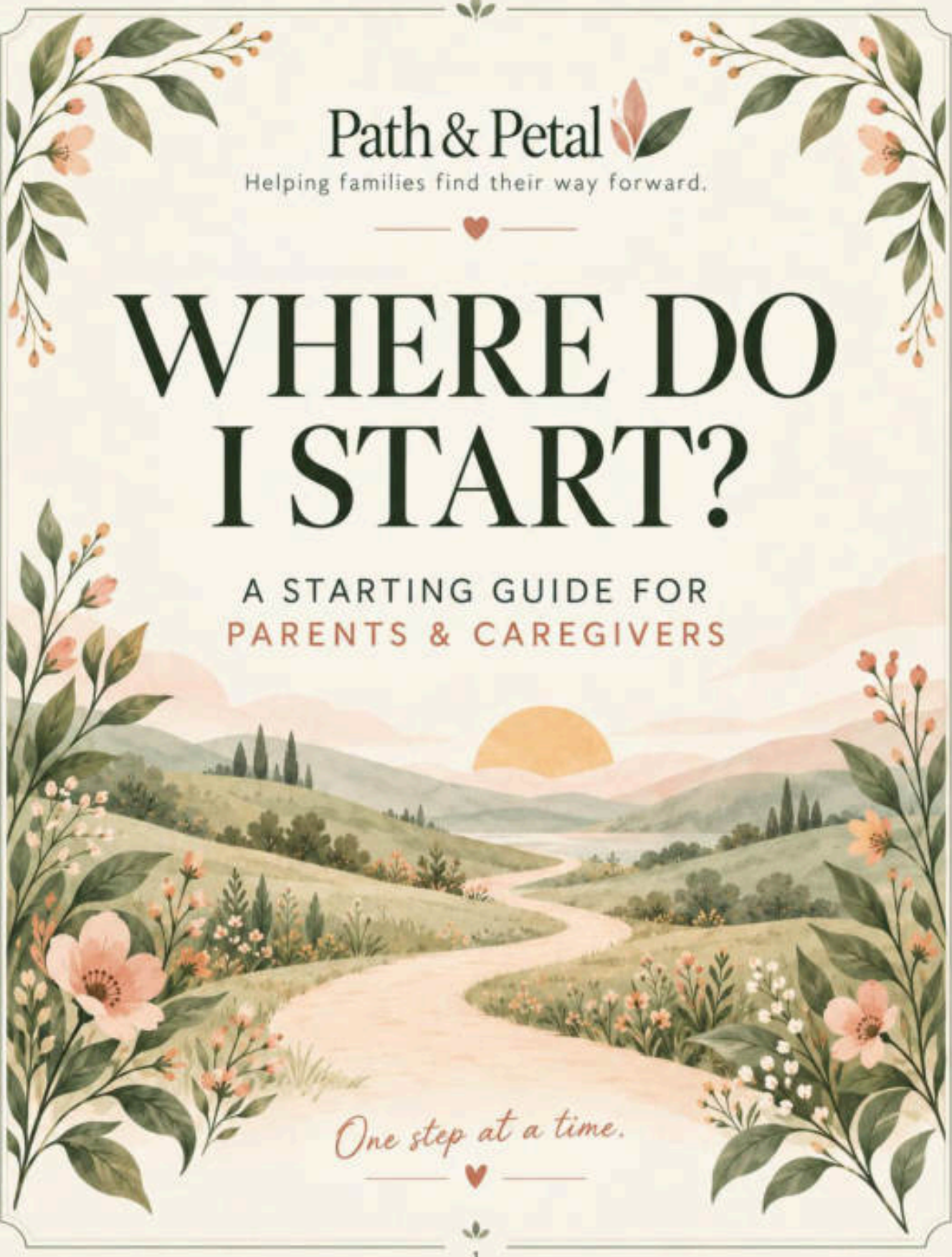




Path & Petal

Helping families find their way forward.



WHERE DO I START?

A STARTING GUIDE FOR
PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

One step at a time.



If you're overwhelmed, start here. — ♥ —

Maybe you've noticed differences in your child's communication, routines, learning, play, sensory experiences, or development. Maybe someone else brought something to your attention. Maybe you're simply wondering if what you see is typical. You're not alone. This guide will help you take a calmer, more informed first step.

THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU

-  Organize what you've noticed
-  Prepare questions for professionals
-  Understand common services
-  Identify your next few steps



REMEMBER

The goal isn't to "fix" your child. It's to understand them better and explore supports that may help them participate, communicate, learn, and grow.

