimes the journey takes an unexpected turn.



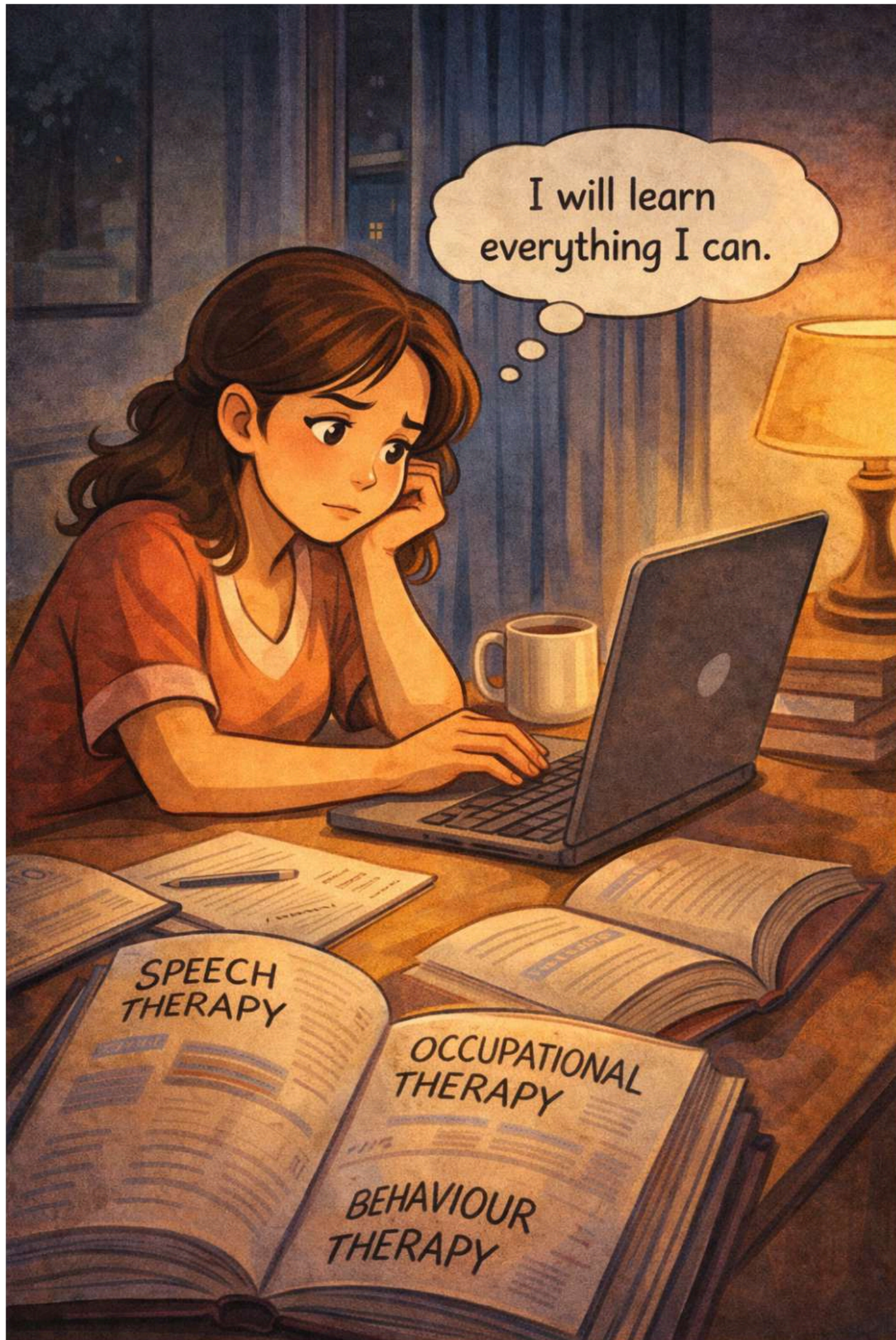
No eye contact. No response to name. No words.



A new journey begins.

Aarav shows signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder.



