

# REPORT

## BREAKFAST CONVERSATION ON CHILD UPBRINGING AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

August 2025

[www.solidminds.rw](http://www.solidminds.rw)

### **120+ Participants**

Parents, teachers, caregivers, medical students, and health professionals gathered to learn and share experiences.

### **3+ Hours of Insightful Exchange**

A morning of presentations, panel discussions, testimonies, and interactive learning.

### **8 Expert Presenters**

Psychiatrists, Pediatrician, Clinical Psychologist, Occupational, speech & language, and behavioral therapists shared their expertise.

### **20+ Clinical Staff Engaged**

Solid Minds clinicians interacted with participants, answering questions and offering personalized guidance.

### **5 Practical Resources Shared**

Handouts, therapy guides, and awareness materials provided for continued learning and support.

### **30+ Questions Raised**

Collected both during registration and live discussions, showing genuine curiosity and the need for clarity.

### **3 Different Types of Therapies Explained**

Occupational, Speech & Language, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), and holistic caregiving strategies explained in practice.

### **10+ Key Takeaways Highlighted**

From early detection and parental patience to reducing stigma and supporting caregivers.

### **1 Community of Support**

A safe space built on compassion, knowledge, and collective commitment.





# BREAKFAST CONVERSATION

## ON CHILD UPBRINGING AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS



... Park Inn by Radisson Hotel  
[www.solidminds.rw](http://www.solidminds.rw)



# 1.Executive Summary

On Friday, 15 August 2025, Solid Minds Counselling Clinic hosted a Breakfast Conversation on Child Upbringing and Developmental Disorders at Park Inn by Radisson Hotel, Kigali. The session brought together more than 120 parents, educators, caregivers, university medical students, and health professionals in an open and compassionate space for learning and dialogue.

The event shed light on the realities of child developmental challenges, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), speech delays, and sensory processing difficulties, while emphasizing the importance of early detection, timely support-seeking, patient caregiving, and strong community networks. Experts in psychiatry, pediatrics, and mental health shared valuable insights, practical strategies, and messages of hope for families navigating these challenges.

Participants engaged actively through questions and reflections, demonstrating a shared commitment to supporting children meaningfully. The conversation reaffirmed that while developmental disorders may not always be “cured,” with timely intervention, professional care, and patient love, children can flourish and families can find renewed strength.

This report captures the key discussions, expert insights, testimonies, and audience contributions from the event, offering both knowledge and encouragement to all who seek to better understand and support children with developmental challenges.



## 2. Background & Objectives

Raising children is one of the most important responsibilities in society, but it can also be one of the most challenging, especially when children face developmental difficulties. Across Rwanda and globally, conditions such as **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**, **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**, speech delays, and sensory processing challenges are often misunderstood.

Too often, parents and caregivers face these realities alone. Stigma, misinformation, and limited access to professional guidance leave families isolated. Many children are only diagnosed late, after missing important developmental milestones—reducing the effectiveness of early interventions. Families frequently shoulder heavy emotional burdens, financial strain, and even social exclusion.

Recognizing this gap, Solid Minds Counselling Clinic convened the Breakfast Conversation on Child Upbringing and Developmental Disorders with the following objectives:

- **Awareness:** Increase understanding of child developmental challenges, their early signs, and pathways to support.
- **Practical guidance:** Provide parents, caregivers, and educators with tools, strategies, and professional advice to better support children.
- **Myth-busting:** Address misconceptions and harmful cultural beliefs that fuel stigma, guilt, and denial.
- **Community building:** Create a safe, inclusive space where families and professionals can connect, share experiences, and learn from each other.
- **Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships between health professionals, educators, and families to ensure holistic child support.

By bringing together voices from psychiatry, pediatrics, psychology, and therapy, Solid Minds reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that **no parent should walk this journey in silence and every child can be given the chance to live out their potential.**

*“No parent  
should walk this  
journey in silence  
and every child  
can be given the  
chance to live  
out their  
potential.”*



# 3. Welcome Remarks

The event opened with heartfelt words from Samuel Munderere, CEO and Co-Founder of Solid Minds Counselling Clinic. In his remarks, he reminded participants of the invisible yet heavy burden carried by families raising children with developmental challenges.

