

SOCIALDAD FIELD GUIDES / 01

The 7-Day Dad Reset

A little closer to your kid.
Five minutes at a time.

BY JAMES R. C. SMITH · [SOCIALDAD.CA](https://socialdad.ca)

7 SMALL ACTIONS · ONE GENTLER WEEK



START HERE

Before you start

You do not need a perfect week. Pick one small action each day, repeat a favourite, or skip ahead. The point is contact, not completion.

Offer choices around touch, eye contact and conversation. A child can say no, choose an alternative or come back later. Warmth still counts when it looks like sitting nearby, passing a note or quietly sharing a snack.

If you live apart, travel for work or have limited time together, use the “when apart” option. Keep promises small enough to keep.

This guide offers general parenting ideas. It is not therapy, medical advice, a safety plan or a substitute for qualified support. If you are worried about a child’s safety or wellbeing, contact an appropriate local professional.

THE 60-SECOND ARRIVAL RESET

Before you open the door, start the call or collect your child:

1. Unclench your jaw and lower your shoulders.
2. Name your state: “I am tired and a bit overloaded.”
3. Choose one intention: “Warm hello first.”
4. Make the next promise tiny: five present minutes.

You do not have to become calm on command. You are simply making a little room between the day you had and the hello you want to give.

DAY 1 / FIVE MINUTES

01

YOUR DAILY RESET

A softer landing

TODAY'S FIVE-MINUTE RESET

Offer a warm hello before questions, corrections or logistics. Use their name. Let your face show that you are glad they exist.

TRY THESE WORDS

"Hey, you. I'm glad to see you."

"Do you want a hug, a high-five or a no-touch hello?"

"I have questions about the shoes later. First, hello."

LISTEN OR HELP?

If they arrive with a problem, ask: "Do you want me to listen, help you think, or do something?"

LOW-ENERGY VERSION

Sit nearby and say, "I'm a bit cooked, but I want five minutes with you."

IF IT LANDS FLAT

Do not chase a response. A warm offer still counts. Try again at snack time, bath time, bedtime or in the car.

WHEN APART

Send a short voice note with one specific thing you remember or appreciate about them.

DAY 2 / FIVE MINUTES

02

YOUR DAILY RESET

Notice the small thing

TODAY'S FIVE-MINUTE RESET

Notice one specific thing that is not about performance. Curiosity often feels warmer than praise delivered from across the room.

TRY THESE WORDS

"You kept changing that drawing until it felt right to you."

"You light up when you talk about that game. Show me one thing I should know."

"I noticed you made room for your sister on the sofa."

LOW-ENERGY VERSION

Name one detail: "I saw the tiny green windows you added."

IF THEY SHRUG

A shrug can mean "message received." You do not need a speech in return.

WHEN APART

Text or write: "Tiny thing I noticed about you lately..."

DAY 3 / FIVE MINUTES

03 YOUR DAILY RESET Follow their lead

TODAY'S FIVE-MINUTE RESET

Let your child choose the mode of connection. You do not have to love pretend play to be an involved dad.

OFFER FIVE MODES

Talk: "Tell me about one thing."

Make: draw, build, cook or fix something.

Move: walk, wrestle safely, kick a ball or dance badly.

Help: join a real task they care about.

Be nearby: share space with no demand to perform.

TRY THESE WORDS

"You choose the kind of five minutes."

"I can do one round, one picture or one small job."

LOW-ENERGY VERSION

Let them show you something while you sit.

BOUNDARY VERSION

"I won't be hit or climbed on. We can choose drawing, Lego or a walk."

WHEN APART

Ask them to photograph one thing from their day, then send one from yours.

DAY 4 / FIVE MINUTES

04

YOUR DAILY RESET

Put words to a repair

TODAY'S FIVE-MINUTE RESET

Repair one small rupture. Own your action clearly. Keep the boundary if one is needed. Do not add blame to the apology.

A SIMPLE REPAIR

"I shouted. That was scary and it was my job to handle my frustration differently. The rule about hitting still stands. I'm sorry. I'm going to take a pause sooner next time."

WHAT HELPS

Name what you did. Name the likely impact. Apologize. Restate the boundary calmly. Say one concrete change.

WHAT TO SKIP

Avoid "I'm sorry, but you..." and do not require forgiveness, a hug or an immediate conversation.