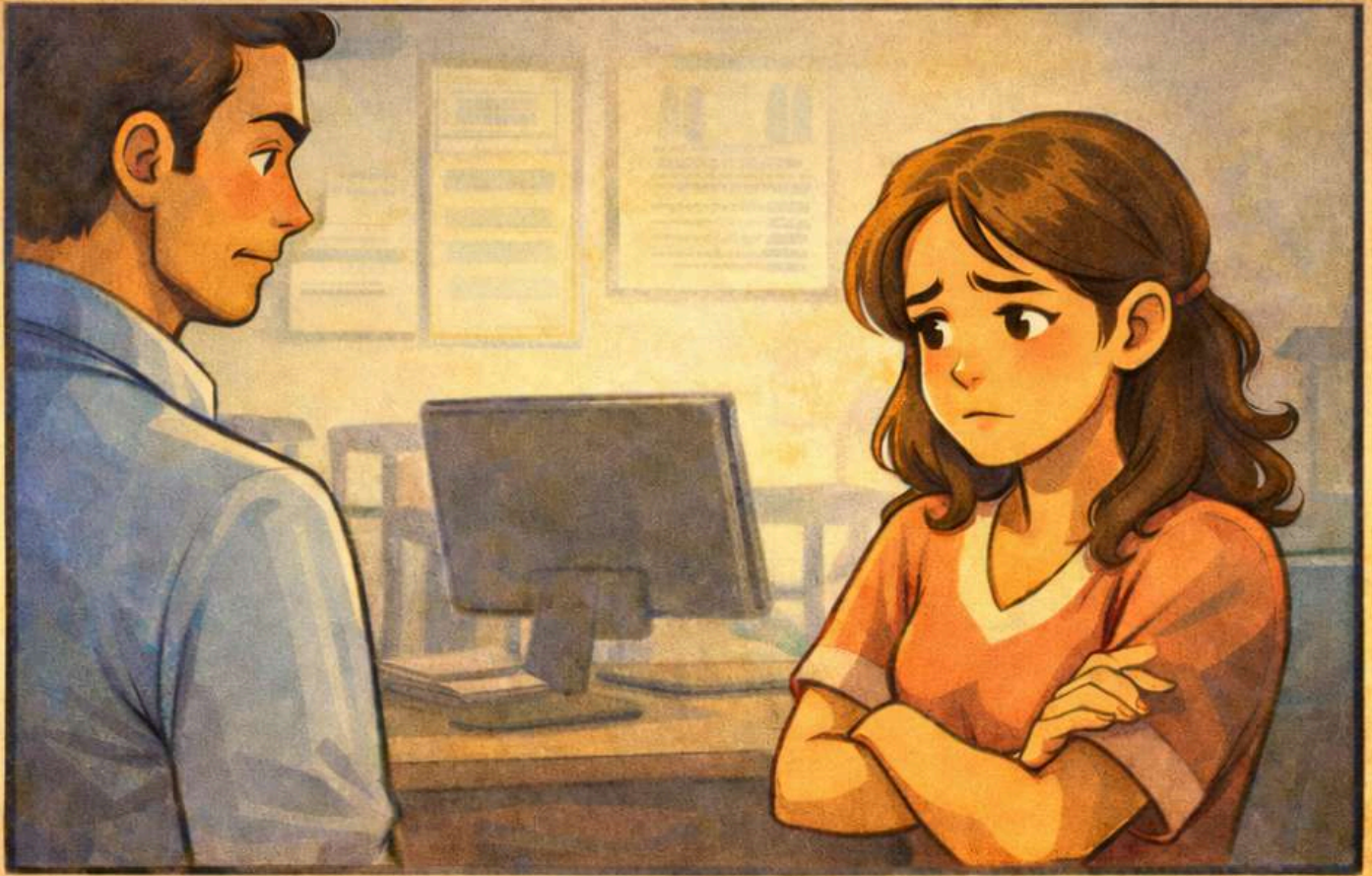


I will learn
everything I can.

SPEECH
THERAPY

OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY

BEHAVIOUR
THERAPY



You have taken too many leaves.



Aarav needs constant therapy...

I think I should
leave my job.

