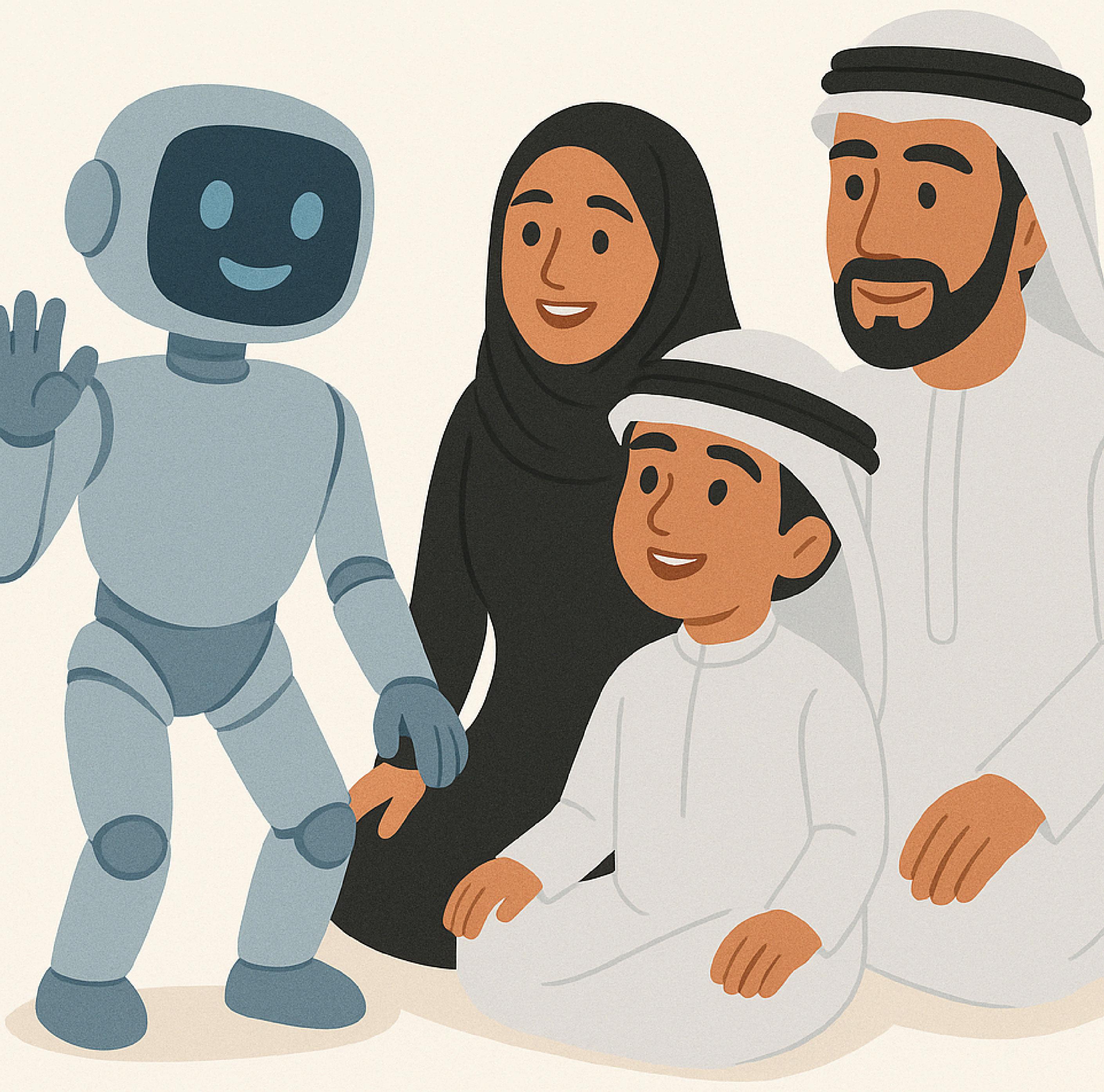
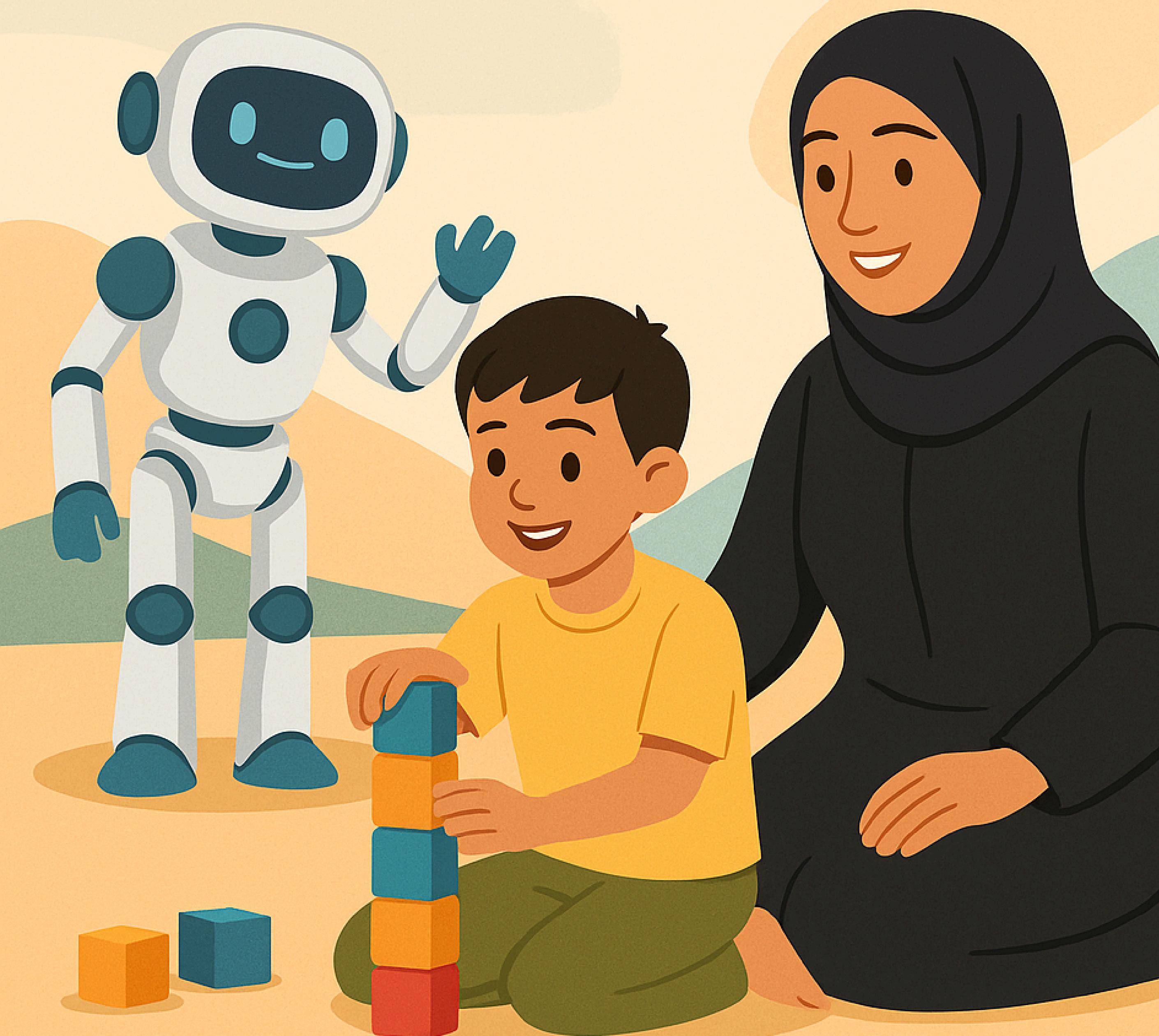


# Every small step matters.



# FOUNDATION UNDERSTANDING

Helping parents understand autism  
and the developmental founda-  
tions for learning



# FOUNDATION UNDERSTANDING

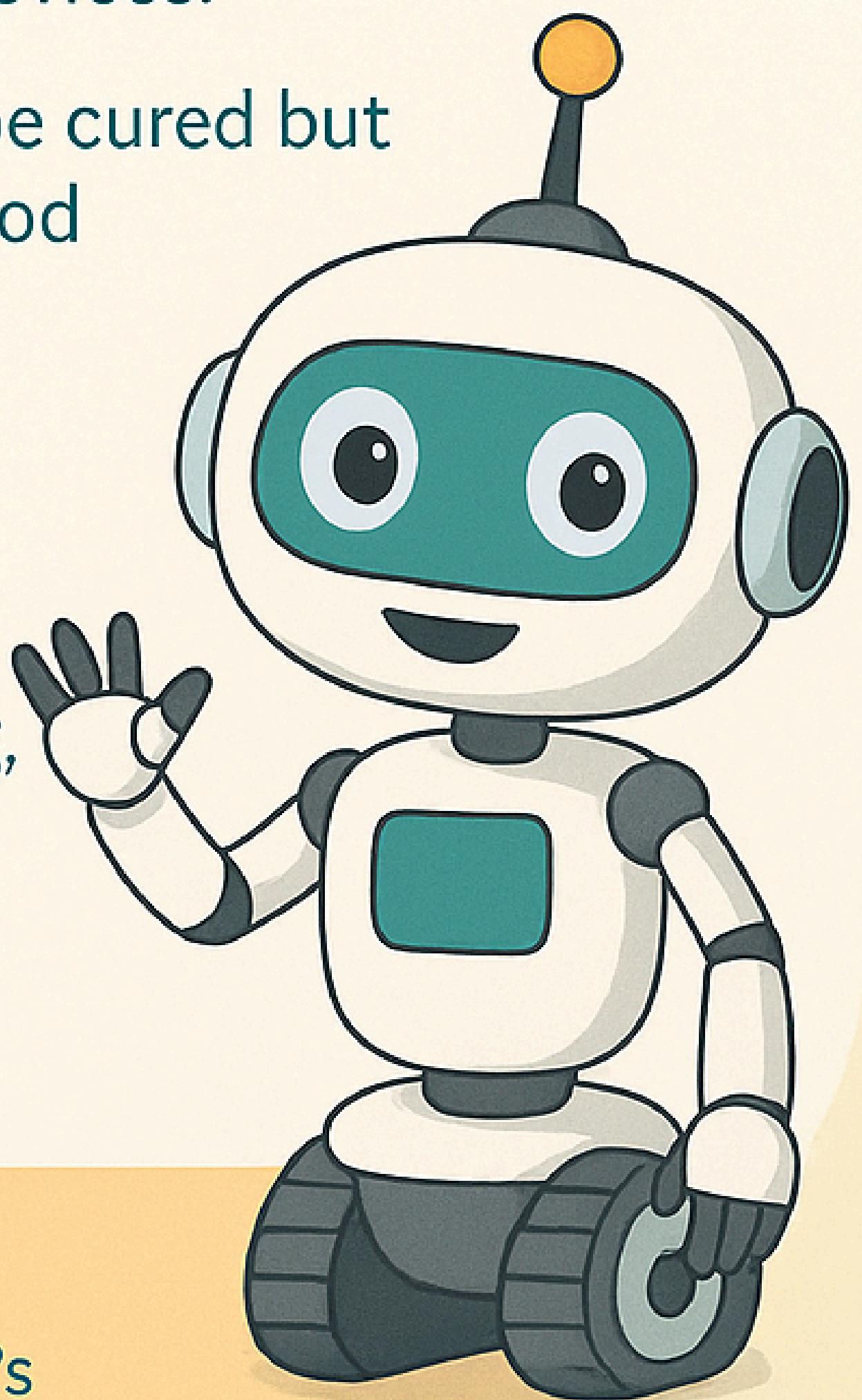
Helping parents understand autism and the developmental foundations for learning.

## What is Autism?

Autism is a unique way of seeing and understanding the world. Children with autism may communicate, learn, or play differently – some use words, while others use gestures, pictures, or devices.

Autism is not an illness to be cured but a difference to be understood and supported. Each child has their own strengths and challenges.

When parents understand their child's way of learning, they can create a path for growth, connection, and confidence.



### Therapist's Tip:

Start by observing your child's natural ways of connecting - how they play, what they enjoy, and what helps them calm down. This understanding becomes your guide in supporting their learning.

# The Building Blocks of Learning

Every child's development grows step by step, built on strong "foundation skills" like attention, imitation, and sensory balance. These early blocks prepare children to talk, play, and connect. Many children with autism need extra support in these areas. Parents can help by:

- Following the child's interests and joining their play.
- Creating shared moments through smiles, gestures, and eye contact.
- Modeling words, emotions, and simple actions for imitation.
- Providing calm, organized sensory spaces.
- Celebrating every small step forward.

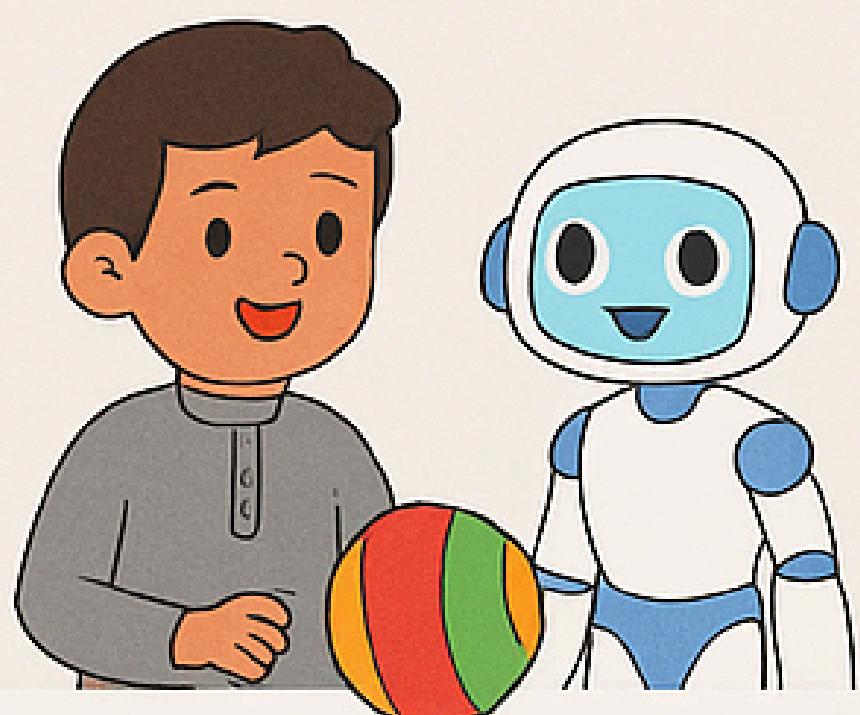


Each of these small steps builds confidence and connection that last a lifetime.

