

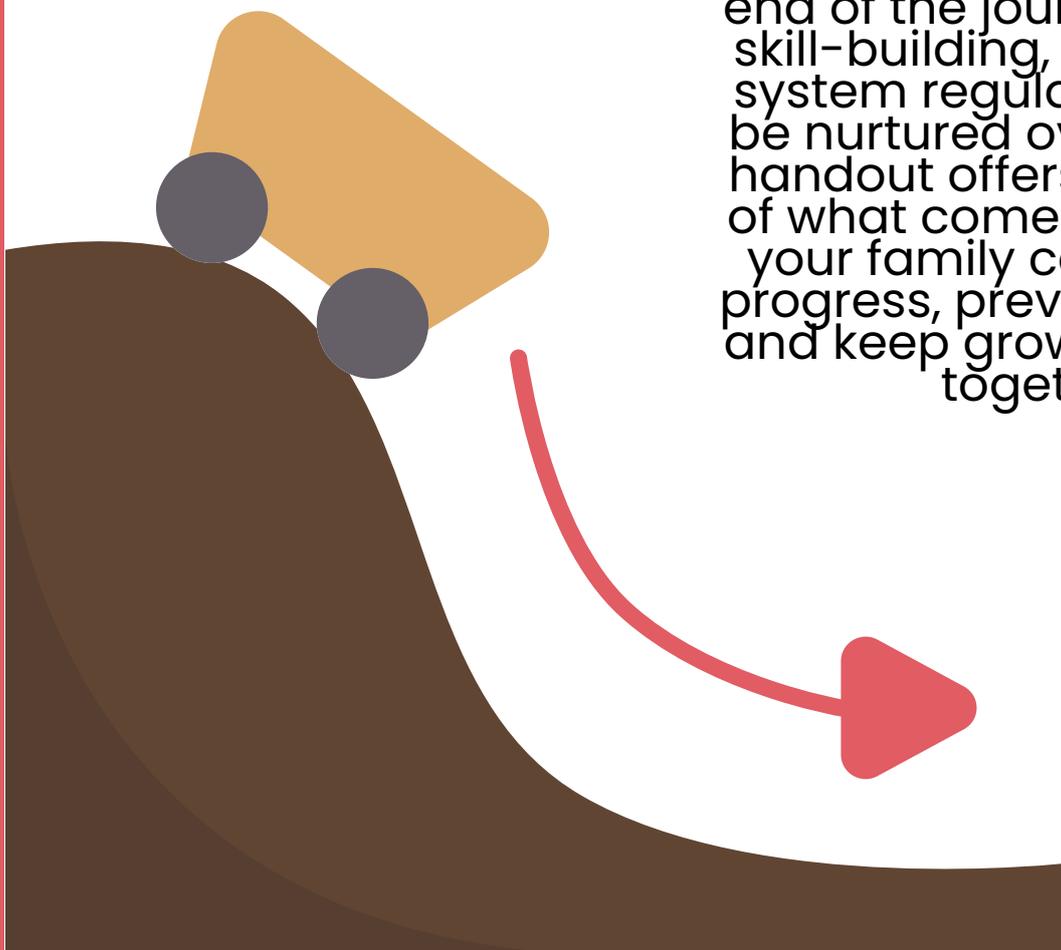
# LIFE AFTER IOP

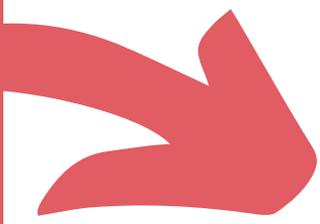
## CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM