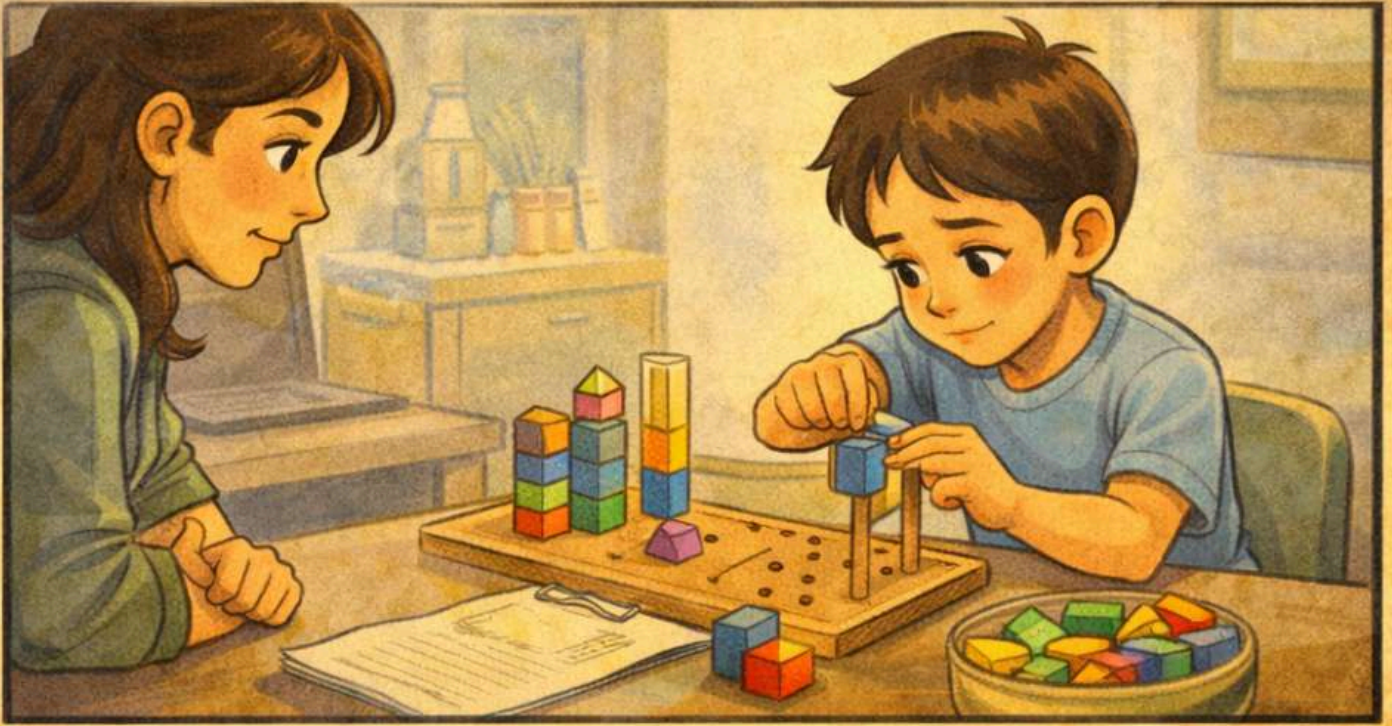
The New Routine



Every day became a schedule of therapies.

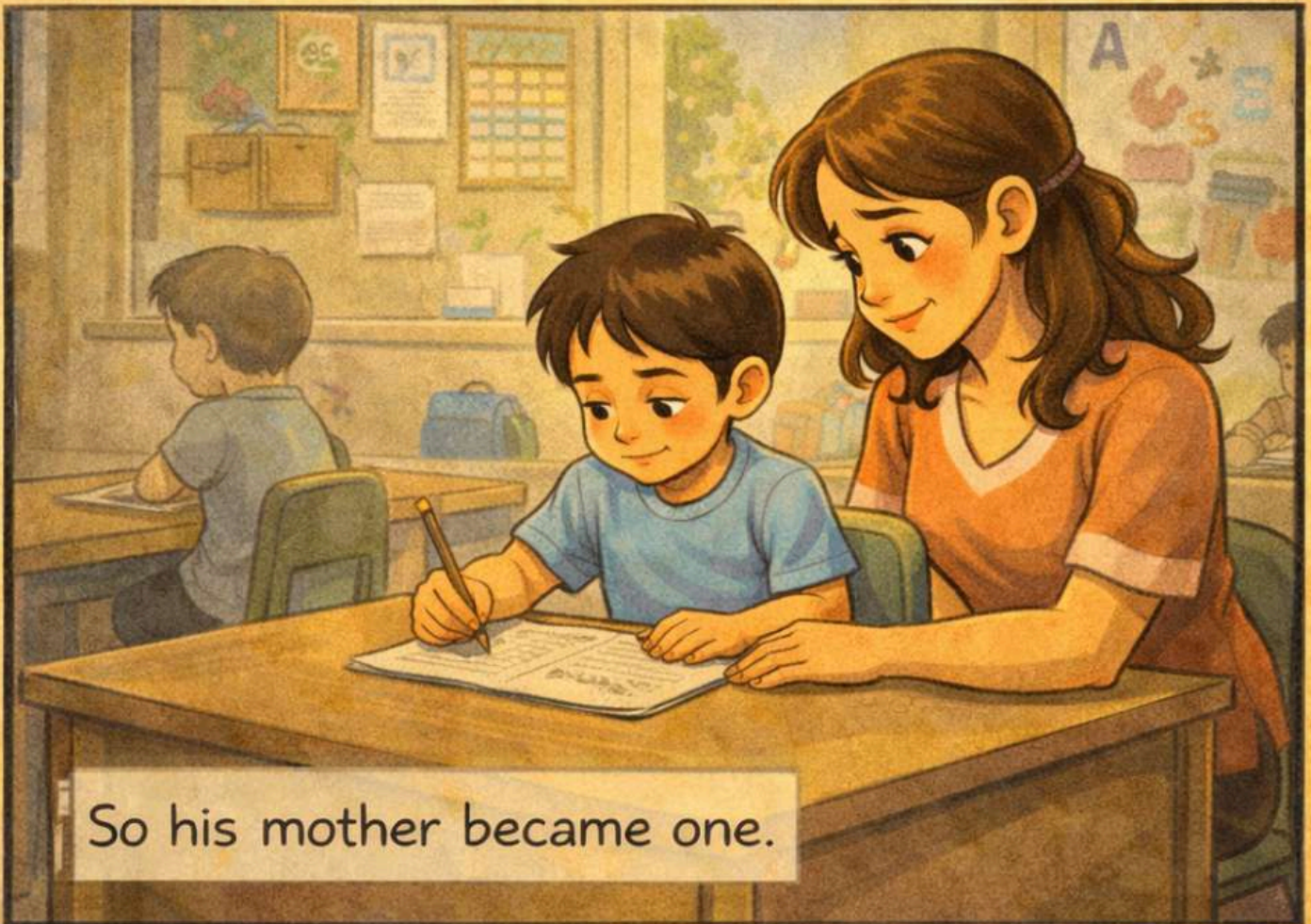


Occupational therapy session.