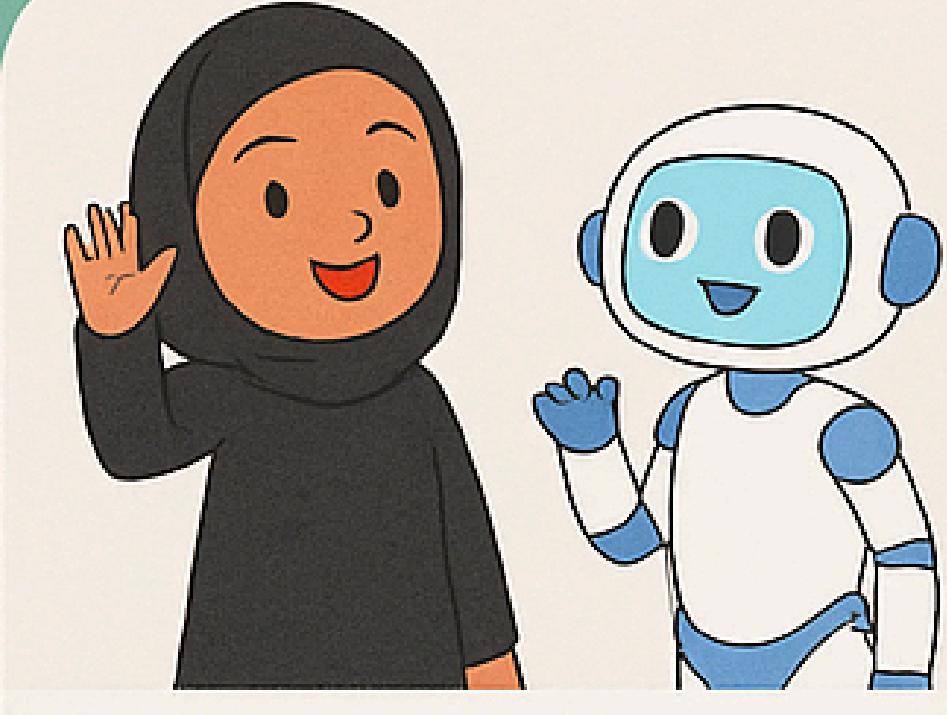
**Therapist's Tip:** Focus on one foundational skill at a time. For example, spend a few minutes daily encouraging eye contact or imitation during play. Progress builds gradually —

# Key Developmental Skills

Each of these skills helps children connect, communicate, and learn in everyday life.



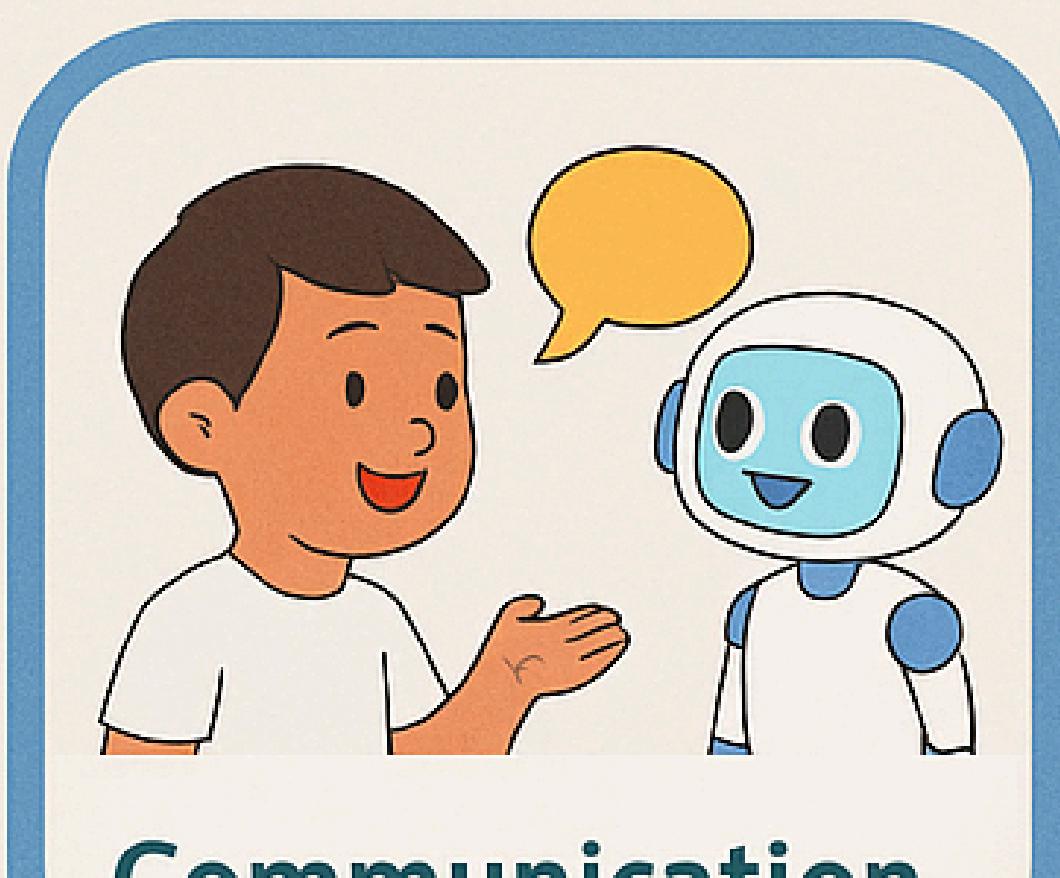
**Joint Attention**



**Imitation**



**Sensory Regulation**



**Communication**

## Therapist's Tip

Choose one area to strengthen each week (like communication or play). Small, focused goals make learning more enjoyable for both you and your child.

# Joint Attention

Joint attention means sharing focus — like looking at the same toy or following a parent's point. It's one of the first social skills that supports language and learning. Parents can build it through fun games like peek-a-boo, following the child's interests, and celebrating short moments of shared focus.

## Therapist's Tip

Use toys your child already loves. Sit face-to-face, name the toy, and wait for your child to look or smile back. Celebrate every second of shared attention.



# Imitation

Imitation helps children learn by watching and copying others. It starts with simple actions like clapping or waving and leads to talking or pretend play. Parents can make imitation fun by copying their child first, then encouraging them to copy new sounds or actions.



## Therapist's Tip

Turn imitation into a game! Copy your child's movement, then pause and see if they copy you back. Make it fun with sound effects or smiles.

# Sensory Regulation and Arousal

Sensory regulation means helping a child stay calm and focused. Some children are sensitive to sound or light, while others need more stimulation.

Parents can use calm spaces, sensory toys, or gentle movement breaks to support focus and comfort.

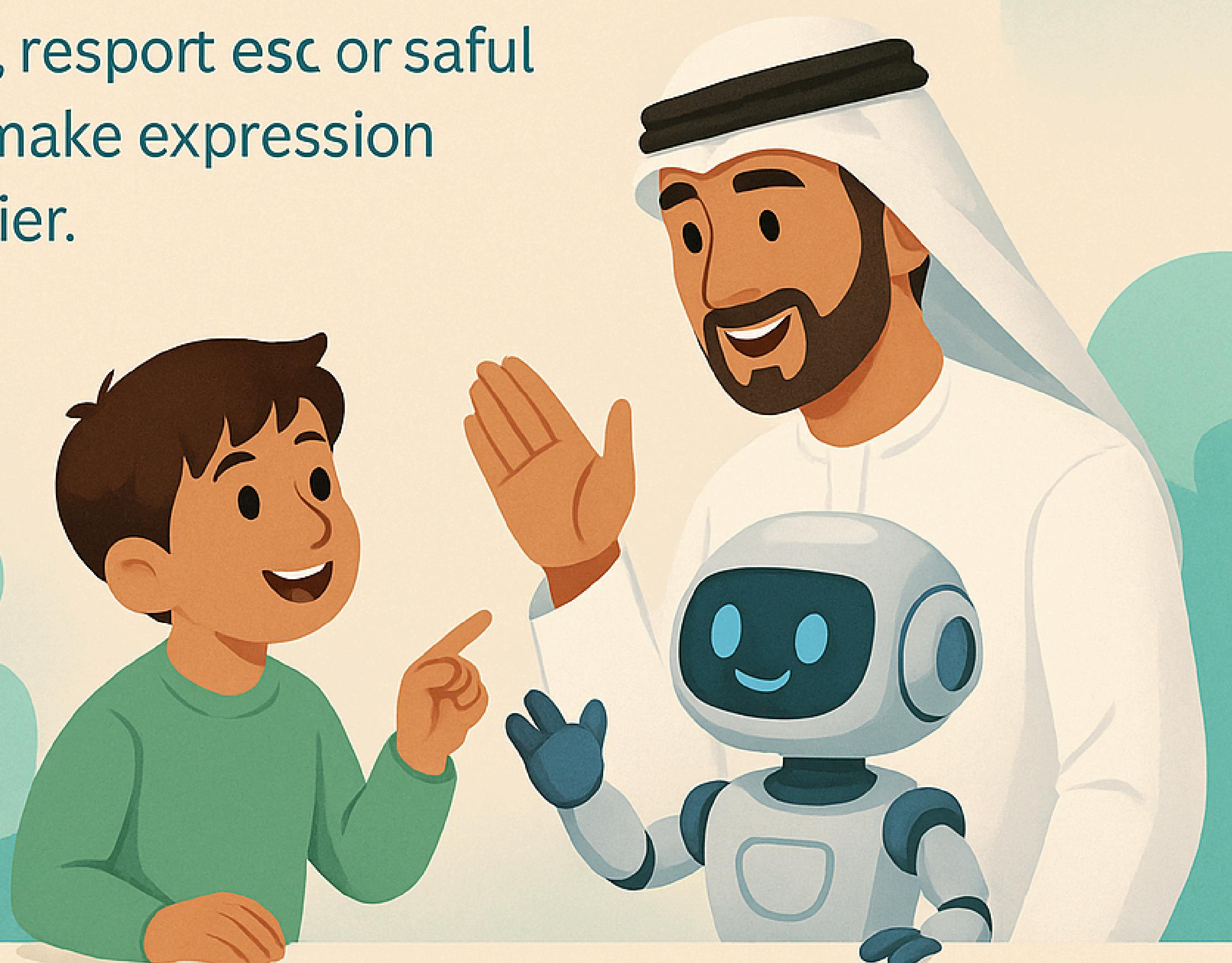


## Therapist's Tip:

Observe what calms or excites your child. If they seem overstimulated, try dim lights and soft sounds. If low-energy, add gentle movement

# Communication (Verbal & Non-Verbal)

**Communication is more than words.**  
Gestures, pictures, and facial expressions  
are powerful ways to express meaning.  
Parents can make imitation  
fun, report esc or saful  
to make expression  
easier.



## Therapist's Tip

Acknowledge all attempts to communicate – a look, a sound, or a gesture. Every response you give shows your child that their voice matters.

## 3.5 Play

Play helps children explore and connect with others. It builds imagination and problem-solving. Parents can follow their child's lead, join their games, and gently add new ideas to make play shared and joyful.



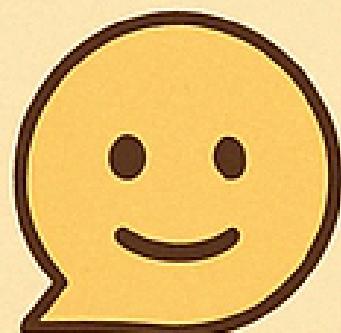
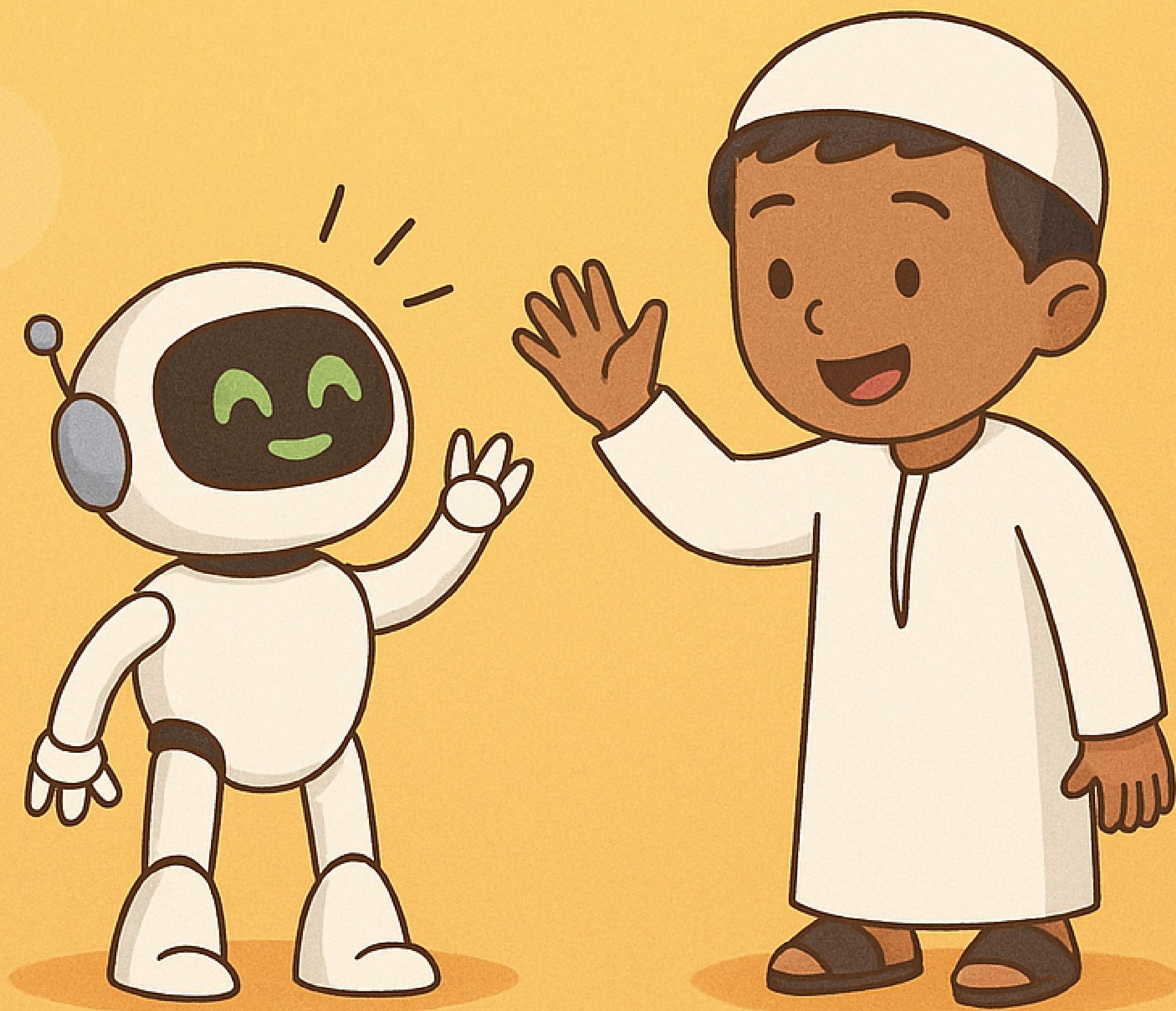
### Therapist's Tip