IF THIS KEEPS HAPPENING

A script is not enough for repeated frightening, controlling or harmful behaviour. Create distance if needed and get qualified support.

DAY 5 / FIVE MINUTES

05

YOUR DAILY RESET

Make room for a small yes

TODAY'S FIVE-MINUTE RESET

Offer one real choice you can live with. A small amount of control can lower friction without handing over the whole ship.

TRY THESE WORDS

"Homework before or after snack?"

"Blue cup or green cup?"

"Do you want to talk now, at bedtime or by note?"

"The answer to more screen time is no. You can choose who turns it off."

LOW-ENERGY VERSION

Offer two options and stop talking.

IF BOTH OPTIONS GET A NO

Keep the limit: "You do not have to like either choice. I'll choose if you cannot."

WHEN APART

Let them choose the next call's opening question, joke or tiny activity.

DAY 6 / FIVE MINUTES

06

YOUR DAILY RESET

Leave a little evidence

TODAY'S FIVE-MINUTE RESET

Leave a note, doodle or tiny sign that says, "I was thinking about you."

WRITE ONE OF THESE

"I like hearing your latest theory."

"Good luck with the thing. No reply required."

"I noticed how patient you were yesterday."

"Tonight: toast and one terrible joke?"

Keep notes private unless your child enjoys public affection. Do not use them to pressure a child into responding.

LOW-ENERGY VERSION

Draw a small heart, dinosaur, football, star or baffling potato. Sign it.

WHEN APART

Mail a postcard, schedule a message or hide a note for the next handover.

DAY 7 / FIVE MINUTES

07

YOUR DAILY RESET

Keep one thing

TODAY'S FIVE-MINUTE RESET

Choose one action from this week that fits your actual life. Turn it into a tiny ritual.

A GOOD RITUAL IS

Easy to remember. Short enough for a tired day. Flexible when plans change. Enjoyable enough that neither of you dreads it.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

"When _____ happens, we will _____ for about _____ minutes."

Examples:

When we get in the car, we each share one small win.

After Sunday breakfast, we take a ten-minute walk.

On the nights we are apart, I send one voice note before 7:30.

If you miss it, restart at the next natural moment. Nothing needs catching up.

Choose one small thing. Leave the rest for another day.

KEEP IT GOING

The pocket reset

WHEN YOU HAVE 30 SECONDS

“Warm hello first.”

“I’m listening.”

“Do you want help or company?”

“I need a short pause so I can speak kindly.”

“That did not go how I wanted. Can I try again?”

WHEN YOU HAVE TWO MINUTES

Put the phone down. Notice one detail. Ask one specific question. Let the answer be short.

WHEN YOU HAVE FIVE MINUTES

Choose one mode: talk, make, move, help or be nearby.

WHEN YOUR CHILD SAYS NO

“Okay. I’m around later.”

WHEN YOU LIVE APART

Keep one reliable point of contact. A tiny promise kept is worth more than a complicated plan that keeps collapsing.

KEEP IT GOING

Good-enough evidence

Use this page at the end of the week, or after any ordinary day.

One moment I showed up:

One thing I noticed about my child:

One moment I repaired, or still need to repair:

One kind of connection that suits us:

One promise small enough to keep:

A person I can contact when I am carrying too much:

This is not a scorecard. It is evidence that family life is made from many small attempts, including the second attempts.

KEEP IT GOING

A final note

Keep one thing that works.

A warm hello. A smaller promise. A repair when you need one. Come back to these whenever family life gets noisy.

For more ready-to-use support, look for **The Good-Enough Dad Toolkit** from SocialDad: 52 connection cards, repair scripts and reusable family worksheets.

[Visit SocialDad.ca](https://socialdad.ca) · [Follow @JamesRCS](https://twitter.com/JamesRCS)

Your child does not need a permanently cheerful entertainment director. They need a grown-up who keeps learning their signals, protects their dignity, holds reasonable boundaries and comes back after hard moments.

For more practical, low-pressure ideas for modern dads, visit [SocialDad.ca](https://socialdad.ca) and follow [@JamesRCS](https://twitter.com/JamesRCS).

FURTHER READING

UNICEF Parenting, “How to communicate effectively with your young child”

<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/child-care/9-tips-for-better-communication>

Raising Children Network, “Positive attention and your child”

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/connecting-communicating/connecting/positive-attention>

Copyright © 2026 James R.C. Smith. Personal use only. Please do not resell, redistribute or upload this guide.