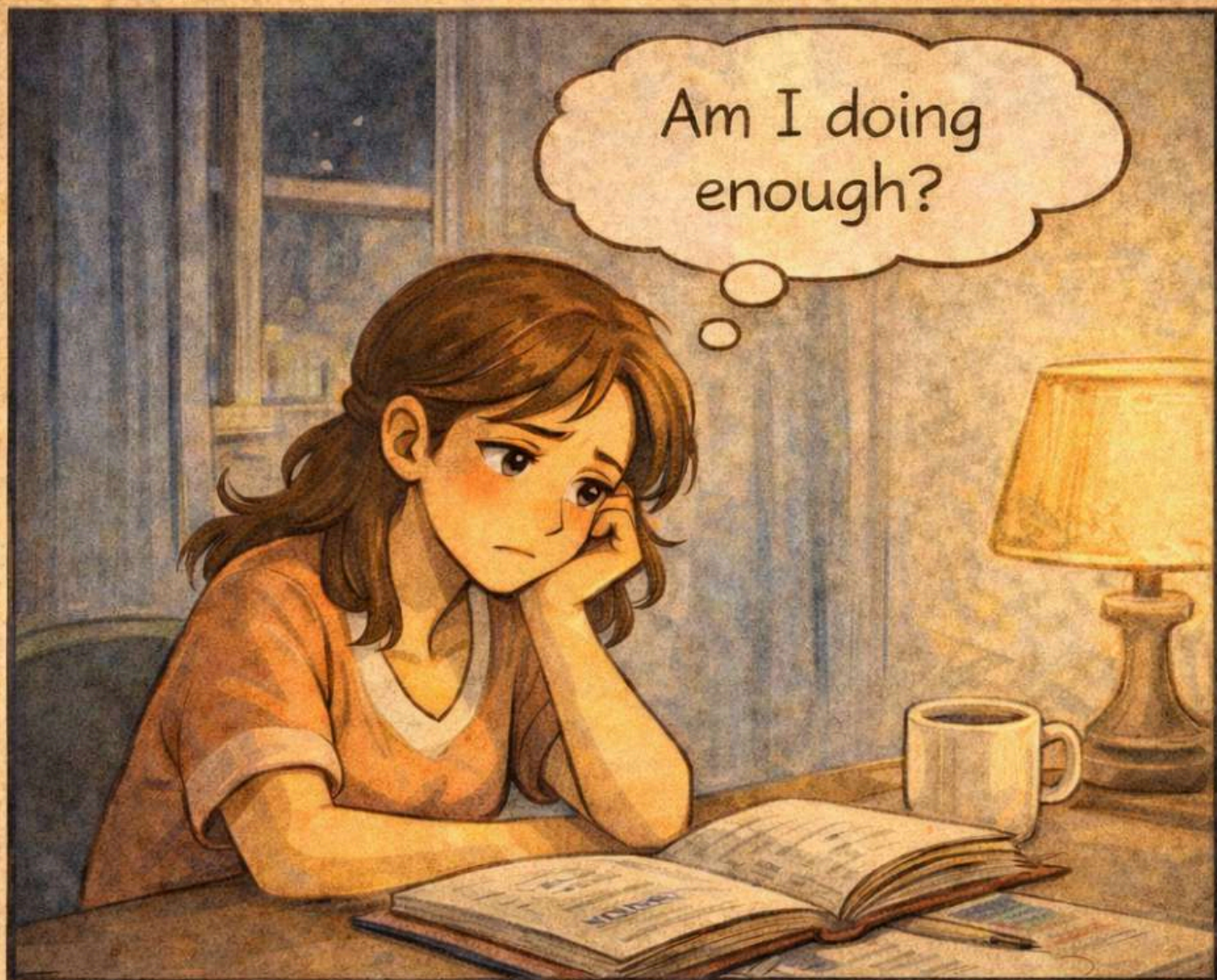


Progress came slowly... but every step mattered.

He could not tolerate another shadow teacher.



So his mother became one.



Caregiver burnout is real.



Siblings can sometimes feel invisible.



Balance is difficult, but possible.

Learning to Care for Herself

Mother speaking with another parent at therapy center.



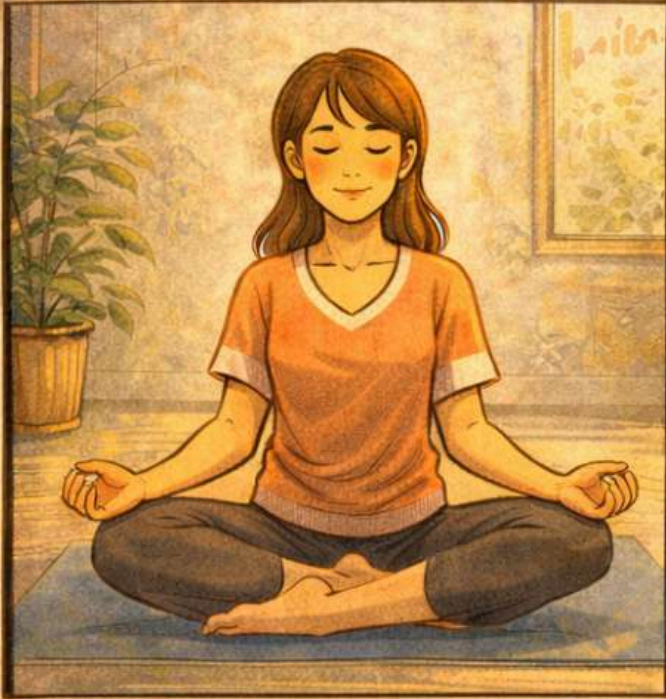
Caregivers also need care.