**“Every child deserves to be seen for their uniqueness, not their limitations. No parent should have to carry this burden in silence. We are here not just to share knowledge, but to build a community of compassion and support.”**

Samuel emphasized that while children with developmental disorders often face stigma, isolation, or misunderstanding, they are also full of potential when supported with patience, love, and professional care. He acknowledged the courage of parents and caregivers who advocate tirelessly for their children, often while battling guilt, economic pressure, and societal judgment.

Framing the gathering as both **an educational and healing space**, he encouraged participants to approach the day with openness:

- Openness to learn from experts.
- Openness to listen to one another’s lived experiences.
- And openness to confront myths and replace them with compassion and understanding.

His welcome remarks set the tone for the morning: a balance of **knowledge and empathy, science and humanity, awareness and hope**.

*Dear Parents, Educators, Esteemed Mental Health Practitioners, and Colleagues from Solid Minds:*

*I want to take this moment to thank my wife Ariane Uwamahoro, our Co-Founder, for bringing this event to life, and the team that has worked tirelessly to prepare today’s program.*

*It is truly an honor to gather here today, united by a shared commitment to the children who inspire us with their courage every single day—children who face developmental challenges that test not only their own strength, but the resilience and endurance of their families. Childhood should be a season of joy, discovery, and boundless possibility. Yet for many of our families, this journey is clouded by uncertainty, exhaustion, and heartbreak. Behind every child is a parent—a mother or father—who carries an invisible weight. They lie awake at night wondering if their child will ever be accepted, if they are doing enough, if tomorrow will bring progress or more setbacks. They carry the quiet pain of watching their child be excluded from birthday parties, struggle to make friends, or be misunderstood by teachers and peers.*

*The rising number of children living with mental, behavioral, and developmental challenges is not just a medical statistic—it is the story of parents who grieve the dreams they once imagined for their child, while finding the strength to build new dreams from love and hope.*

*Parents sacrifice more than we often see—physically, emotionally, and financially. They skip meals to pay for therapy sessions. They cancel their own medical appointments to make it to yet another evaluation. They smile in public while silently carrying the fear of what will happen when they are no longer there to protect their child. They face moments of doubt, guilt, and even isolation—wondering if anyone truly understands what they are going through. And yet, in the middle of these struggles, parents find the courage to fight for education, to advocate for inclusion, and to believe in their child’s potential even when the world sees only limitations.*

*Educators and mental health professionals—you are the lifelines. Your empathy, your listening ear, and your willingness to adapt make an immeasurable difference. When you validate a parent’s fears instead of dismissing them, when you celebrate even the smallest milestones, you help to heal wounds of misunderstanding and give parents the hope they need to keep going.*

*Early detection and intervention are not just medical necessities— they are acts of compassion that can rewrite a family’s future. By noticing the signs, offering guidance, and connecting parents to support networks, we turn despair into possibility.*

*As professionals, our responsibility is to see the child not through the lens of their diagnosis but through the light of their potential, and to see the parent’s love, courage, and endurance as the foundation on which progress is built. Today, let us commit to building a community where no parent must carry these burdens alone, where every child’s uniqueness is celebrated, and where love, understanding, and shared purpose shape the future.*

*Thank you for your compassion, your dedication, and your unwavering belief that together, we can create families and communities where children with developmental challenges not only survive but truly thrive.*

Samuel Munderere,  
CEO and Co-Founder  
Solid Minds Counselling Clinic







## 4. Key Discussions & Expert Insights

The heart of the Breakfast Conversation unfolded through expert presentations, a panel discussion, personal testimony, and practical explanations of different types of therapies available to support children with developmental challenges. Together, these contributions offered a comprehensive picture of child developmental disorders: what they are, how they manifest in everyday life, the struggles families encounter, and the pathways of hope and resilience that can transform their journeys.