Where are we right now?

Check anything that sounds like your family.

- ☐ I've noticed differences but haven't spoken to anyone yet.
- ☐ Someone else has expressed concerns.
- ☐ We're waiting for an evaluation.
- ☐ My child recently received a diagnosis / evaluation.
- ☐ My child already receives services.
- ☐ I genuinely don't know where we are. That's why I'm here.



NEXT STEP

Circle or highlight the statement that feels most urgent right now. That becomes your starting point.

What are you noticing?

Use the areas below to start observing patterns.



COMMUNICATION

Wants/needs
Directions
Speech
Gestures / AAC



DAILY LIVING

Dressing
Toileting
Feeding
Hygiene
Sleep



SENSORY

Sounds & textures
Movement
Clothing
Environments



ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS

Stopping
Leaving
Changes
Mornings
Bedtime



PLAY & INTERESTS

Toys
Activities
Peers
Imagination
Independence



LEARNING

Attention
Following
Problem solving
New skills



KNOW YOUR CHILD

What do they love? What do they do really well?

What happened around the moment?

Instead of relying on memory alone, capture what happened before, what you observed, and what happened after.



BEFORE

What was happening right before?



OBSERVED

What did you actually see or hear?



AFTER

What happened immediately afterward?

DATE	BEFORE	OBSERVED	AFTER



WHY THIS HELPS

Observing patterns helps us understand what might be supporting or interfering with success. This is not about labeling — it's about learning.



My Child Snapshot

A whole-child view — not a list of problems.

Take a moment to look at your child as a whole person. This page is about their strengths, preferences, needs, and what makes them them. There are no right or wrong answers — just a clearer, kinder understanding.



THINGS I LOVE



THINGS I DO WELL



HOW I COMMUNICATE



WHAT HELPS ME FEEL COMFORTABLE



WHAT CAN OVERWHELM ME



WHAT MOTIVATES ME



ONE THING I WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT MY CHILD



You don't need a 30-item to-do list.

Choose three small next steps and come back to them when you're ready.



1. SOMETHING I NEED TO LEARN



2. SOMEONE I NEED TO CONTACT



3. SOMETHING I'LL ORGANIZE OR TRY AT HOME

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Your free guide helped you find your starting point. The Path & Petal Starting System helps you organize the journey.



Child Profile



Provider & Appointment Tracker



Evaluation Organizer



Question Library



Routine Builder



Next-Step Planner

EXPLORE THE STARTING SYSTEM →



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Who can help?

You are not alone. There are many people and resources who can support you and your family. Each plays a different role, and together they can help you find the right next steps.



Pediatricians

Your child's doctor can listen to your concerns, check development, and help guide referrals.



Teachers

Teachers may notice patterns in learning, play, communication, and classroom routines.



Early Intervention

For young children, early intervention services can provide evaluation and support.



Therapists

Speech, occupational, physical, developmental, and mental health professionals may support specific needs.



School Teams

School teams can help discuss evaluations, accommodations, and supports for learning.



A gentle reminder

You do not need to contact everyone at once. Start with one person who can help you feel more informed and supported.



Get organized without overwhelm.



A simple, flexible system to keep everything you need in one place — so you can spend less time searching and more time moving forward.



1. Gather

Collect what you already have: notes, reports, school information, provider details, and routines.



2. Sort

Group similar items together into categories that make sense for your family.



3. Store

Choose a simple home for everything, like a binder, folder, or digital file.



4. Maintain

Add new information as you receive it. A quick check-in keeps your system current.



5. Make It Work for You

Keep it simple, not perfect. Your system should reduce stress and support daily life.

*Less searching.
More forward.*





What to keep in one place.

Use this checklist as a guide to gather the key information your family may need. Keep what's relevant and add your own categories as needed.



Medical information

Diagnoses, reports, test results, medications, allergies, and care plans.



School information

IEPs or 504 plans, evaluations, meeting notes, accommodations, and school contacts.



Provider contacts

Doctors, therapists, case managers, teachers, support coordinators, and important phone numbers.



Routines and daily life

Daily schedules, visual supports, helpful strategies, and what works (and what doesn't).



Insurance and paperwork

Insurance details, authorizations, receipts, and important forms.



Notes and next steps

Questions to ask, goals, ideas, and follow-up items.

*Everything you need.
In one place.*