Self-care is not
selfish.
It is survival.



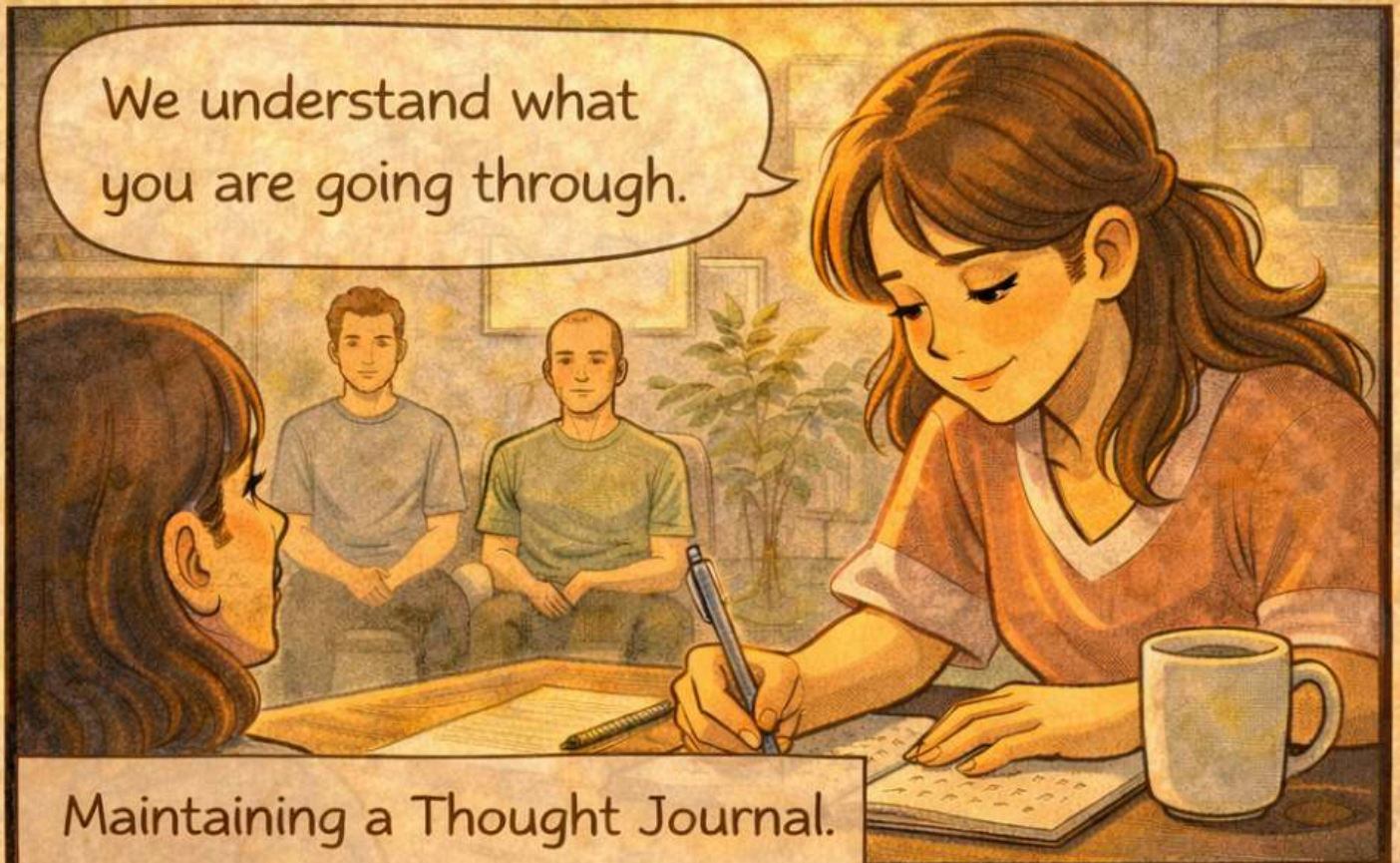
Balance is difficult, but possible.

Meditation and Yoga



Parent Support Group

Physical health helps sustain emotional strength.