### 4.1 Opening Presentation: An Overview of Child Developmental Challenges

The morning began with a grounding reflection by **Perpetua Omondi**, Occupational Therapist and consultant with Solid Minds. Using the metaphor of an **iceberg**, she explained that parents often see only the “tip” of their child’s behavior: tantrums, restlessness, delayed speech, while beneath the surface lie deeper developmental challenges such as autism, ADHD, or sensory processing difficulties.

She emphasized that early observation, professional consultation, and patience are key. Parents were encouraged not to dismiss small signs but to **seek support early**, as timely intervention often determines long-term outcomes.

➔ **Access the full presentation [Here](#).**

### 4.2 Panel Discussion: Understanding Child Developmental Disorders & What Parents Should Look Out For.

Moderated by **Justine Mukamwezi**, Clinical Director at Solid Minds, the panel brought together three leading experts:

- **Dr. Butoto Xavier**, Specialist in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Ndera Hospital
- **Dr. Janvier Hitayezu**, Head of Pediatric Critical Care Services, CHUK
- **Chantal Mudahogora**, Senior Clinician, Solid Minds

Together, they unpacked the realities of child developmental disorders—highlighting common signs, causes, family struggles, and the importance of early intervention.

***“What you see may not be the whole story. When we look deeper, we begin to understand the child—not just the behavior.”***



# Common Challenges & Signs



## Dr. Butoto described the range of cases he sees daily:

*“We see children every day with autism—delayed speech, difficulty interacting, sometimes even an inability to walk. These are not rare cases; they are our daily reality.”*

## Mudahogora emphasized the diversity of signs:

*“Some children scream constantly, others are overly restless, and some are hypersensitive to something as simple as the ticking of a clock. These are not ‘bad children’; these are signs. If supported, they can realize their potential at their own path, because they’re not completely disabled, rather differently abled.”*



## Dr. Hitayezu added a medical perspective:

*“If by 6 months a child cannot sit, by 9 months is not babbling, by 12 months is not standing, or by 18 months is not taking steps, these are red flags. Parents must consult doctors immediately, because delays caught early are easier to address.”*



# Causes & Misconceptions

Autism is thought to have genetic links, though no single gene has been identified. Importantly, the panel dispelled damaging myths: autism and other developmental disorders are not the result of poor parenting or spiritual punishment.

*“These conditions are real. Parents should not be ashamed. They must not keep children hidden in churches or as prisoners in their homes. Coming forward to seek professional help is the first step toward giving children a chance to thrive.”* Dr. Butoto emphasized.

# Family Struggles

The panelists recognized that parents often carry a heavy emotional load, blaming themselves for their child’s condition. Financial strain is common, with some leaving jobs to become full-time caregivers. Stress, isolation, and sometimes marital breakdowns follow. But beyond this, families face additional hidden struggles:

- **Siblings** often feel exhausted, emotionally burdened, or forced into caregiving roles prematurely.
- **Fear of rejection** looms large, as parents worry how their child will be treated as they grow older.
- **Community indifference and stigma**, fueled by ignorance, compound the pain families experience.

The experts stressed that families need **holistic support**: emotional, financial, and social, so they are not left to navigate these challenges in isolation.

# Impact of Electronics

Dr. Butoto highlighted the dangers of excessive screen time:

*“Too much screen use reduces attention span, confuses reality with virtual worlds, and can even trigger aggression when devices are taken away. Screens must be carefully monitored and limited.”*

Dr. Butoto added an important caution:

*“Digital screens before the age of two are not recommended at all.”*

Parents were encouraged to replace screens with interactive play, reading, and face-to-face communication to build healthier developmental pathways.



## Panel Conclusion

The panel reminded participants that developmental disorders are **not the end of a child's story**, but rather a call to **patience, compassion, and call to action**. Parents must observe milestones carefully, seek medical help without delay, and approach caregiving with empathy instead of punishment.