Let your child guide the play – even if it seems repetitive. Join in, imitate their play, and slowly add variety. Shared joy is the foundation for learning.

# Social Interaction

Social interaction is how children connect with others – sharing, turn-taking, or greetings.

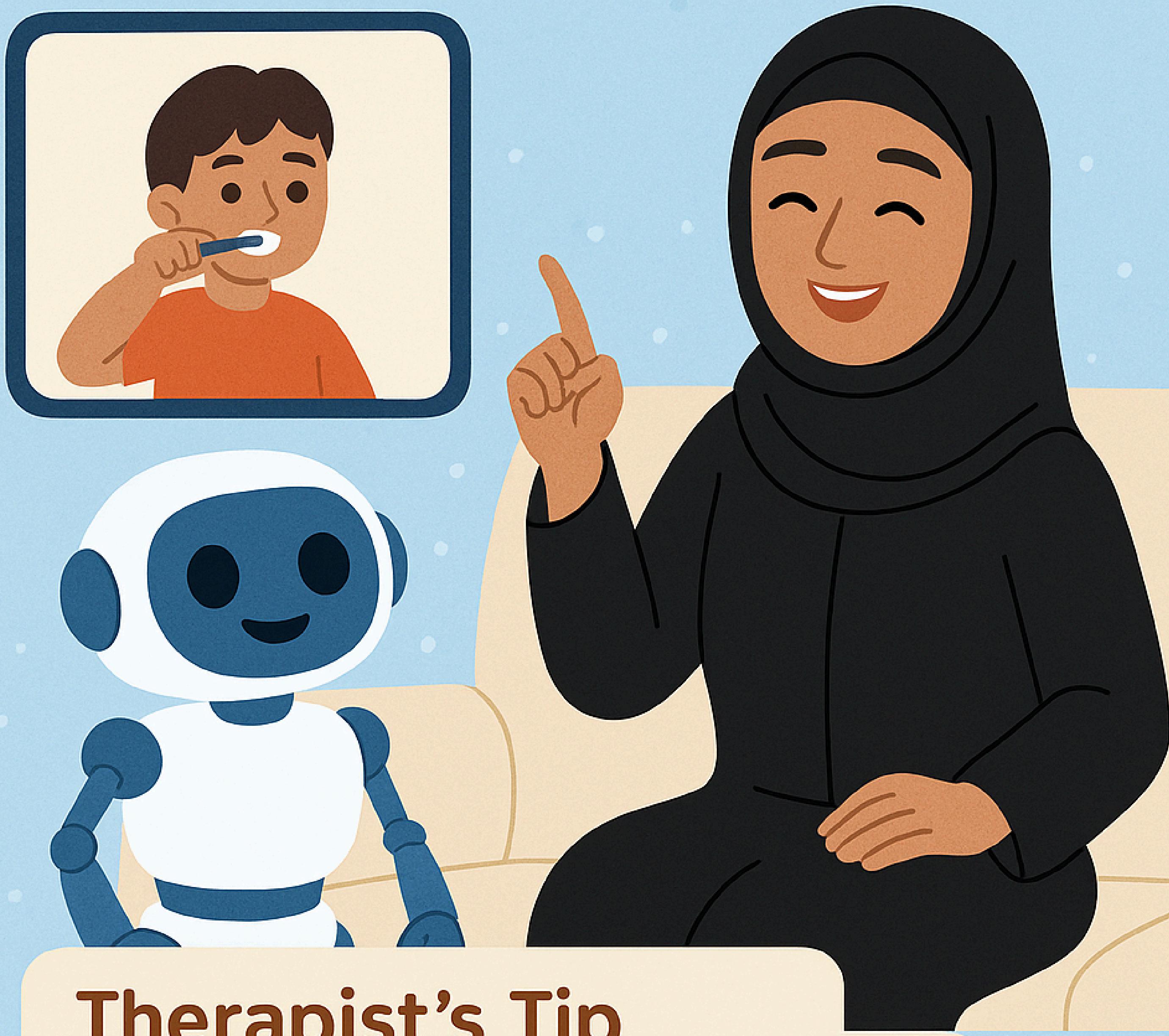
Parents can model kindness, use role-play, and provide low-pressure chances to practice.



Create short, positive social moments—waving “hi,” passing a toy, or clapping together. Keep it light and fun to reduce pressure.

## 3.7. Modeling and Video Modeling

Modeling means showing a skill so the child can try. Short, clear videos can help visual learners. Parents can record or show examples and praise attempts.



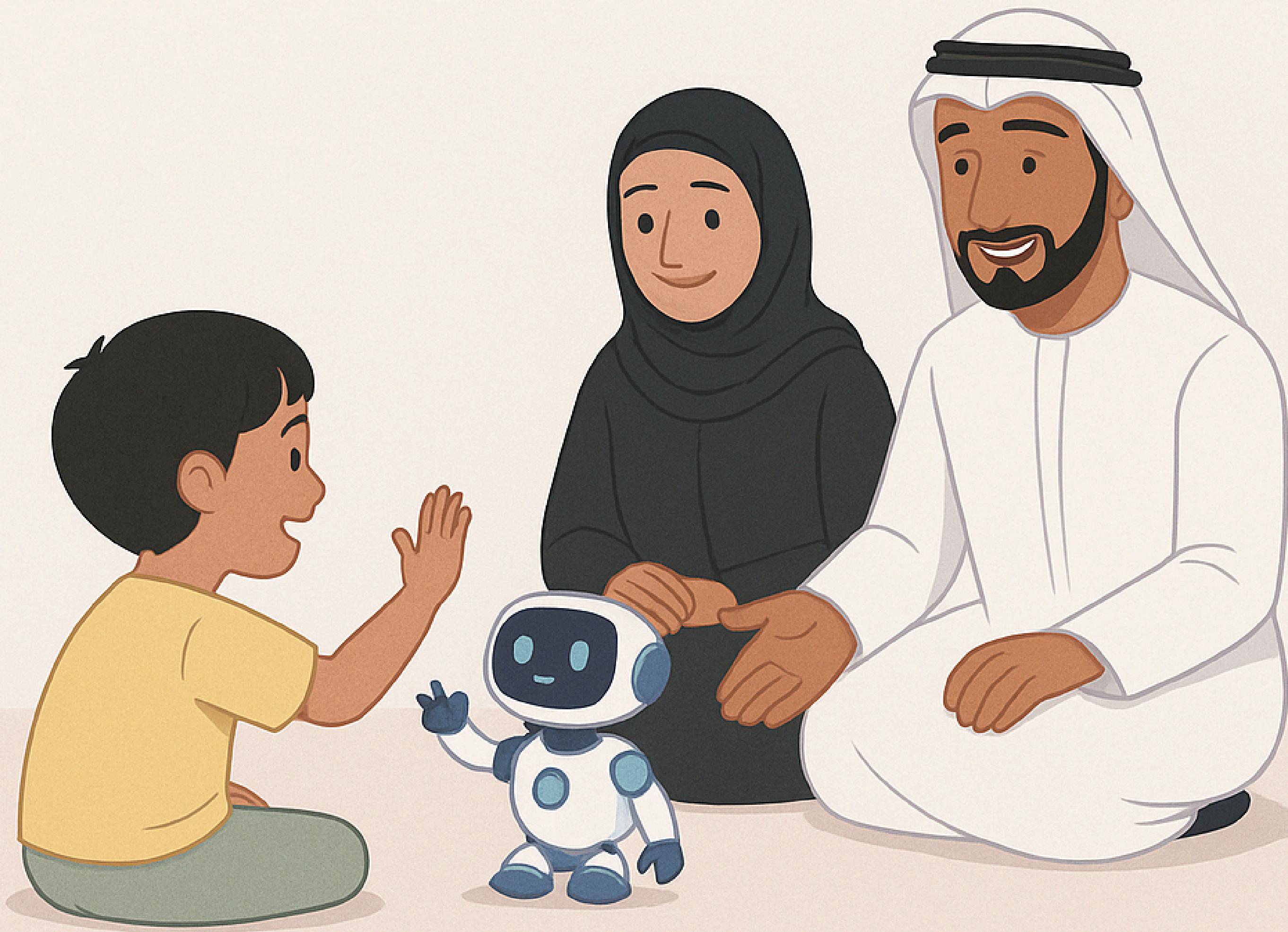
### Therapist's Tip

Show, don't just tell! Record a short clip of brushing teeth, sharing toys, or greeting someone – then watch and practice together.

## 3.8. Prompting

Prompting means giving gentle help – a visual, verbal, or physical cue – to guide success.

The goal is to fade help gradually so the child becomes independent.



### Therapist's Tip

Offer just enough help for success – then reduce it step by step. Praise effort, not perfection. Independence grows through gentle support.

## 3.9. Reinforcement

Reinforcement means celebrating progress through praise, smiles, or rewards. It motivates children to try again and builds confidence.



### Therapist's Tip

Find what truly motivates your child – maybe hugs, favorite songs, or playtime. Use it immediately after the behavior to strengthen learning.

## 3.10. ABC (Antecedent–Behavior–Consequence)

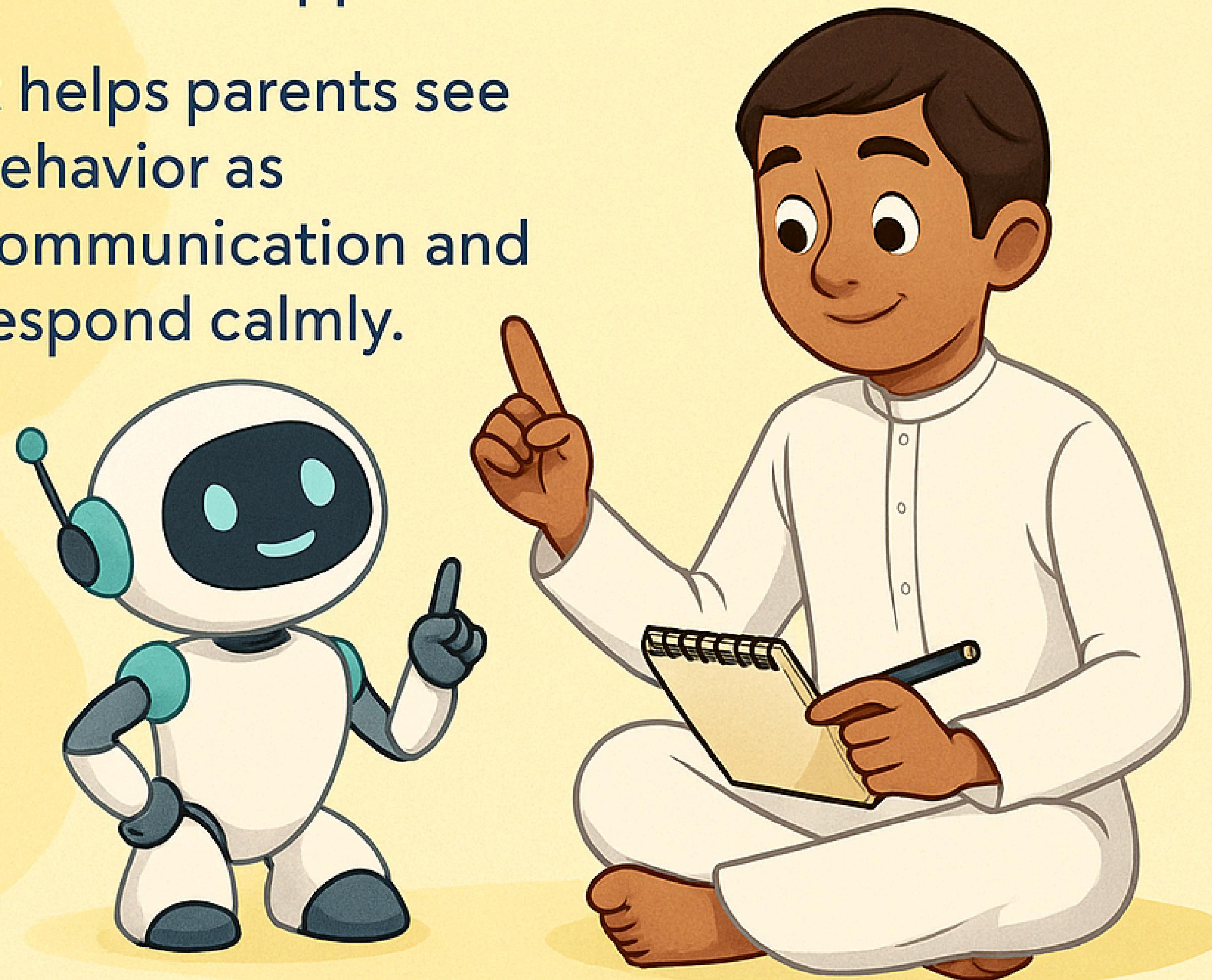
The ABC model helps parents understand behavior:

**A** – what happens before,

**B** – the behavior itself,

**C** – what happens after.

It helps parents see behavior as communication and respond calmly.



