

EARLY SIGNS
OBSERVATION
CHECKLIST FOR
PARENTS

#### A GENTLE INTRODUCTION

Every child's development is a little like watching a sunrise—soft, slow, and full of colours that appear in their own time. You don't rush the light; you simply witness it. In the same spirit, this booklet is an invitation to observe your child with the same quiet wonder.

This is not a diagnostic tool, nor a reason to tighten your heart with worry. Think of it instead as a gentle compass—something that helps you notice the subtle ways your child communicates, plays, reacts, and expresses their inner world. Early noticing leads to early support, and early support can change the entire landscape of a child's future, like sunlight opening petals that didn't know they were waiting.

Some children speak through words, some through gestures, and some through patterns and rhythms only they can hear. This guide simply helps you tune into those rhythms. With these observations, you're not labelling your child—you're learning their language. Let this be the beginning of understanding, not the beginning of worry.

# HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Before you begin, take a breath. This is about gentle awareness, not judgment.

- Observe your child over 2-4 weeks, during daily routines, playtime, mealtimes, and outings.
- Look for behaviours that appear consistently, not just once.
- Notice patterns across different situations home, park, preschool, family gatherings.
- Remember: every child develops at their own rhythm. This checklist simply helps you understand your child's way of engaging with the world.
- If several signs resonate with you, consider reaching out to a child psychologist or developmental specialist for guidance.

Each sign below comes with a small example—a real-life moment where you might notice the behaviour. These examples are meant to make the sign crystal clear, so you know exactly what to observe.

#### COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE

#### 1. Limited Response to Name

What to observe: Your child doesn't consistently turn when you call their name. Example: You're standing right behind them, calling "Aarav... Aarav," but they stay focused on spinning the wheels of their toy car as if they didn't hear you.

#### 2. Delayed Speech or Loss of Earlier Words

What to observe: Speech milestones come late or previously spoken words disappear. Example: Your child used to say "mama" or "ball," but over the months, these words became less frequent or stopped completely.'

#### 3. Limited Gestures

What to observe: Fewer gestures like pointing, waving, or reaching to be picked up. Example: Instead of pointing at the cookie jar, they pull your hand toward the kitchen without showing what they want.



# 4. Repeating Words Without Meaning (Echolalia)

<u>What to observe</u>: Repetition of phrases without using them appropriately. <u>Example</u>: You say, "Do you want milk?" and they repeat "want milk, want milk" without indicating yes or no.

# 5. Communicates Needs Non-Verbally What to observe: Prefers action-based communication over words. Example: They put your hand on the remote control instead of asking to switch the TV on.



# SOCIAL INTERACTION

#### 6. Reduced Eye Contact

<u>What to observe</u>: Avoids or rarely maintains eye contact. <u>Example</u>: When you try to make eye contact during feeding, they keep looking elsewhere.

#### 7. Limited Interest in Peers

<u>What to observe</u>: Prefers solo play even when other children are nearby. <u>Example</u>: At a birthday party, they sit in a corner stacking blocks while other kids play together.

#### 8. Less Sharing of Joy

<u>What to observe</u>: Doesn't bring toys or objects to show you. <u>Example</u>: Instead of excitedly showing you their new puzzle piece, they quietly continue playing.

#### 9. Difficulty Imitating

What to observe: Finds it hard to copy actions or expressions. <a href="Example">Example</a>: You clap and say "yay!", but they don't imitate, even after repeated modeling.



# PLAY & INTERESTS

#### 10. Repetitive Play Patterns

<u>What to observe</u>: Plays the same way each time. <u>Example</u>: They line up cars perfectly in a row instead of driving them around.

#### 11. Limited Pretend Play

<u>What to observe</u>: Doesn't imitate everyday actions in play. <u>Example</u>: When given a toy cup, they don't pretend to drink or feed a doll.

#### 12. Strong Attachment to Specific Objects

<u>What to observe</u>: Fixates on one item. <u>Example</u>: Carries the same spoon everywhere, even to bed.



#### SENSORY RESPONSES

#### 13. Unusual Sensitivity to Sounds

<u>What to observe</u>: Overreacts to noises. <u>Example</u>: Covers ears or cries when the mixer or pressure cooker whistles.

#### 14. Texture or Touch Sensitivity

<u>What to observe</u>: Discomfort with certain fabrics or grooming activities. <u>Example</u>: Refuses to wear woollen clothes or dislikes hair brushing.

#### 15. Fascination With Movement or Lights

<u>What to observe</u>: Stares at moving objects for long periods. <u>Example</u>: Watches the ceiling fan spin for several minutes.



#### BEHAVIOURS & ROUTINES

#### 16. Repetitive Movements

<u>What to observe</u>: Flapping, rocking, or spinning. <u>Example</u>: When excited, they flap their hands repeatedly.

#### 17. Strong Need for Routines

<u>What to observe</u>: Gets upset by small changes. <u>Example</u>: If the cup is a different colour today, they refuse to drink.

#### 18. Difficulty With Transitions

<u>What to observe</u>: Struggles to move from one activity to another. <u>Example</u>: Crying intensely when it's time to leave the park, even with warnings.



#### A CLOSING NOTE

If this booklet helped you pause, observe, or understand your child even a little more deeply, then it has already done its work.

And if it stirred questions, that is a sign of strength, not worry. Curiosity is the doorway through which support enters.

You are not alone in this journey. With early understanding, timely guidance, and a heart willing to learn, you and your child can walk toward a future full of clarity, comfort, and light—one gentle moment at a time.

Whenever you feel ready, reach out. Support is a conversation away.