**Mudahogora** offered a compassionate reminder:

***“When parents choose patience over punishment, and understanding over stigma, they open the door for their children to grow and be accepted.”***

**Dr. Butoto** reinforced the power of persistence:

***“Children may not ‘heal’ from these conditions, but with consistent love and professional care, they can learn, improve, and surprise us in ways we never imagined.”***

And as **Dr. Hitayezu** concluded:

***“Early medical consultation changes everything. What seems like a delay today could become progress tomorrow if we act in time.”***

The discussion closed on a hopeful note: while the challenges are undeniable, so too are the opportunities. With timely intervention, professional care, supportive families, and compassionate communities, children with developmental disorders can grow, learn, and thrive, living out their potential in dignity and strength.

## 4.3 Testimony: Realities and Misconceptions

The panel was followed by a moving personal reflection from **Dr. Charles Mudenge**, Psychiatrist at Solid Minds with over 20 years of experience. Drawing on decades of practice, he spoke about the struggles, myths, and stigma surrounding children with developmental disorders, with a particular focus on autism.

*“In some communities, families are told they are being punished by God or cursed when they give birth to a child with autism. These are not only untrue—they add pain to already difficult journeys.”*



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More Pictures.**



“You are not alone, and you should never be ashamed. Support is available, and when families come forward for help, we walk the journey together. Every child has potential. Our task is to nurture it with patience and compassion.”

**Dr. Charles Mudenge,  
Psychiatrist at Solid Minds**



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Dr. Mudenge explained that autism often receives the most attention because of its visibility, but many children also face other developmental challenges, such as speech delays, ADHD, or sensory difficulties. Regardless of the condition, families frequently encounter the same barriers: denial, stigma, financial strain, and social isolation.

From his experience, he offered three key truths:

1. **Early detection is very important.** The sooner a child is assessed, the sooner support can begin. “A condition identified at age three has a very different outcome than one identified at age ten,” he explained. Early detection opens the door to therapies that help children build skills step by step.
2. **Children can improve remarkably with the right support.** While developmental disorders may not have a “cure,” they are not a dead end. With therapy, structured routines, patience, and love, children can make extraordinary progress, learning to speak, interact, or manage their emotions in ways that once seemed impossible. “Progress may be slow, but every small step forward is a victory,” he encouraged.
3. **Myths must give way to truth and compassion.** Beliefs that conditions like autism are punishments, curses, or caused by parental mistakes only add shame and isolation. Families deserve compassion, accurate information, and encouragement. Science shows these are developmental conditions, not spiritual faults.

Dr. Mudenge’s testimony grounded the conversation in lived reality. He acknowledged the pain many families carry but also reminded them of the resilience he has witnessed over years of practice.

In conclusion, he reassured parents:

*“You are not alone, and you should never be ashamed. Support is available, and when families come forward for help, we walk the journey together. Every child has potential. Our task is to nurture it with patience and compassion.”*

His words left participants with a powerful reminder: hope is real, support is available, and no family should ever feel compelled to face these challenges in silence. He urged parents and caregivers to seek help early, engage with health professionals, and lean on community networks, because every step toward support is a step toward a brighter future for their child.



## 4.4 Therapeutic Interventions

Beyond the panel discussion and testimony, the conversation turned to practical solutions. Solid Minds clinicians introduced participants to different types of therapies that can support children with developmental challenges. These sessions offered parents and caregivers not only information but also practical guidance to apply in daily life.

**Occupational Therapy (OT)**, Presented by **Perpetua Omondi**, Occupational Therapist and Consultant at Solid Minds

**Context:** Occupational Therapy (OT) helps children develop the skills they need to participate in everyday activities, such as playing, eating, dressing, or learning. It focuses on both the child's abilities and adapting the environment to their needs. OT is often recommended for children with sensory processing difficulties, motor delays, or challenges in daily self-care tasks. Perpetua explained that OT is about enabling participation, not perfection:

“When we make small adjustments—such as reducing overstimulation at home, creating structured routines, or teaching skills through play—we empower children to engage more fully in daily activities.”