### Therapist's Tip

Keep a small notebook to track “A-B-C” events. Patterns will appear that reveal what your child is trying to communicate through behavior.

## 3.11. Visual Supports

Visual supports like schedules, cards, and “first/then” charts make routines easier and increase independence.

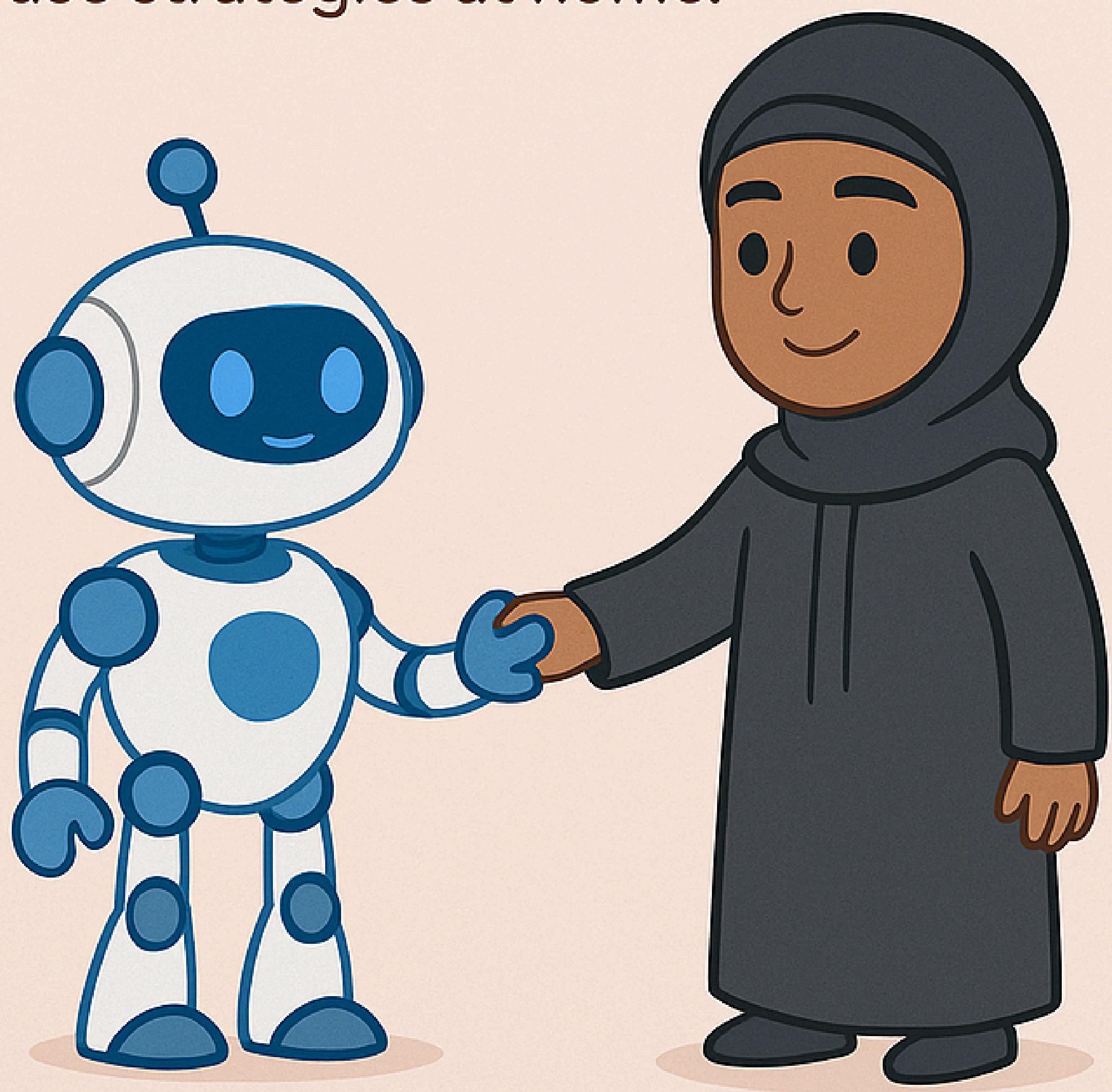


### Therapist's Tip

Start with simple visuals — pictures of daily tasks or snack choices. Use them consistently so your child learns what comes next.

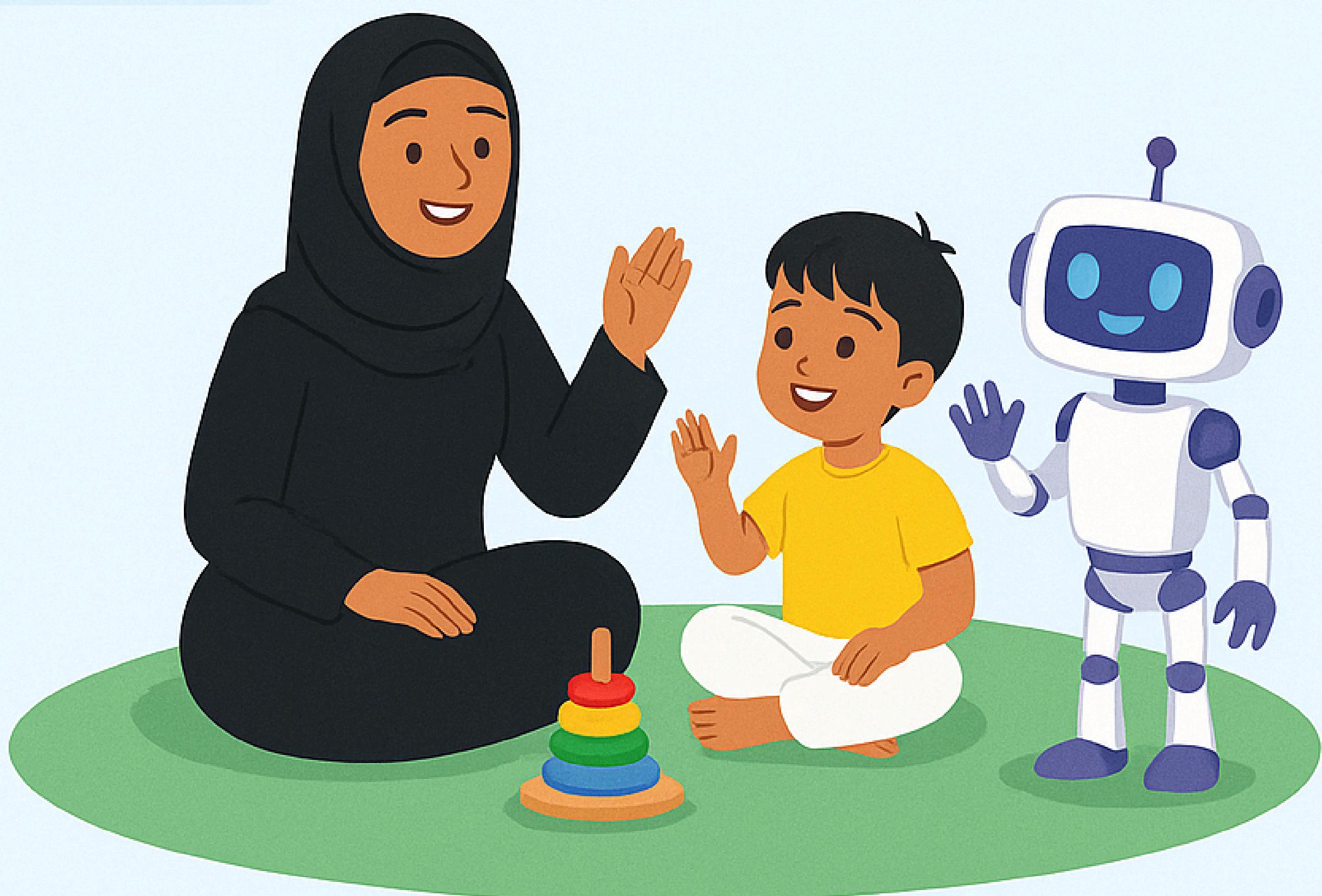
# Approaches & Interventions

Helping parents understand  
how interventions work and  
how to use strategies at home.



# Why Early Support Matters

Early and consistent support helps children build strong foundations for future learning. Everyday moments like play, meals, and talking together can make a lasting difference. The earlier we start, the more confident and connected the child becomes.

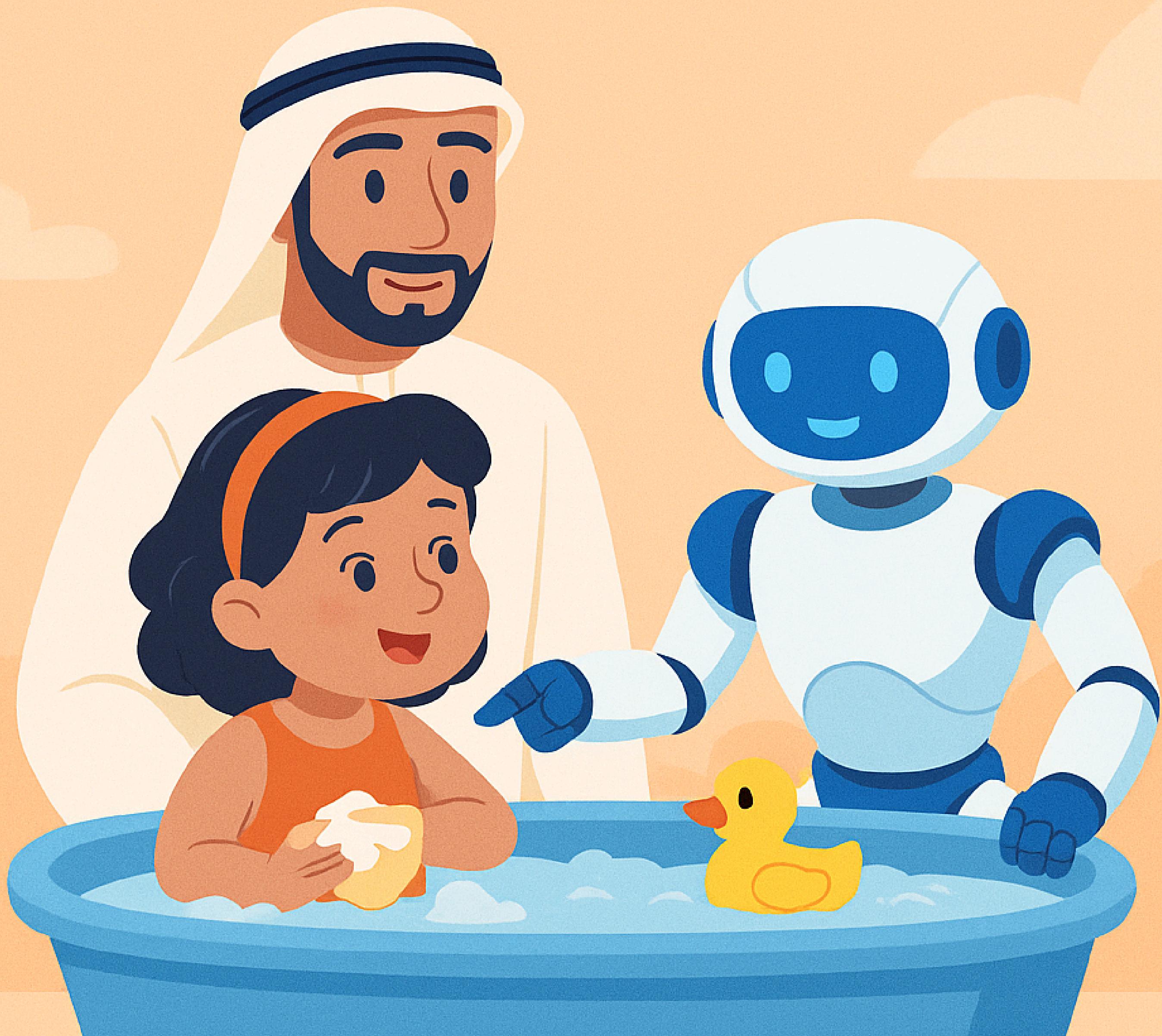


## Therapist's Tip

Start small – even a few minutes of focused, playful interaction each day is powerful. Early does not mean rushing: it means being consistent and responsive.

