STARTER KIT 04

After-School Decompression

放学后缓冲

For the child who holds it together at school and falls apart at home.

SET-UP	YOU'LL NEED	BEST FOR
15 minutes, once	Snack station, a reset menu, a quiet corner	Ages 5 to 13

What's really going on

Many children work hard all day to follow rules, filter noise and hide their struggles. When they reach their safe place, which is you, it all comes out: snapping, tears, whining, shutting down. This is sometimes called after-school restraint collapse. It does not mean you are failing. It usually means you are the person they trust enough to fall apart with.

Your five-step plan

1. **Greet before you question**
   "Hi, I'm glad to see you." Hold off on "How was school?" and "Did you finish your spelling?" for the first fifteen minutes.

2. **Feed and water first**
   Hungry brains are crabby brains. Have the same snack and water ready in the same spot every day.

3. **Offer a buffer of 20 to 30 minutes**
   Let your child choose from the reset menu: move, quiet, create, play. For some children a short, timed screen break helps. For others it winds them up, so watch how they are afterwards.

4. **Save the debrief for later**
   Talk about the day at dinner or bedtime, side by side rather than face to face. Short, low-pressure questions work best (see the plan page).

5. **Look at the whole week's load**
   School, student care, tuition, CCA and enrichment add up. Count the hours your child is "on". Removing one thing can help more than any strategy.

Start here this week

For the next five school days, say hello, hand over a snack and ask nothing for fifteen minutes. Just watch what changes.

Our After-School Landing Plan

Agree the order with your child. The same four steps every day make the hardest hour of the day predictable.

Arrive
Warm greeting.
No questions yet.

▶

Snack
Same snack, same spot.
Water too.

▶

Reset
20 to 30 minutes.
Child chooses.

▶

Then
Homework, dinner
or chores.

Reset menu (tick three)

- ☐ **Move:** Playground, bike, scooter, dance
- ☐ **Quiet:** Own room, tent, beanbag, soft music
- ☐ **Create:** Draw, Lego, clay, build
- ☐ **Play:** Free play, pet, water play
- ☐ **Screen (timed):** Short and agreed. Watch how they are after.
- ☐ **Outdoors:** Walk, fresh air, a few minutes of green

Low-pressure debrief (save it for dinner or bedtime)

- What was the best part of today?
- What was the hardest part?
- Who did you sit or play with?
- What made you laugh?
- Is there something you wish was different tomorrow?

Side by side works better than face to face: in the car, while drawing, while walking.

Week load check: how many hours is "on"?

Day	School ends	After school (student care, tuition, CCA)	Home at	Crash level
Mon				1 2 3 4 5
Tue				1 2 3 4 5
Wed				1 2 3 4 5
Thu				1 2 3 4 5
Fri				1 2 3 4 5

Look at it: Which day is the crash worst? _____ What is on that day? _____
One thing we could drop, shorten or move: _____

Adapt it for your child

Every child is different. Read the cards that sound like yours, pick one or two ideas to try, and leave the rest.

How your child is wired

ADHD

Movement first: scooter, stairs, playground. Offer a snack with protein. If medication wears off mid-afternoon, a rebound dip in mood is common, so note the times and mention it to the prescriber. Keep your tone light and don't open with homework.

Autism

A day of masking and sensory work is exhausting. Make the first hour demand-free: little talking, familiar things, alone time if wanted. Withdrawal is recharging, not rejection. Keep the arrival routine the same every day.

Sensory-sensitive

The school bus, canteen and corridors add up. Make the trip home calmer with headphones, a cap or sunglasses and a quiet route. Avoid crowded shops straight after school.

Dyslexia or other learning differences

School means hours of reading, writing and decoding, so their tank starts lower than their friends'. Offer an audiobook or an active break before any reading, and avoid words like "lazy".

Anxious

They may hold worries in all day. Skip "what went wrong?" and try "what felt good?". A worry notebook can catch what spills out later. If the dread continues, tell the teacher or school counsellor.

Sensitive perfectionist

A small mistake at school can sit with them all day. Let them be grumpy without arguing. Later, say what you noticed ("you worked hard today") and let them decide how much to share.

Your family's situation

Younger children (K1 to P2)

Many need a quiet rest or a cuddle more than play. Keep the first half hour low-stimulation. An earlier bedtime helps the next day's crash.

Pre-teens and teens

Don't hover. Leave a snack, say "I'm around", and let them come to you, often later in the evening. Hold back demands the moment they walk in. Group chat drama can add to the load.

Student care, tuition and CCA days

On heavy days, plan a lighter evening with no extra tasks or errands. Ask student care what downtime looks like. If a crash always follows one activity, ask whether it can move or be shortened.

Helper or grandparents at the door, parents home late

Brief them: say hello first, offer a snack, no questions. Explain that grumpiness is not rudeness. When you get home, give ten minutes of undivided attention before chores or your phone.

Words that help

Try saying	Rather than
Hi! I missed you. Snack's on the table.	How was school? Did you do your homework? Where's your water bottle?
Long day? Want some alone time or me nearby?	Don't use that tone with me.
Let's talk about the day after we've eaten.	Your teacher said you were disruptive again.
It's okay to be grumpy after a long day.	You've got nothing to be upset about.

If it's still not working

They will not talk about school. Do not interrogate. Try side-by-side activities and a nightly "best part, hardest part" at dinner.

Crash and homework collide. Use the buffer first, then Homework Reset (Kit 3). Homework straight after school is the most common trigger.

School says "no problems", home is chaos. This is often masking: holding it together all day. Share what you see with the teacher or SENO and ask what support exists.

The schedule is packed. Audit the week with the load check. One fewer class is sometimes the best intervention available.

When to get extra support

Speak to the school counsellor or your child's doctor if the daily crash lasts for weeks, comes with school avoidance, changes in sleep or appetite, or loss of interest in things they used to enjoy.

In Singapore, a good first step is your child's paediatrician or polyclinic doctor, who can refer you on to a Child Development Clinic, a Child Guidance Clinic or a psychologist. The form teacher, school counsellor and SEN officer (SENO) can share what they are seeing at school.

These kits offer general parenting and developmental guidance for educational purposes. They are not a diagnosis or a substitute for advice from your child's doctor, therapist, psychologist or teacher. Every child is different.