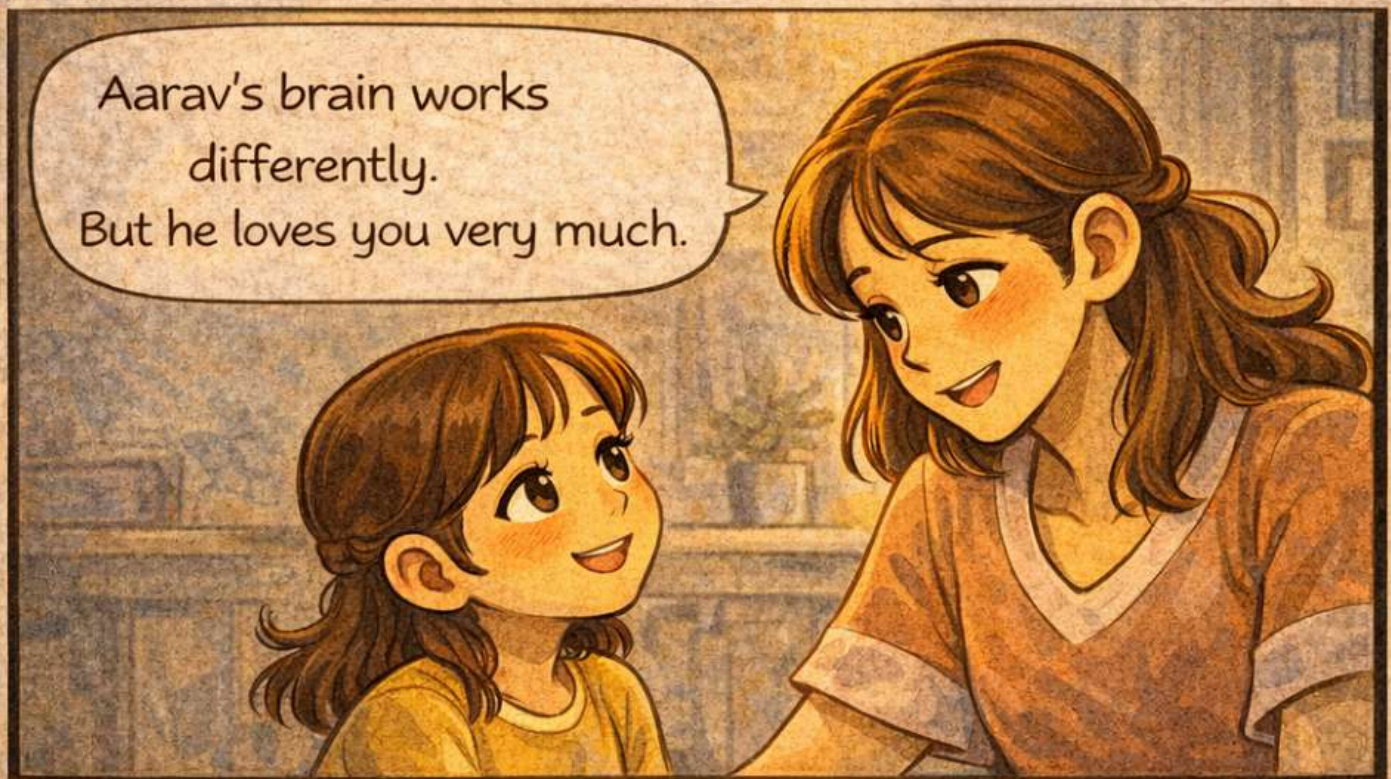
Maintaining a Thought Journal.

Writing feelings helps release stress.

Caring for the Sibling



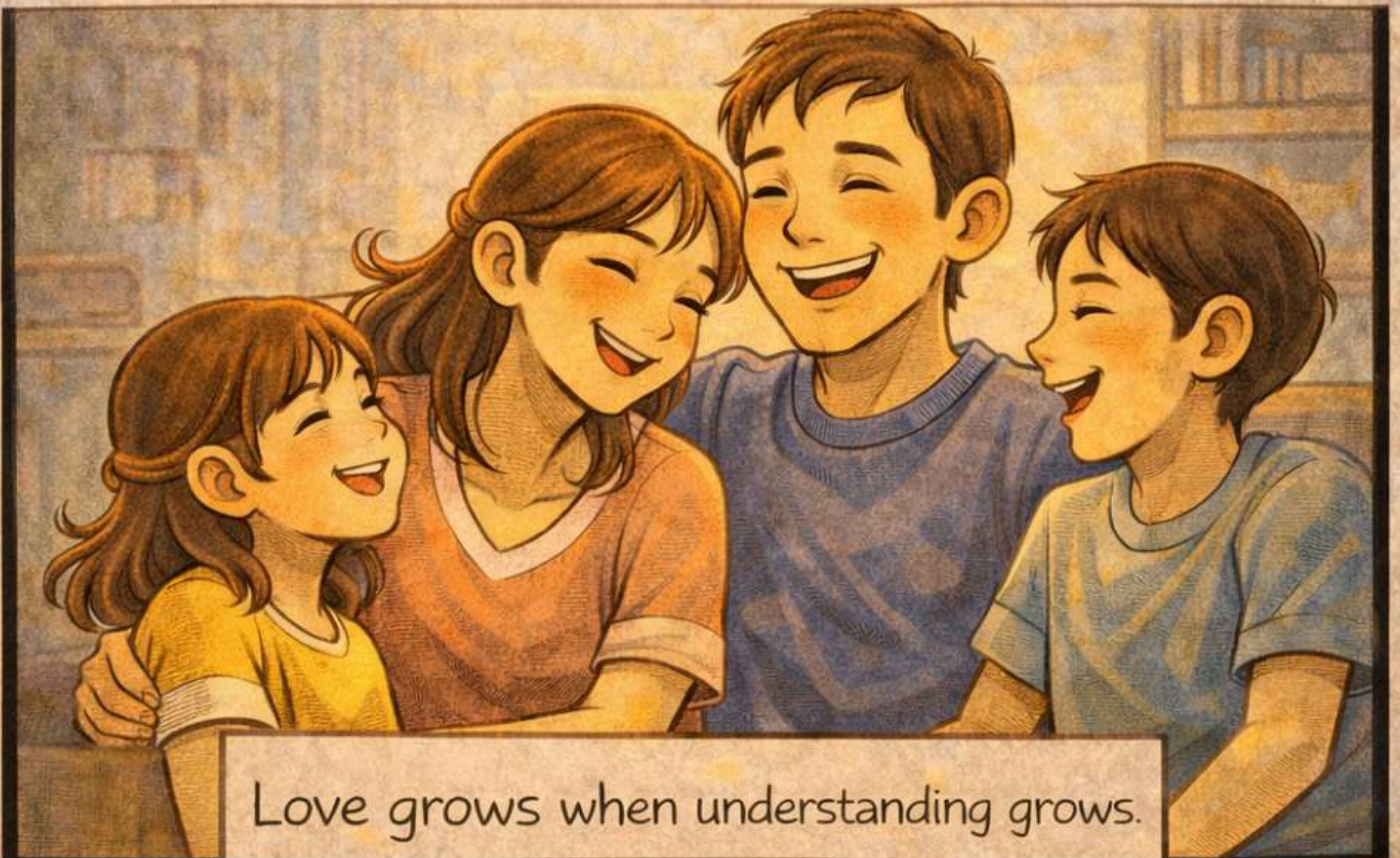
Mother spending special time with Meera.