# Every small step matters.

► The Power of Everyday Learning



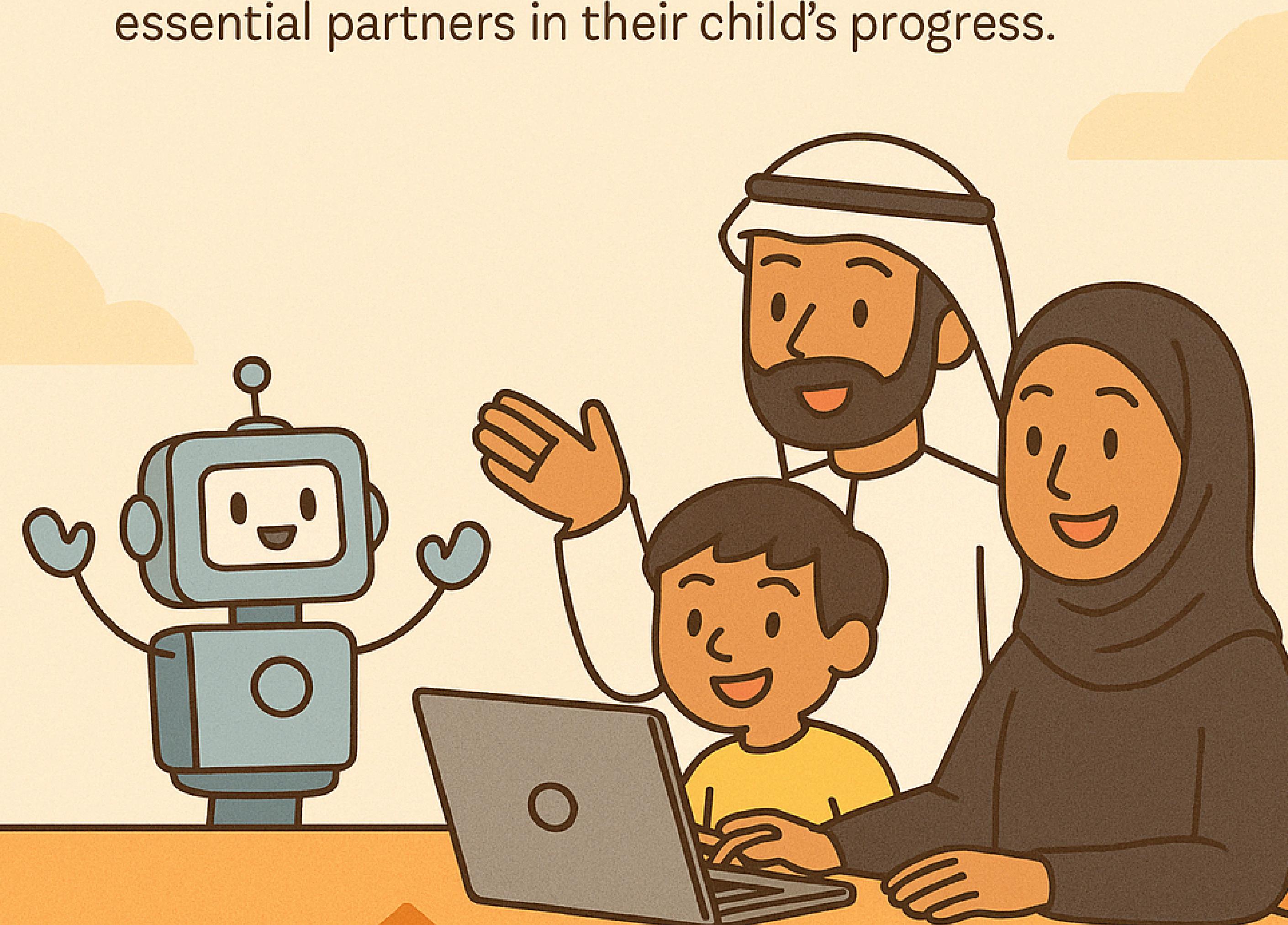
Daily routines are powerful teaching moments. Activities such as snack time, or getting dressed offer natural chances to teach communication, self-help, and independence. Learning through real-life experiences keeps children motivated and relaxed.

► Therapist's Tip: Turn routines into mini learning sessions – label items (“soap,” “cup”), count steps,



# Collaboration with Professionals

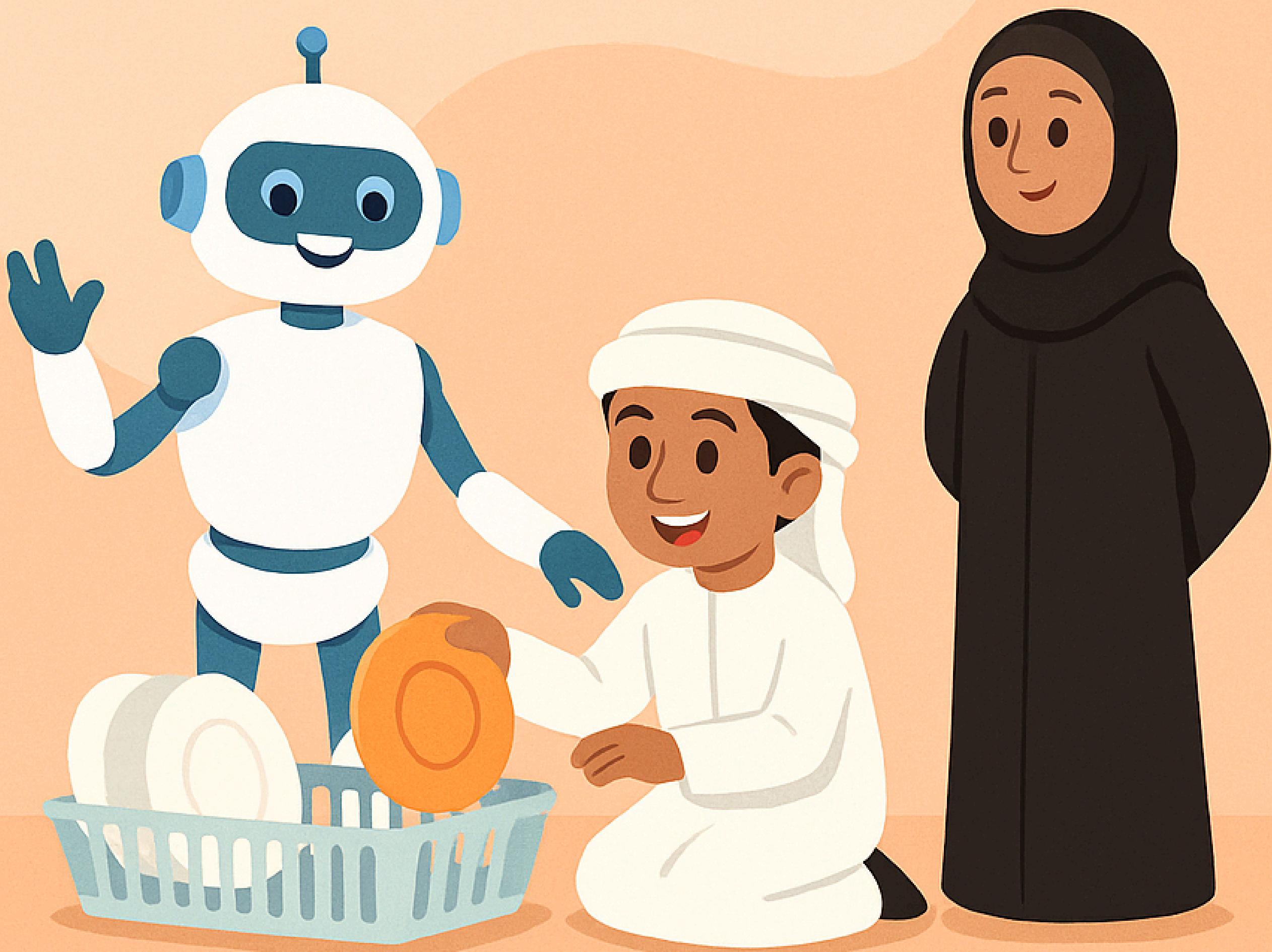
Parents, therapists, and teachers form one team. Open communication, shared goals, and regular updates help everyone work together effectively. Parents are not just participants – they are essential partners in their child's progress.



## Therapist's Tip

Keep a small “communication notebook” or digital chat with your child’s team. Share what works at home – your insights help therapists personalize strategies.

# Independence and Daily Living Skills



Independence grows through small steps – dressing, eating, cleaning up, or following schedules. Parents can use prompts, visuals, and praise to teach these routines. Independence looks different for every child; the goal is confidence, not perfection.



Start with one daily task your child can almost do alone (like washing hands). Guide gently, celebrate effort, and fade help over time.

# FAMILY & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



Focusing on the family's emotional balance and journey of support.

Families go through many emotions - from worry and doubt to acceptance and pride. It's important to care for your own emotional balance just as much as you care for your child's growth. A strong, emotionally healthy family can provide better support and find joy in the small, everyday steps of progress.

**Therapist's Tip:** Set aside a few minutes each day for your own emotional care - a walk, a deep breath, or a quiet moment. Caring for yourself helps you care for your child.

# Family as Advocates

Parents are their child's strongest voice. They can speak up in schools, therapy sessions, and communities to ensure fair support and inclusion. Knowledge and confidence empower advocacy.



## Therapist's Tip

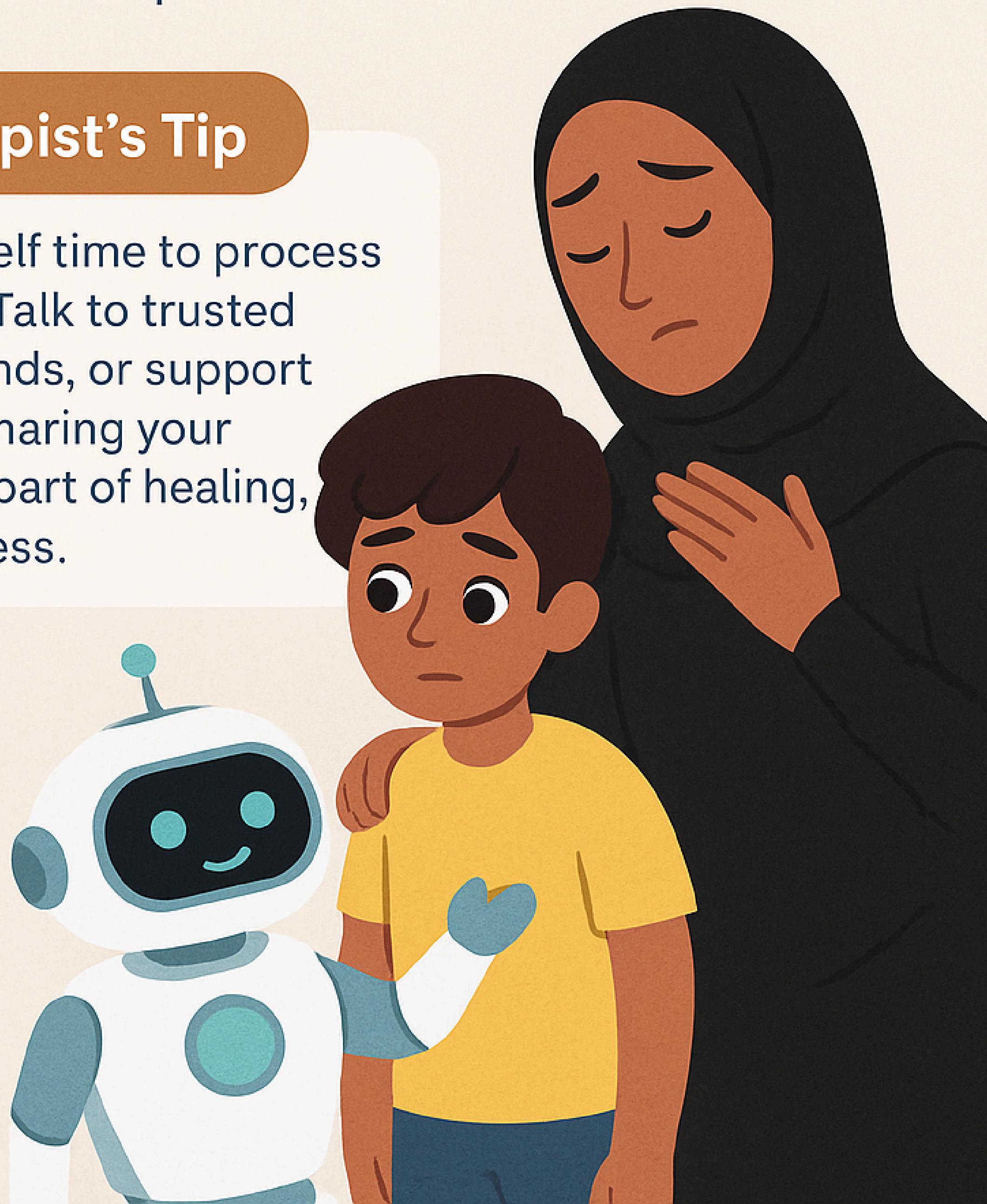
Prepare a short description of your child's strengths and needs. Use it when talking to teachers or professionals - it helps them understand your child faster and better.

# Coping with the Diagnosis

Hearing the diagnosis can bring mixed feelings — worry, sadness, or confusion. Over time, families grow stronger through understanding, love, and hope. Acceptance opens the door to action and empowerment.

## Therapist's Tip

Give yourself time to process emotions. Talk to trusted family, friends, or support groups — sharing your feelings is part of healing, not weakness.



# Celebrating Progress

Progress appears in many forms – a smile, a new word, or a calm response. Every step forward deserves celebration. Focusing on growth builds motivation for both child and parent.



## Therapist's Tip

Keep a 'success jar' or small notebook – write or draw each new progress.

Reviewing it later reminds the whole family how far you've come.

# Preventing Burnout

Parents also need care. Taking breaks, resting, and asking for help are signs of strength, not weakness. A rested parent is more present, calm, and supportive.