➔ [Access the full presentation Here.](#)

### Conclusion on Therapeutic interventions:

Together, these therapeutic approaches demonstrated that children with developmental challenges are not without pathways to progress. With Occupational Therapy, children learn to adapt and participate; with Speech and Language Therapy, they gain a voice; and with Applied Behaviour Analysis, they develop positive habits and independence. The message was clear: **early, consistent, and compassionate therapy equips children to thrive and helps families walk the journey with renewed hope.**

**Speech & Language Therapy (SLT)**, Presented by **Isa Ssenkabala**, Speech and Language Therapist at Solid Minds

**Context:** Speech and Language Therapy supports children in developing their communication skills, whether spoken, non-verbal, or through alternative methods. It also addresses difficulties with understanding language, articulation, and social interaction. SLT is used when children show delayed speech, difficulty forming words, limited vocabulary, or challenges in social communication. Isa reminded participants that communication is not just words, it is connection:

**“Every attempt at expression deserves encouragement. Singing with your child, telling stories, and responding to their sounds are simple but powerful ways to build language.”**

He added that early stimulation makes a difference:

“When families engage children in conversation and play, they give them confidence to use their voices in the world.”



➔ [Access the full presentation Here.](#)

**Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)**, Presented by **Pacifique Igiraneza** and **Linda Ingabire**, both Behaviour Therapists, Solid Minds

**Context:** ABA is a structured, evidence-based therapy that uses positive reinforcement to encourage desired behaviors and reduce harmful or disruptive ones. It is widely used in supporting children with autism and other developmental disorders. ABA is applied when children need help with communication, social skills, self-regulation, or reducing repetitive or disruptive behaviors. It is tailored to each child's unique needs.

Pacifique highlighted the focus on building independence:

“ABA is not about changing who the child is; it's about helping them succeed in their environment. Step by step, we can reduce harmful behaviors, build useful skills, and support integration at home, school, and in the community.”



Linda emphasized the importance of consistency:

“Consistency is key. What we do in therapy must continue at home and at school. That is how children learn to apply these skills in real life.”



➔ [Access the full presentation Here.](#)



## 5. Audience Engagement & Q&A Highlights

The Q&A session was one of the most dynamic parts of the Breakfast Conversation. Participants raised many questions, both during registration and in the live discussion. Their questions revealed the everyday struggles faced in homes and classrooms, and the deep desire for practical solutions.

The responses from experts were not only informative but also affirming. They reassured families that there is a way forward, that small daily changes matter, and that support is available.

### Nutrition and Concentration

Parents asked whether high sugar intake and exposure to strong-smelling materials could affect children's concentration. Experts were clear: yes, diet matters. Consuming sugary snacks such as candies, chocolates, sodas too frequently negatively affect attention, mood, and overall health.

Parents were encouraged not to pack sugary foods for children all the time, but instead provide a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, proteins, and water. Occasional treats are acceptable, but balance is key. Creating calm, low-sensory environments at home and in schools also helps children focus and reduces stress.

### Screens and Eating Habits

Parents voiced concern that many children refuse to eat without a phone in hand. Experts strongly advised that **children under 2 years old should not be exposed to digital screens at all**. For older children, screens must be used with parental control, moderation, and supervision.

**“Excessive screen time is harmful. Human interaction is irreplaceable,” Dr. Butoto reiterated.**

Parents were urged not to rely on screens as “babysitters” but to encourage alternatives such as family play, music and singing, reading together, storytelling, and outdoor activities. These not only promote healthy habits but also build strong bonds between parents and children.

### At-home Interventions for Young Children

A recurring question was what parents can do at home with very young children (18 months and above). Experts were affirmative: **children need their parents' presence and guidance**. Talking to children, playing with them, and responding to their attempts to communicate are essential.

These daily interactions allow parents to **spot abnormal behaviors early** such as lack of eye contact or speech delays and seek professional support. Human connection remains the most powerful tool for a child's growth.



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### Exposure to Triggers

Some children are distressed by triggers like loud noises or bright lights. Experts were firm: **do not force children into distressing situations**. Instead, follow the child's tolerance. For some, gentle and gradual exposure helps build resilience; for others, continued avoidance may be safer.

