

# The CONNECT Framework<sup>®</sup>

## Connection Before Communication

The CONNECT Framework<sup>®</sup> is a relationship-based approach to communication development created by Specialist Speech & Language Therapist and Auditory Verbal Therapist, Susannah Burden.

Rather than focusing only on isolated therapy tasks, CONNECT looks at the whole child — their regulation, relationships, environment, sensory profile, communication style, and everyday routines.



The framework is built on the understanding that:  
**Regulation supports connection,  
and connection supports communication.**

It is designed to support children and young people across a wide range of communication profiles, including hearing loss, neurodivergence, speech and language differences, anxiety, social communication differences, and developmental delay.

### The CONNECT Framework

## Key Principles

- C** ▶ Connection First
- O** ▶ Observe and Adapt
- N** ▶ Natural Routines
- N** ▶ Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice
- E** ▶ Empowered Caregivers
- C** ▶ Communication as an Outcome of Regulation
- T** ▶ Togetherness

REGULATION



CONNECTION



COMMUNICATION



### The CONNECT Principles

- C** **Connection First**  
Children communicate best when they feel safe, understood, and emotionally connected.
- O** **Observe and Adapt**  
We notice what helps and what hinders, then adapt the environment, interaction style, and expectations accordingly.
- N** **Natural Routines**  
Communication is built into real life — mealtimes, dressing, play, movement, shared experiences, and everyday interactions.
- N** **Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice**  
We work with a child's profile, not against it. Differences are understood, respected, and supported.
- E** **Empowered Caregivers**  
Parents, carers, and educators are not passive observers — they are central to communication development.
- C** **Communication as an Outcome of Regulation**  
Communication is not separate from emotional safety, sensory regulation, or connection. These foundations matter first.
- T** **Togetherness**  
Progress happens through collaborative support around the child — home, school, therapists, and community working together.

### A Different Starting Point



CONNECT does not ask:  
"How do we get this child to perform?"



Instead, it asks:  
"What helps this child feel safe enough, connected enough, and regulated enough to communicate?"



You won't find pressure, perfection, or step-by-step scripts here. Instead, you'll find clarity, practical ideas, and a reminder that what your child needs most is you.

### Key Themes Within CONNECT

- Relationship-led intervention
- Parent and caregiver empowerment
- Everyday communication opportunities
- Emotional regulation and co-regulation
- Functional communication in real life
- Diagnostic observation within natural interaction
- Practical, sustainable strategies rather than "perfect therapy"
- Seeing the child beyond labels or deficits

### Togetherness in Action



When everyone is connected and working as a team, children are more likely to feel safe, engage, and communicate.



#### About the Author

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