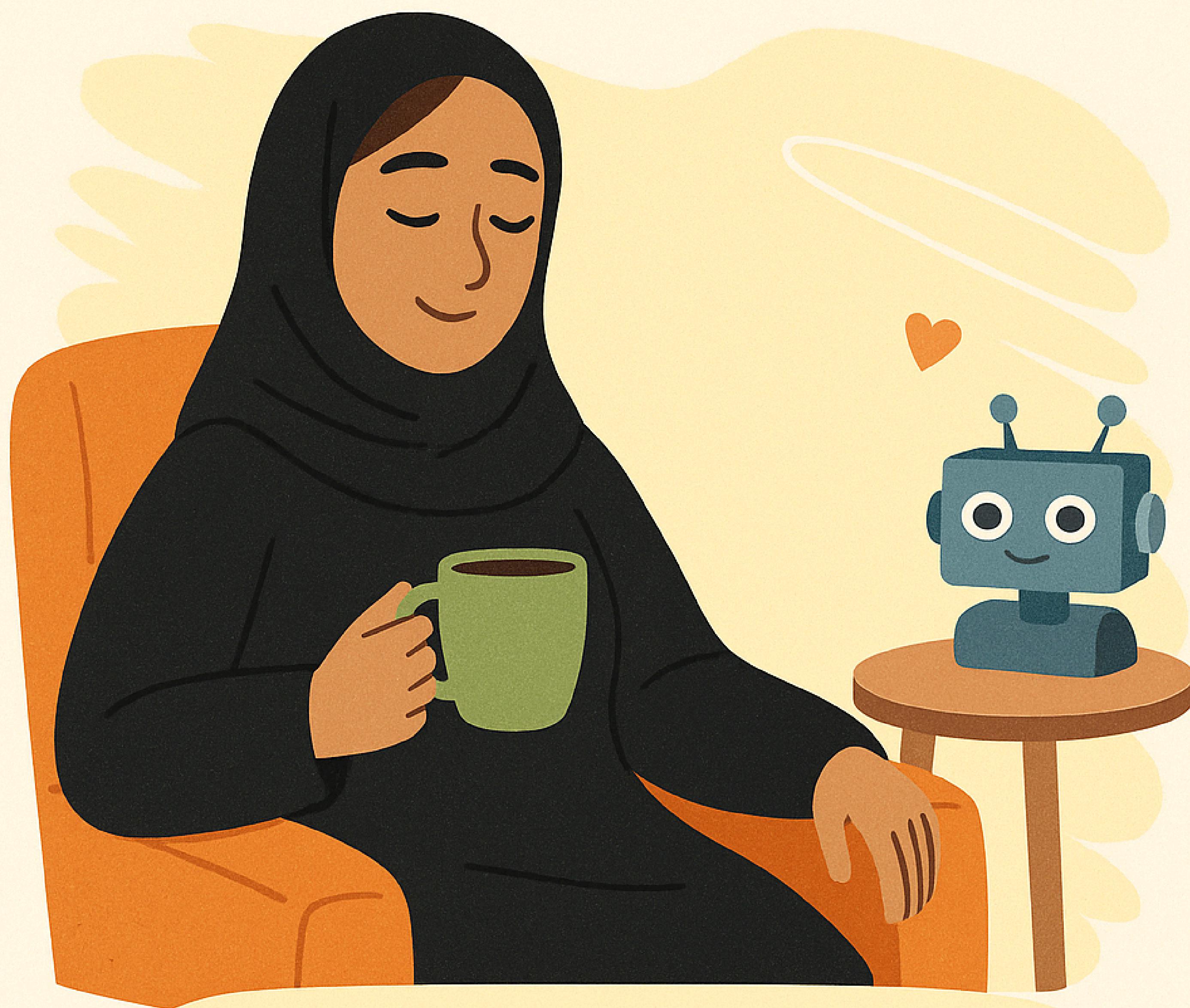


## Therapist's Tip

Schedule short “me-time” moments daily — a walk, coffee, or quiet breathing. Caring for yourself is part of caring for your child.

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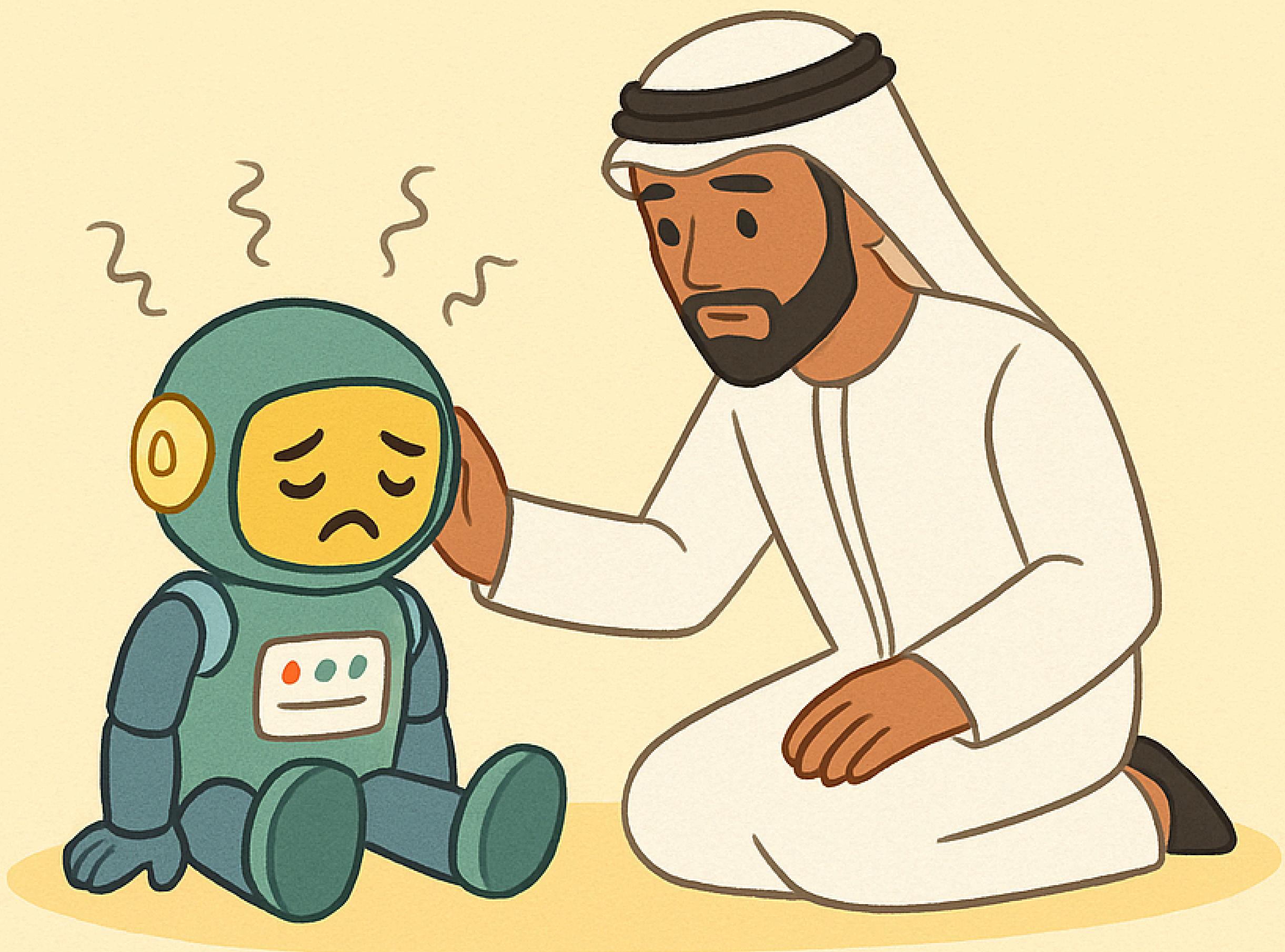


## THERAPIST'S TIP

Schedule short “me-time” moments daily – a walk, coffee, or quiet breathing. Caring for yourself is part of caring for your child.

# Understanding Meltdowns

Meltdowns are not misbehaviour; they are signs of emotional or sensory overload. Staying calm, offering comfort, and reducing stimulation help children feel safe until they regain balance.

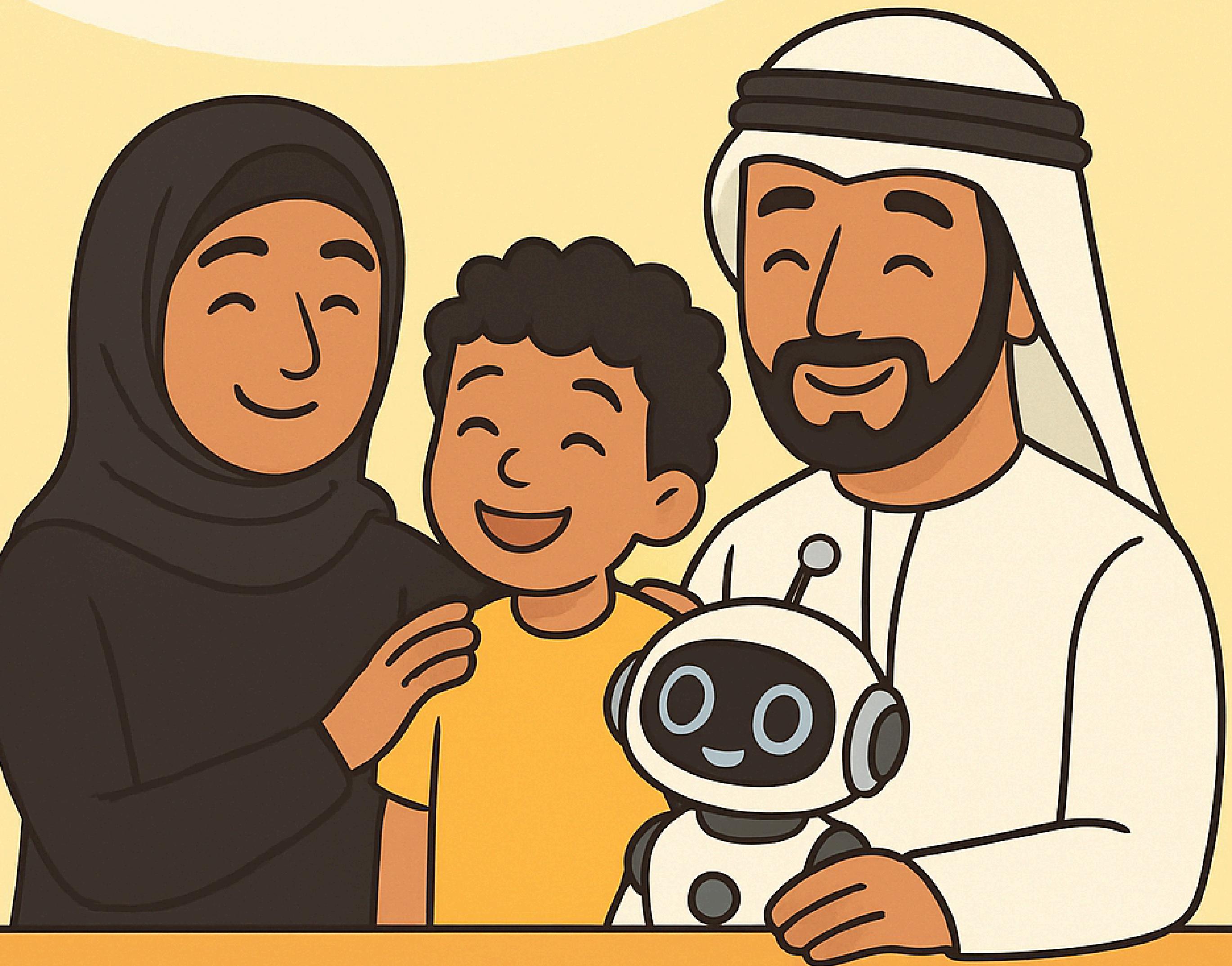


## Therapist's Tip

During a meltdown, focus on calm presence, not correction. Lower your voice, dim the lights, and use gentle touch if your child accepts it.

# Building Family Resilience

Strong families share teamwork, love, and flexibility. Facing challenges together builds unity. Celebrate small victories and support each other through tough days.



## Therapist's Tip

Create weekly “family moments” – a shared meal, short walk, or game night. Regular connection builds emotional strength.

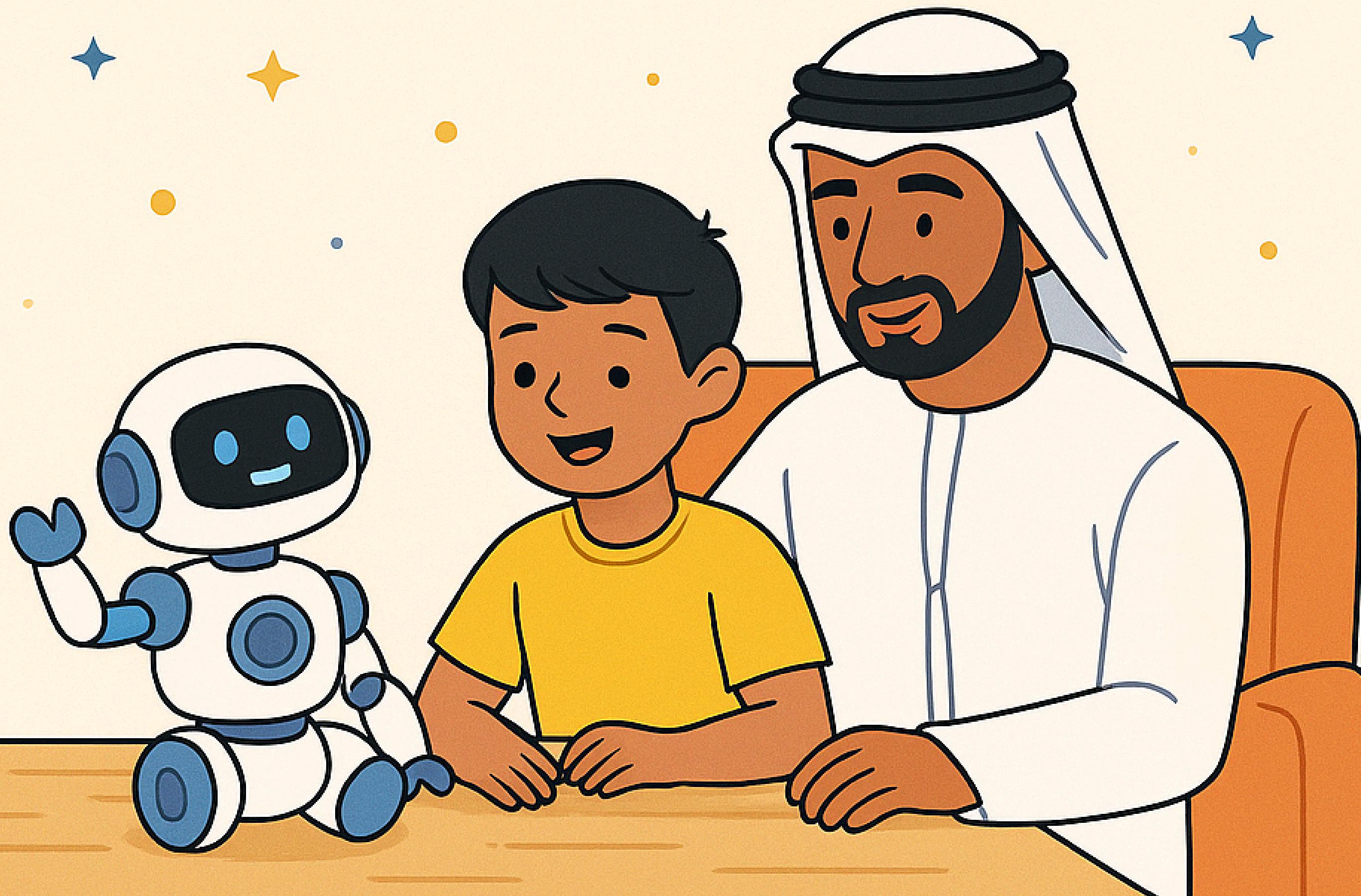
# Goal Setting for Families

Set realistic, meaningful goals that match your family's rhythm. Progress is built step by step, not all at once. Celebrate effort, not perfection.