The guidance was clear: **listen to the child and prioritize their well-being**. Forcing adaptation only adds trauma while supportive approaches nurture growth.

### Educational Videos and Digital Content

Participants asked whether popular videos, such as *Miss Rachel*, are helpful for children. Experts explained that while some educational content is useful, it should only complement not replace real human interaction. Parents were advised to use such content carefully (by avoiding excessive exposure), under supervision, and always alongside active engagement with their children.

### Inclusion in Schools

Parents and teachers questioned when and how children with autism should be integrated into mainstream classes. Experts strongly advocated for inclusion as a right and a necessity for growth.

*“Inclusion is not just about letting children attend lessons; it is about ensuring they are fully part of school life, including breaks, play, and relationships,”  
Mudahogora explained.*

However, they cautioned that inclusion must be backed by trained teachers, supportive peers, and flexible environments. Some children may still require specialized support depending on severity, but the long-term goal should always be integration, acceptance, and equal opportunity to thrive.

### Financial Barriers

Parents highlighted the heavy costs of therapy and specialized schooling, often unaffordable and not covered by insurance. Experts acknowledged this painful reality but reminded families that conversations like this event are also a form of awareness and advocacy. They promised continued dialogue with policymakers, communities, and donors to expand support and reduce financial burdens, while affirming that efforts are ongoing to make therapies more accessible.

### Nutrition and Brain Development

Questions also touched on diet and brain development. Clinicians confirmed that foods rich in Omega-3 fatty acids such as fish, nuts, and seeds support healthy brain function and overall development. These should be part of a balanced diet, though they are not a cure for developmental disorders. Parents were advised to view good nutrition as one important pillar, alongside therapy, love, and structured support.

### Conclusion

The Q&A session showed the greater value of dialogue: families are eager to learn, ask, and apply new knowledge. Experts provided not just answers but encouragement, reminding parents that every small change at home, practiced consistently, can make a significant difference in a child's growth.


The shared knowledge affirmed that while developmental disorders are real, so too is the power of **timely information, parental presence, professional guidance, and community solidarity**. By steadily applying what was learned, step by step families can nurture their children's potential and transform worry into hope.

*“Inclusion is not  
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Chantal  
Mudahogora*




# 6. Emerging Themes and Key Takeaway

The discussions, presentations, and audience exchanges revealed powerful lessons that went beyond individual stories. The Breakfast Conversation highlighted not only the challenges families face, but also the opportunities for progress when knowledge is shared and support is sought. The following themes capture the most important insights, pointing the way forward for families, professionals, and communities at large.



**Let’s Advocate for Our Children**

Children with developmental challenges deserve to be understood and supported, not hidden away. Advocacy begins at home and extends into schools, churches, and communities. Parents and caregivers were encouraged to speak up for their children’s needs and challenge misconceptions wherever they appear.




**Developmental Disorders Are Real**

Conditions such as autism, ADHD, and speech delays are real and scientifically documented. They are not caused by witchcraft, curses, or evil spirits. The conversation underscored the need to build a culture where families consult health professionals early instead of turning to harmful myths or isolation.


**Collaboration Among Professionals Is Essential**

No single professional can address all the needs of a child. Pediatricians, psychiatrists, therapists, parents, educators, and caregivers at large must work hand in hand to ensure proper referrals and holistic care. Families benefit most when systems are connected and professionals coordinate their efforts.




**Early Intervention Transforms Outcomes**

The earlier a child receives support, the better their chances of developing skills and independence. Early intervention whether through various professional care interventions, including but not limited to Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech and Language Therapy (SLT), or Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), provides tools for progress that may otherwise be lost if families delay.




**Practical Lifestyles Strengthen Children’s Growth**

Balanced diets, safe environments, limited screen time, and routines tailored to children’s needs all make a difference. Parents were reminded that small daily choices: packing nutritious food, prioritizing play, talking with their children are simple yet powerful investments in their child’s future.




**Families Need Support Too**

Behind every child with developmental challenges is a family that also struggles. Parents may experience guilt, marital strain, or denial, while siblings may feel overwhelmed or prematurely forced into caregiving roles. Families need safe spaces for emotional support, conflict resolution, and encouragement. Support groups and community networks are vital in helping families carry the weight.