Mother explaining autism gently.



Siblings can become wonderful allies.



Love grows when understanding grows.

Small Victories

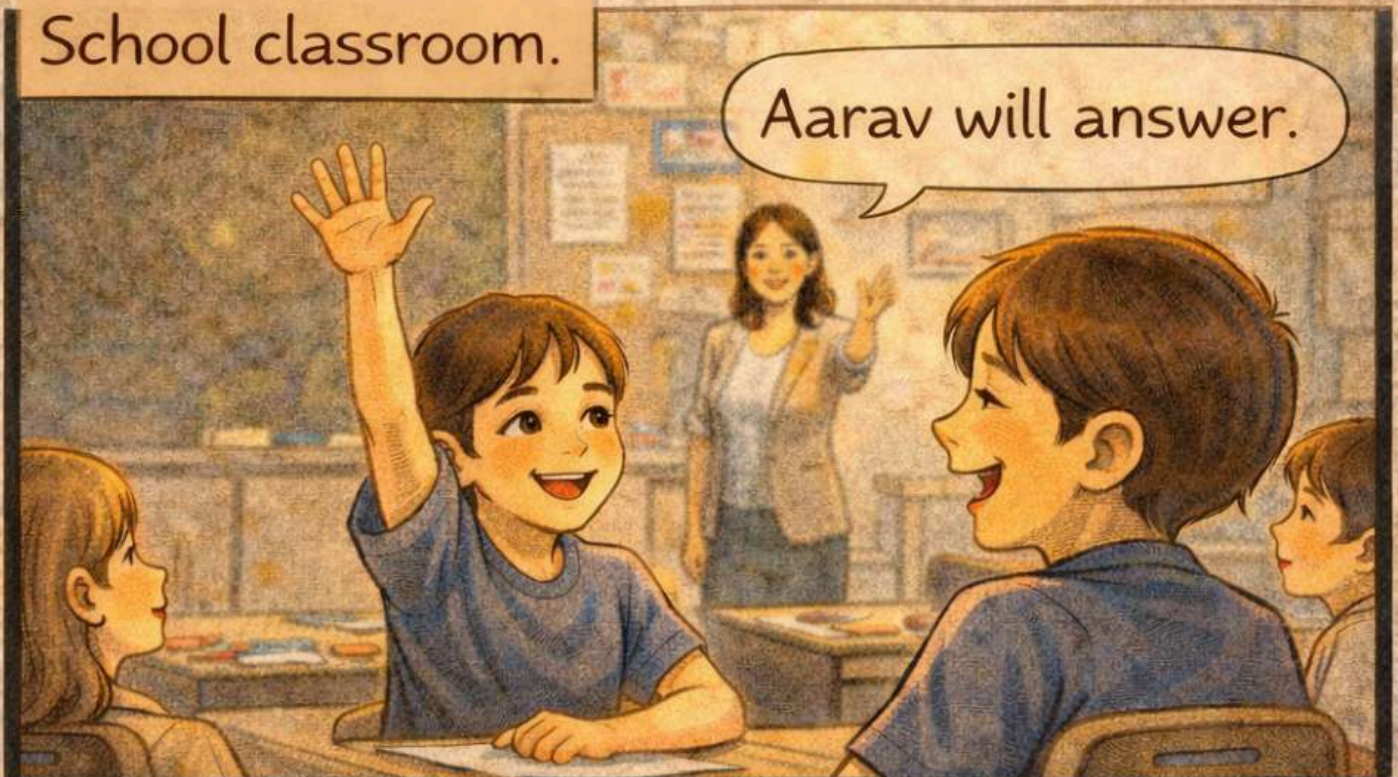
Speech therapy.

Mama.



School classroom.

Aarav will answer.



Love grows when understanding grows.

The Quiet Strength



This journey was not easy.



But love is stronger than difficulty.