Start with 1-2 simple family goals (like "eat dinner together" or "practice one new skill"). Write them down and review progress weekly.

# Balancing Therapy and Everyday Life



Therapy is important, but balance keeps the family healthy. Mix structured learning with fun, relaxed moments at home.

Sustainable progress comes from joy, not pressure.



## Therapist's Tip

earlyelmlmig talking, talk with your therapist about adjusting schedules or goals. Balance prevents burnout and keeps learning able.

# Involving All Family Members

Include siblings, fathers, and extended family in small, positive ways. Everyone can contribute to connection, learning, and joy.



## Therapist's Tip

Give siblings simple helper roles — like passing toys or saying “good job.” It builds empathy and shared pride within the family.

# COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

Helping families find belonging, guidance, and long-term support.



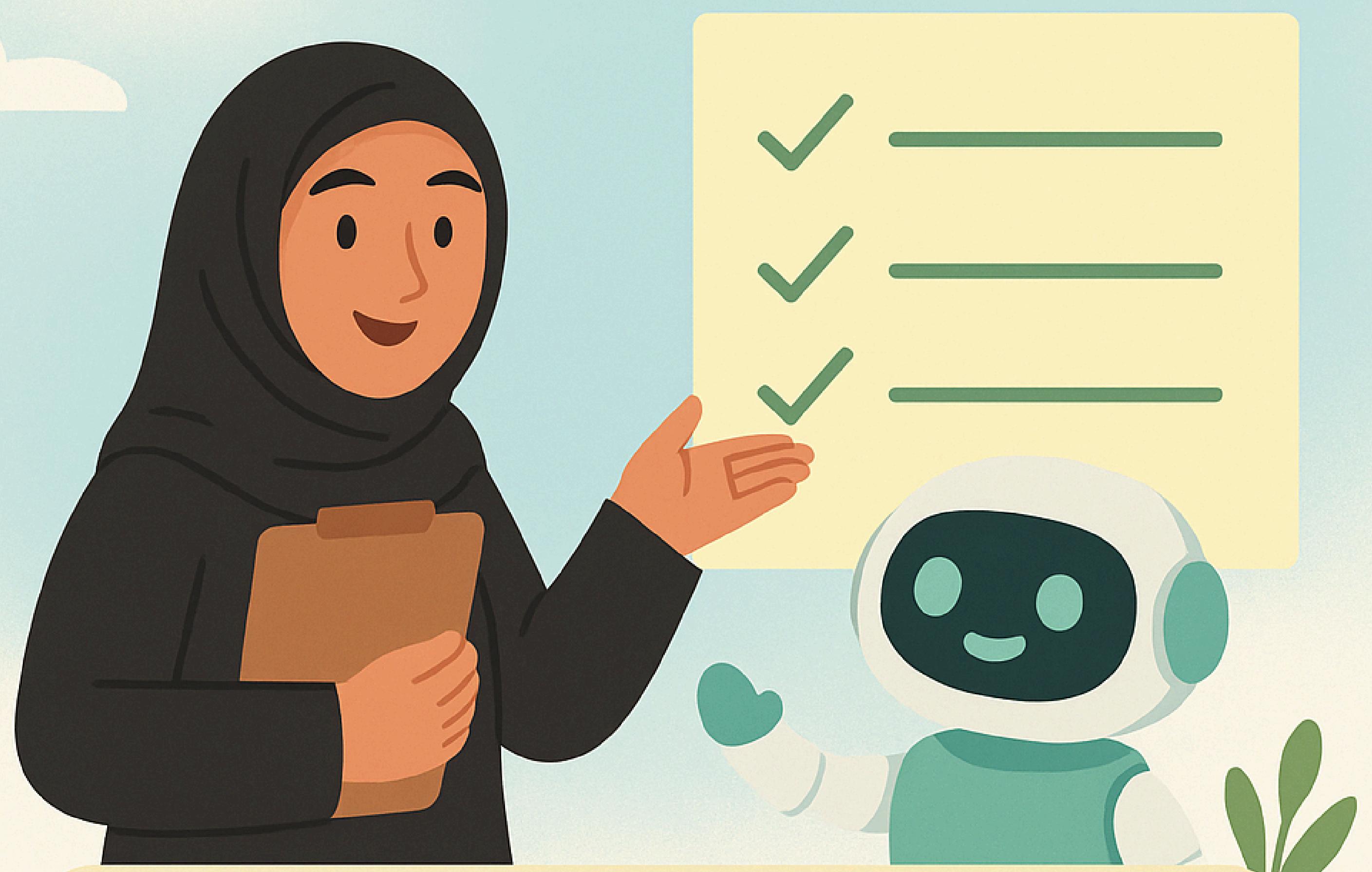
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COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

# Using Supports and Services

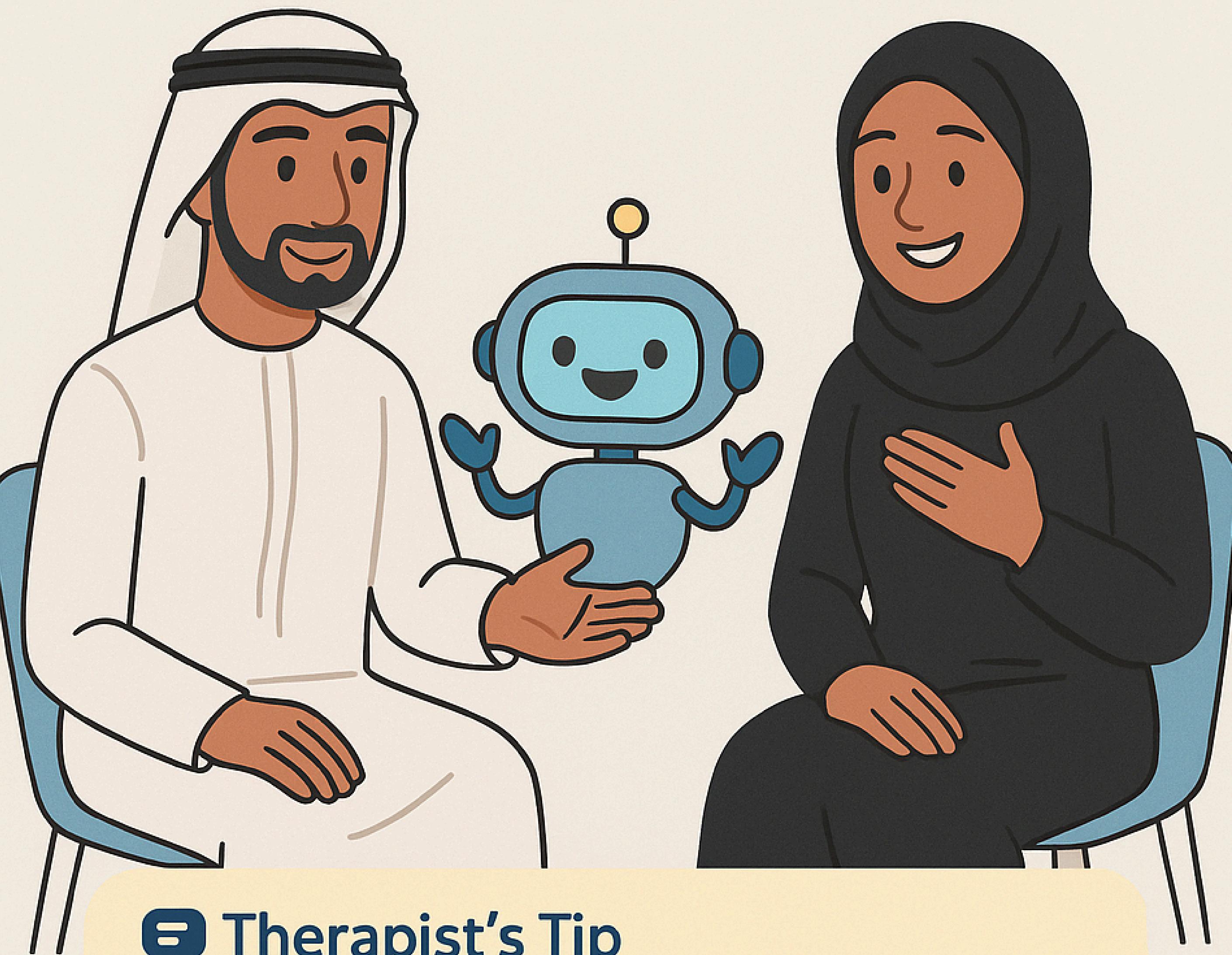
Explore available resources – therapy programs, funding options, and support groups. Ask professionals how to access them. Every resource can make a big difference.



**Therapist's Tip** Make a list of local centers, therapists, and parent groups. Keep contact info handy – knowing where to go saves time and reduces stress when help is needed.

# Learning from Others

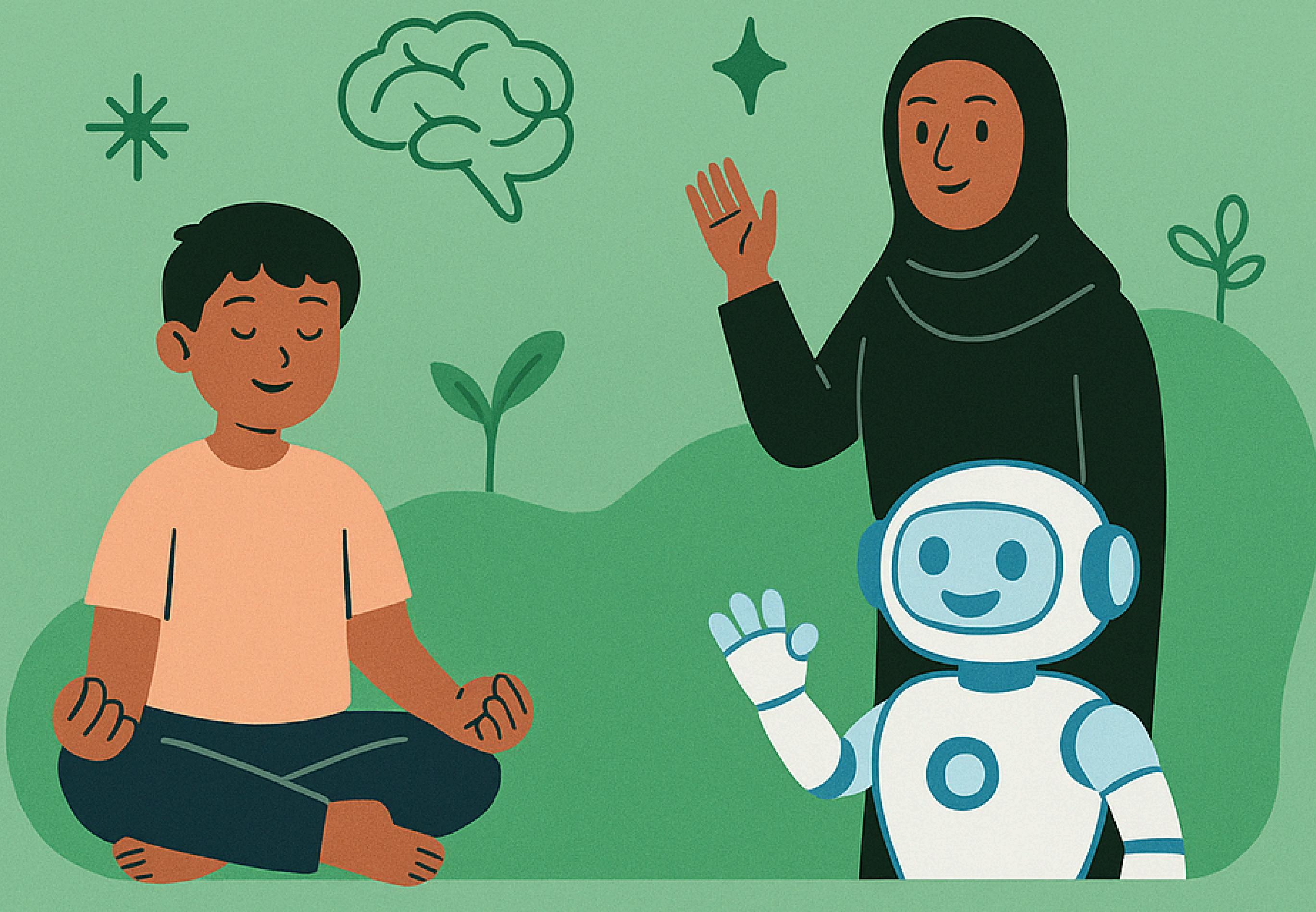
Real stories from other families provide encouragement and hope. Sharing experiences reminds parents they are not alone on this journey.