**Hope Through Therapy**

Therapies such as OT, SLT, and ABA are proven tools that unlock children’s potential. Therapy does not erase challenges, but it opens doors to communication, independence, and resilience. The key is building a culture of seeking support early and consistently.





## 7. Recommendations & Way Forward

The Breakfast Conversation not only offered knowledge but also pointed to concrete steps that families, professionals, educators, and policymakers can take together. Moving forward, the following recommendations emerged as priorities for action:

### 1. Continue Creating Spaces of Exchange

Parents, educators, and caregivers need safe platforms to learn, ask questions, and share experiences. Regular forums like this Breakfast Conversation provide encouragement, reduce stigma, and build solidarity.

**Action:** Solid Minds Counselling Clinic will continue convening such sessions and invites partners, schools, and community organizations to collaborate in expanding their reach.

### 2. Establish Parent Support Groups

Families raising children with developmental challenges often face isolation, stress, and emotional fatigue. Support groups can help parents connect, share coping strategies, and strengthen their resilience.

**Action:** Solid Minds Counselling will initiate parent support groups and provide guidance on how families can access these. Partners are encouraged to join in sustaining these groups and providing resources.

### 3. Advocate for Systemic Change

Individual efforts must be supported by strong systems. Children with developmental challenges deserve inclusive schools, accessible therapies, and healthcare coverage that lightens the financial burden on families.

**Action:** Communities, professionals, and civil society organizations should work together to advocate for:

- Inclusive education policies and teacher training.
- Expanded access to therapies such as OT, SLT, and ABA.
- Insurance and subsidy reforms to reduce out-of-pocket costs for families.

### 4. Promote Early Detection and Intervention

Delays in seeking help reduce children's chances of making progress. Families must be empowered to recognize early signs and act promptly.

**Action:** Awareness campaigns, routine pediatric screenings, and community sensitization should be scaled up so that children are identified early and supported without delay.

### 5. Strengthen Collaboration Among Professionals

Children benefit most when pediatricians, psychiatrists, therapists, educators, and counselors work together. Poor referrals or fragmented care leave families frustrated and children unsupported.

**Action:** Build stronger referral systems and multi-disciplinary collaboration between health facilities, schools, and community services.

### 6. Support the Whole Family

Developmental challenges affect not just the child but the entire family. Parents, siblings, and caregivers all need emotional, social, and sometimes financial support.

**Action:** Families are encouraged to seek family counseling, support siblings through engagement programs, and participate in community awareness initiatives that reduce stigma and foster compassion.



## 8. Conclusion.

The Breakfast Conversation was more than a dialogue, it was a collective awakening and a call to action. The stories shared, the questions raised, and the commitments voiced all underscored a single truth: progress is possible when knowledge is embraced, stigma is challenged, and support is sought early.

It reminded us that every child deserves to be recognized for their potential, understood with patience, and supported meaningfully along their unique journey. This gathering was also part of Solid Minds' broader commitment to advancing mental health, advocacy, and awareness for prevention and support. It was both a giving back to the community and an outreach effort to foster understanding, share knowledge, and encourage support among participants.

Above all, the event affirmed Solid Minds' unwavering mission to walk alongside families and communities, ensuring that mental health is not silenced but embraced as an essential part of collective well-being.

The way forward is clear: when families, professionals, educators, communities, and policymakers work hand in hand, we can build a society where no child is hidden, no parent feels abandoned, and every child regardless of their challenges has the opportunity to grow, thrive, and truly live out their potential.

[View a Highlight Video.](#)



“Every child deserves to be recognized for their potential, understood with patience, and supported meaningfully along their unique journey.”



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# Annex: Glossary of Key Terms

Understanding child developmental challenges often requires learning new terms that may sound technical or unfamiliar. This glossary is designed as a mini-educational guide for parents, caregivers, educators, and community members. Each term is explained simply, with practical notes on what signs to look out for, whether the condition can be “cured” or improved, and tips on how to cope and support children effectively.