Parents raising children with autism are not alone. With support, patience, and self-care, families can grow stronger together.

10 Ways to Prevent Caregiver Burnout



1. Accept That You Cannot Do Everything

Perfection is not the goal. Focus on what **truly** helps your child and **let go** of unrealistic expectations.



2. Take Short Breaks

Even **15–20 minutes** of personal time daily can help **recharge** your mind and body.



3. Maintain Physical Health

Regular walking, yoga, or light exercise improves **energy**, **sleep**, and **emotional resilience**.



10 Ways to Prevent Caregiver Burnout

4. Seek Support From Others

Connect with **family members**, **friends**, or parent support groups. Sharing experiences reduces isolation.



5. Share Responsibilities

Whenever possible, involve **spouse**, **grandparents**, or relatives in caregiving.



6. Schedule Personal Time

Plan small enjoyable **activities** like **reading**, **music**, gardening, or hobbies.



10 Ways to Prevent Caregiver Burnout

7. Maintain Social Connections

Stay in touch with **friends**.
A simple conversation
can relieve emotional stress.



8. Express Your Feelings

Writing a **thought journal**,
speaking to a counselor, or
talking with trusted people
helps release emotional burden.



9. Celebrate Small Victories

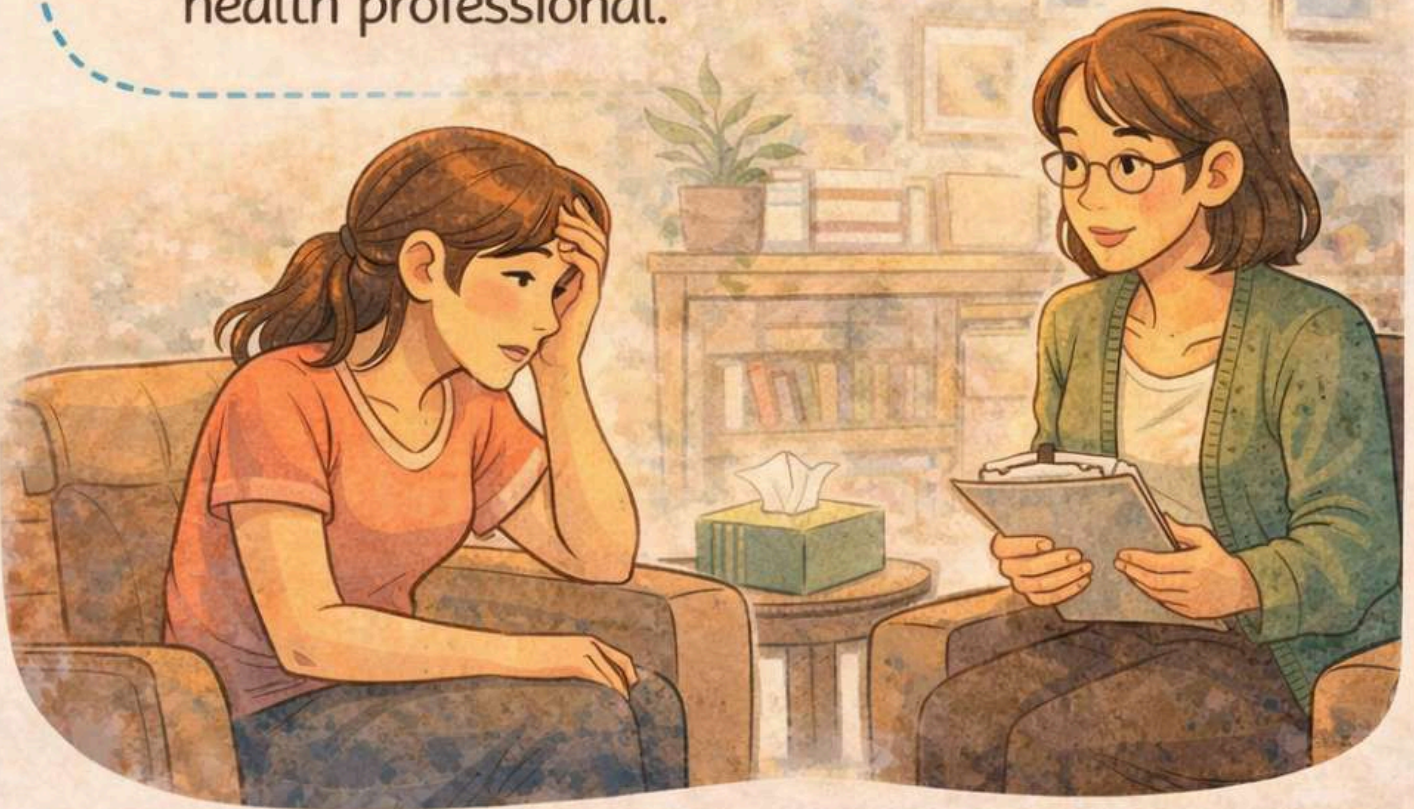
Progress in autism is often slow.
Recognizing small improvements
keeps motivation alive.



10 Ways to Prevent Caregiver Burnout

10. Ask for Professional Help When Needed

If you feel overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed, consult a mental health professional.



♥ Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
A healthy caregiver provides the best care.