## Therapist's Tip

Join a parent group — in person or online — and listen to others' experiences. You'll find new ideas, comfort, and strength in shared understanding.

# ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE & DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORT



## Understanding emotional growth and advanced developmental needs

### Therapist's Tip

Teach by example. When others see your calm explanations and acceptance, they learn compassion too. Awareness begins with one kind conversation.



ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE &  
DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORT

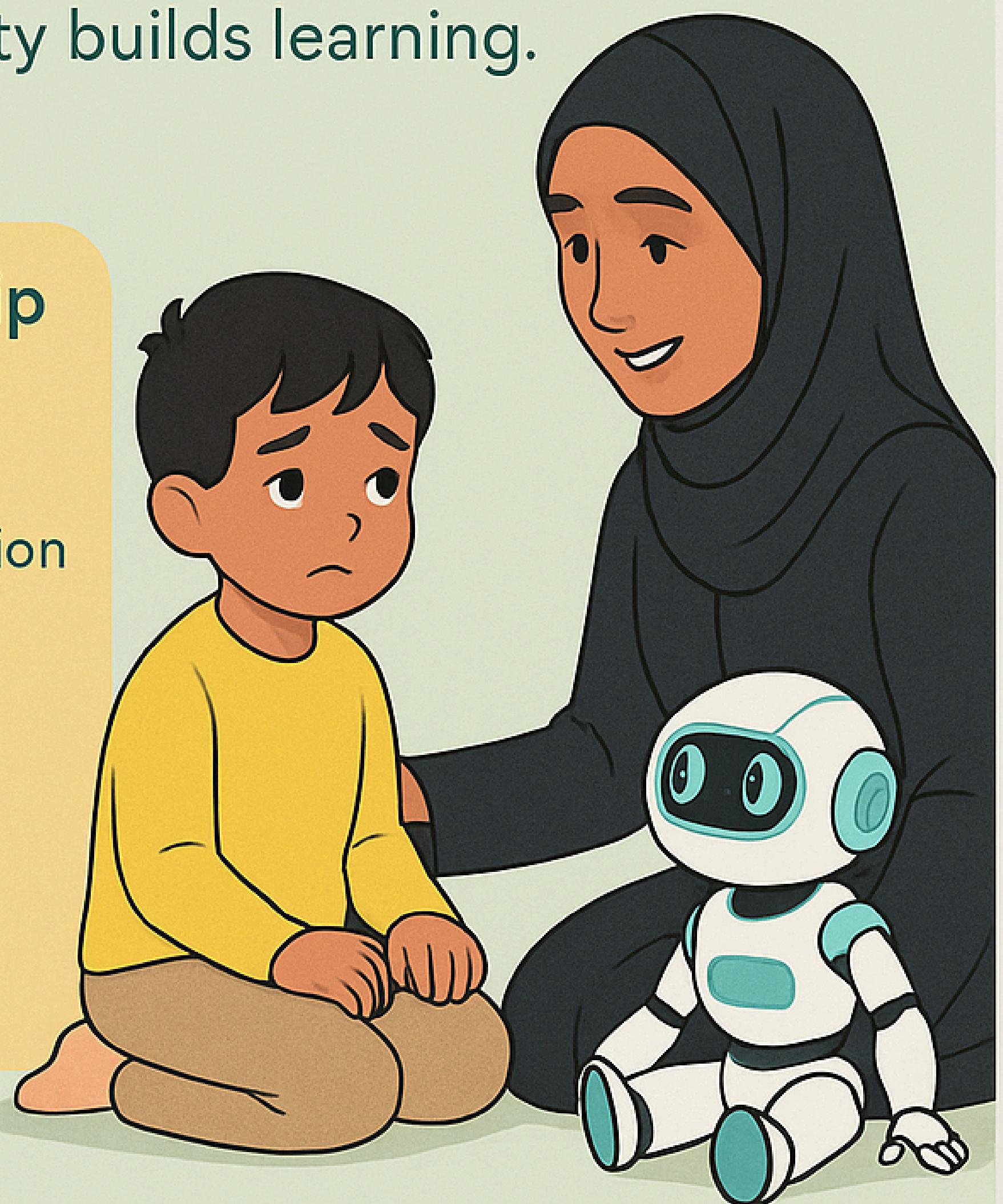
# Emotional Regulation and Co-Regulation

Children learn to manage big feelings when parents stay calm, empathetic, and supportive. Co-regulation means helping the child return to balance through gentle presence and connection.

Emotional safety builds learning.

## Therapist's Tip

When your child is upset, focus on calm connection — speak softly, sit nearby, and breathe slowly together. Your calm becomes their calm.

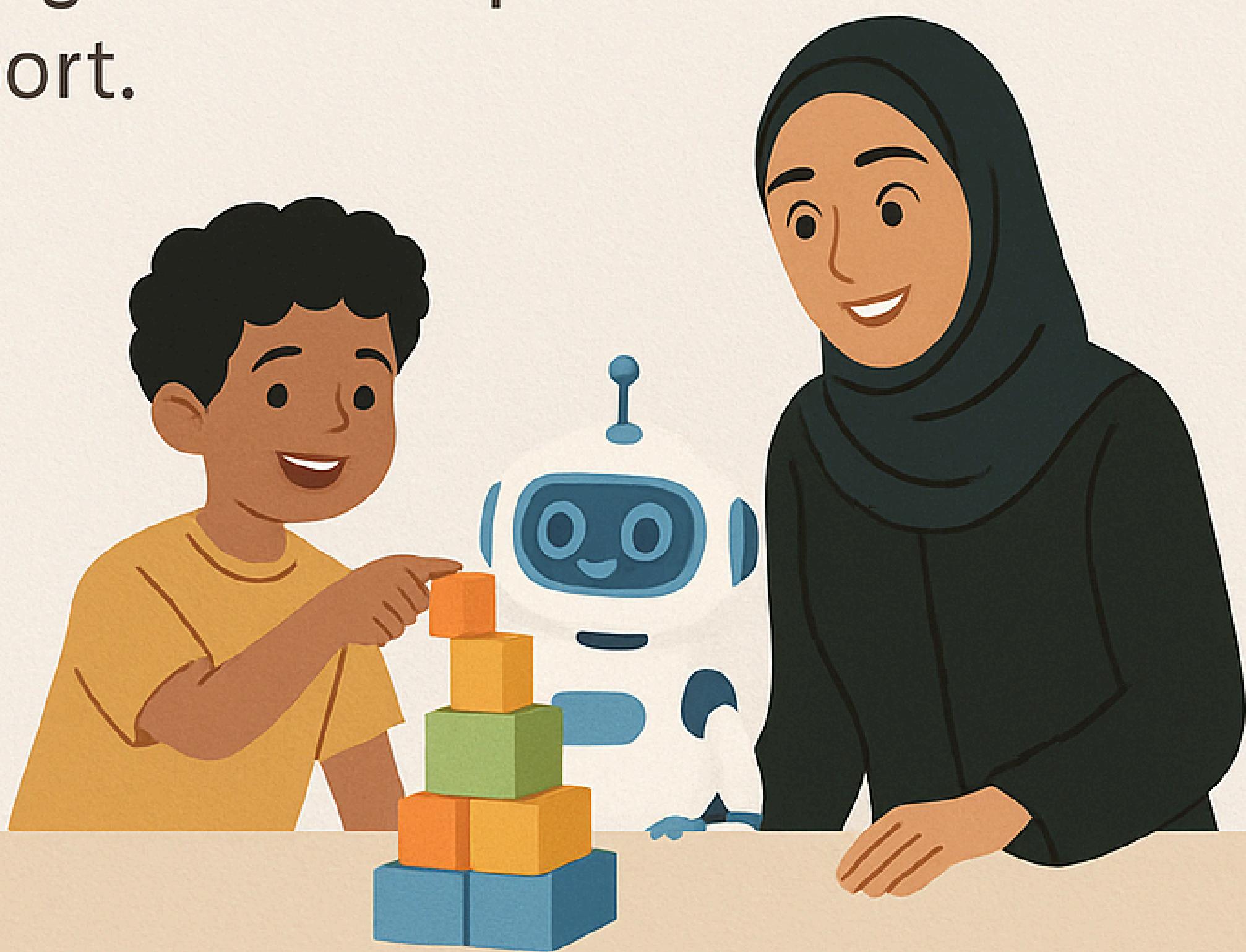




# EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AND FLEXIBILITY

These “thinking skills” help children plan, organize, and adapt to changes. Encourage problem-solving through small, playful challenges.

Flexibility grows with practice and support.



## Therapist's Tip

Play “switch” games — change rules mid-play (“Now we hop instead of run!”). Gentle change teaches your child to adapt and enjoy flexibility.

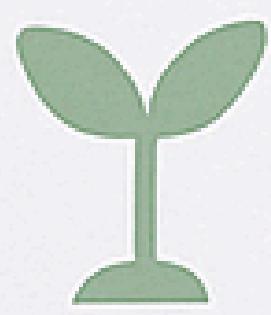
# Transitioning Across Ages

Each age brings new changes — from early childhood to adolescence and beyond. Prepare early, maintain routines, and celebrate growth at every stage.



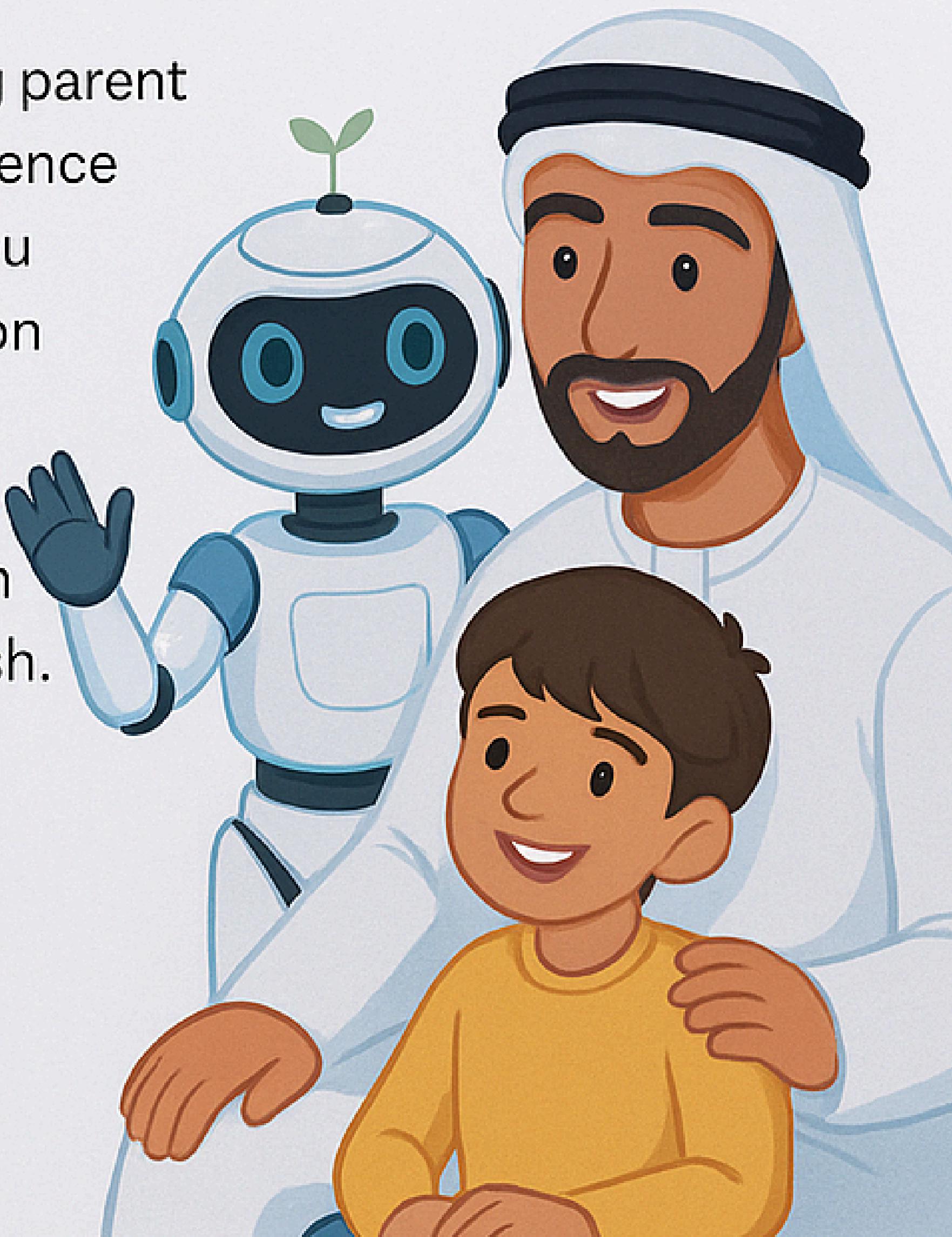
## Therapist's Tip

Review your child's progress every few months. Ask, "What skills are new? What's next?" Small adjustments keep development on track with confidence.



# General Advice

- Every child is unique, and every small step makes a big difference. Celebrate progress in all its forms and remember that every child learns at their own pace.
- Trust your instincts as a parent and seek advice when needed. You don't have to do everything on your own. Asking for support is a sign of wisdom and care.
- You are an amazing parent who makes a difference every day. When you prioritize connection and joy, you create a loving environment where growth and learning flourish.



**Thank you.**