The goal is to empower families and communities with knowledge, reduce fear and stigma, and encourage early and confident support-seeking.

## → 1. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

A developmental condition that affects communication, behavior, and social interaction.

- **Signs to look for:** Limited eye contact, delayed speech, repetitive behaviors, sensitivity to sounds or textures.
- **Can it be cured?** No, but with therapy and support, children can significantly improve and thrive.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Seek early professional support, build structured routines, celebrate small progress, and provide patience and understanding.

## → 2. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

A neurodevelopmental condition marked by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

- **Signs to look for:** Difficulty concentrating, excessive restlessness, interrupting or acting without thinking.
- **Can it be cured?** No, but symptoms can be managed through therapy, parenting strategies, and sometimes medication.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Create consistent routines, use positive reinforcement, and break tasks into manageable steps.

## → 3. Developmental Delay

When a child does not reach developmental milestones at the expected ages.

- **Signs to look for:** Late sitting, walking, talking, or difficulty with social interaction.
- **Can it be cured?** Many children catch up with early intervention, though some may require long-term support.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Regular pediatric checkups, therapy referrals, and daily stimulation through play and interaction.

## → 4. Milestones

Key stages of growth and development in children (e.g., sitting, babbling, walking).

- **Signs to look for:** Not sitting by 6 months, not babbling by 9 months, not standing by 12 months, not taking steps by 18 months.
- **Can delays be corrected?** Often, yes, if detected early and addressed with proper support.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Track milestones closely, consult doctors if delays occur, and engage children in play that encourages growth.



# Annex: Glossary of Key Terms

## → 5. Occupational Therapy (OT)

Therapy that helps children develop skills needed for everyday activities like playing, eating, or dressing.

- **When applied:** For children with motor difficulties, sensory issues, or challenges in daily routines.
- **Can it “fix” challenges?** It doesn’t “cure” but equips children with adaptive skills to live more independently.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Encourage practice of daily tasks at home, create structured environments, and reinforce therapy exercises.

## → 6. Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)

Therapy that supports communication skills, including speech, language, and social interaction.

- **Signs to look for:** Child not speaking or forming words at expected ages, limited vocabulary, difficulty interacting with peers.
- **Can it cure speech issues?** Many speech difficulties can improve significantly with therapy and practice.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Talk, sing, and read with your child regularly; celebrate every communication attempt; follow therapist’s exercises at home.

## → 7. Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

An evidence-based therapy that uses positive reinforcement to encourage desired behaviors and reduce harmful ones.

- **When applied:** Often recommended for children with autism, but useful for other behavioral challenges as well.
- **Does it cure autism?** No, but it helps children learn skills, manage emotions, and function more independently.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Be consistent across home and school, reinforce positive behaviors, and celebrate progress.

## → 8. Early Intervention

Support services provided at the earliest signs of developmental challenges, aimed at improving outcomes.

- **Signs to act:** Missing milestones, persistent communication delays, unusual behaviors or sensitivities.
- **Does it work?** Yes—children identified early often show remarkable improvement with therapy and guidance.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Seek pediatric advice immediately, follow through with therapies, and avoid “waiting it out.”

## → 9. Stigma

Negative attitudes or beliefs that lead to discrimination or shame toward children and families facing developmental challenges.

- **How it shows:** Families hiding children, community labeling, or children being excluded.
- **Can it be eliminated?** Yes, through education, awareness campaigns, and open conversations.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Speak openly, challenge harmful beliefs, and connect with supportive networks.

## → 10. Inclusion

The practice of ensuring children with developmental disorders learn, play, and grow alongside peers in mainstream environments, with the right support.

- **What it means:** Children are part of lessons, playtime, and school life—not isolated or excluded.
- **Is it always possible?** Yes, with trained teachers, adaptive methods, and community support, though some children may also benefit from specialized settings.
- **Tips to cope/support:** Advocate for inclusive schools, support teacher training, and encourage peer acceptance.



Thank you for being part of this journey  
Together, we can make a difference.

## Stay connected!



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