### A TRANSITION GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

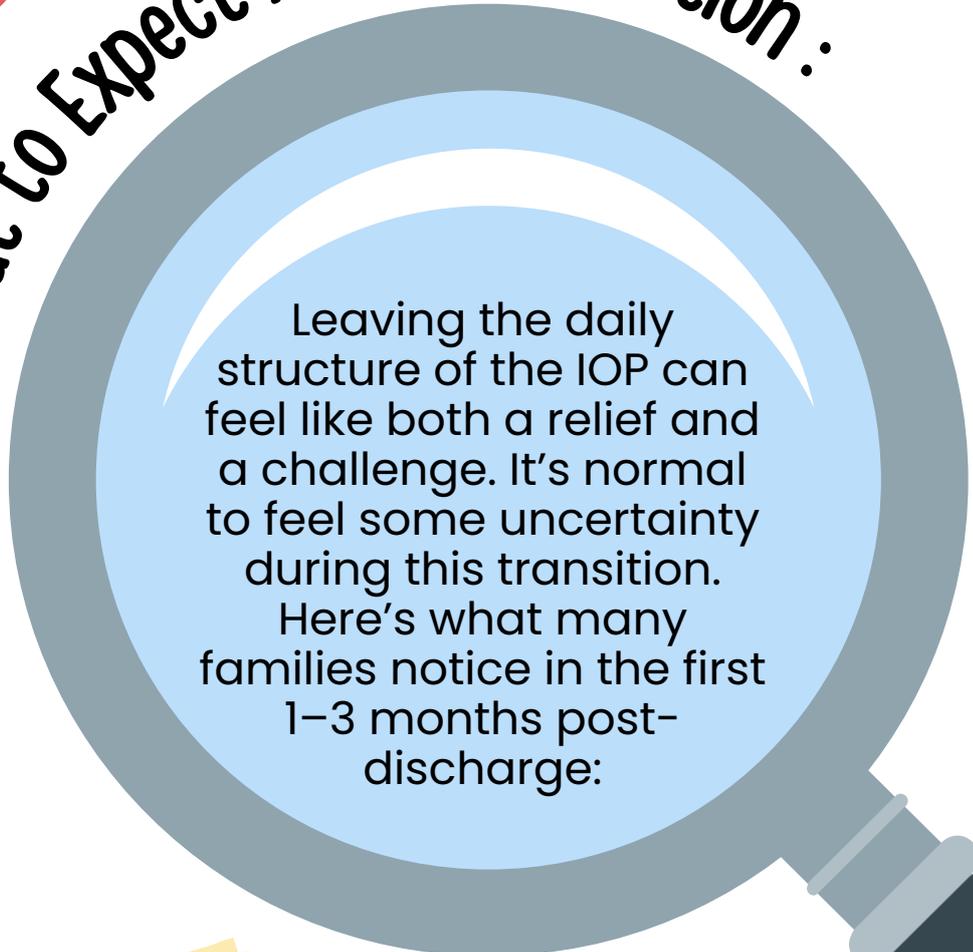
Graduating from the IOP is a major accomplishment—for your child and for your entire family. You've done hard work, built new emotional muscles, and created more predictable patterns of safety and support.

This transition is a powerful milestone, but it's not the end of the journey. Healing, skill-building, and nervous system regulation need to be nurtured over time. This handout offers a roadmap of what comes after IOP so your family can maintain progress, prevent setbacks, and keep growing stronger together.



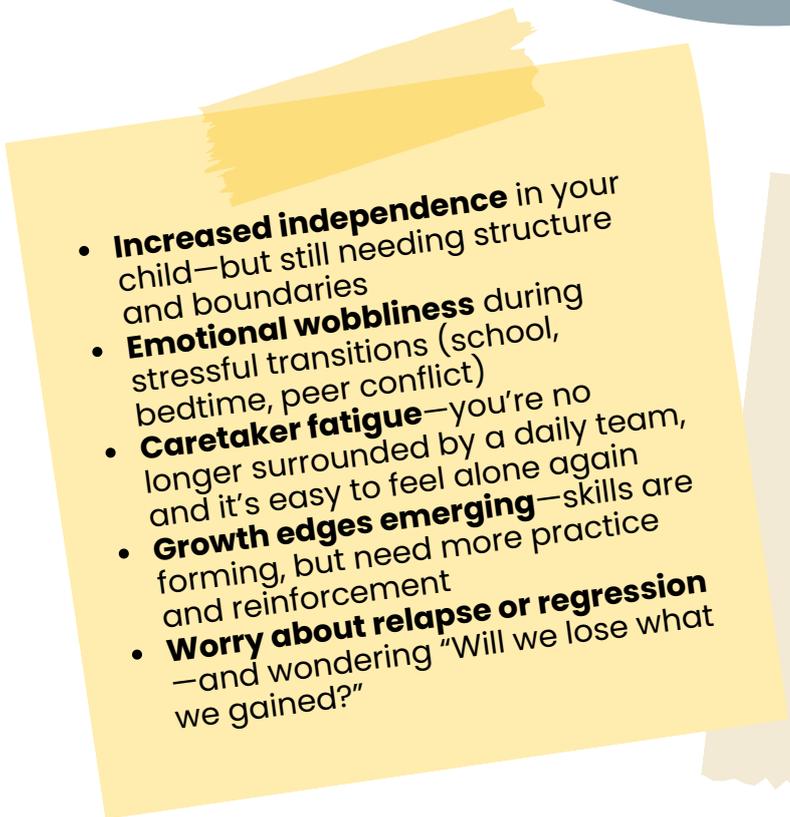


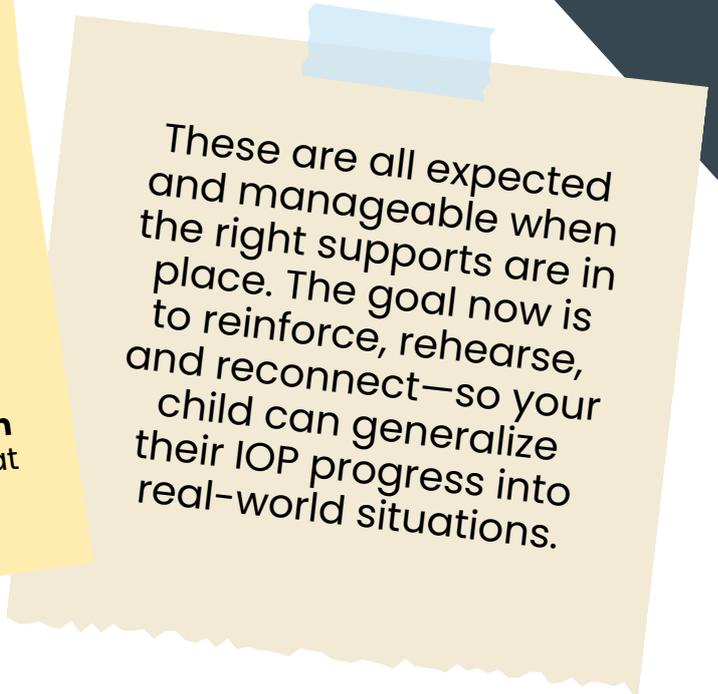
# What to Expect After Graduation:



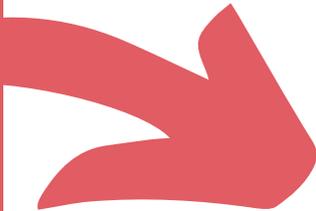
Leaving the daily structure of the IOP can feel like both a relief and a challenge. It's normal to feel some uncertainty during this transition.

Here's what many families notice in the first 1–3 months post-discharge:

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- **Increased independence** in your child—but still needing structure and boundaries
  - **Emotional wobbliness** during stressful transitions (school, bedtime, peer conflict)
  - **Caretaker fatigue**—you're no longer surrounded by a daily team, and it's easy to feel alone again
  - **Growth edges emerging**—skills are forming, but need more practice and reinforcement
  - **Worry about relapse or regression**—and wondering “Will we lose what we gained?”



These are all expected and manageable when the right supports are in place. The goal now is to reinforce, rehearse, and reconnect—so your child can generalize their IOP progress into real-world situations.

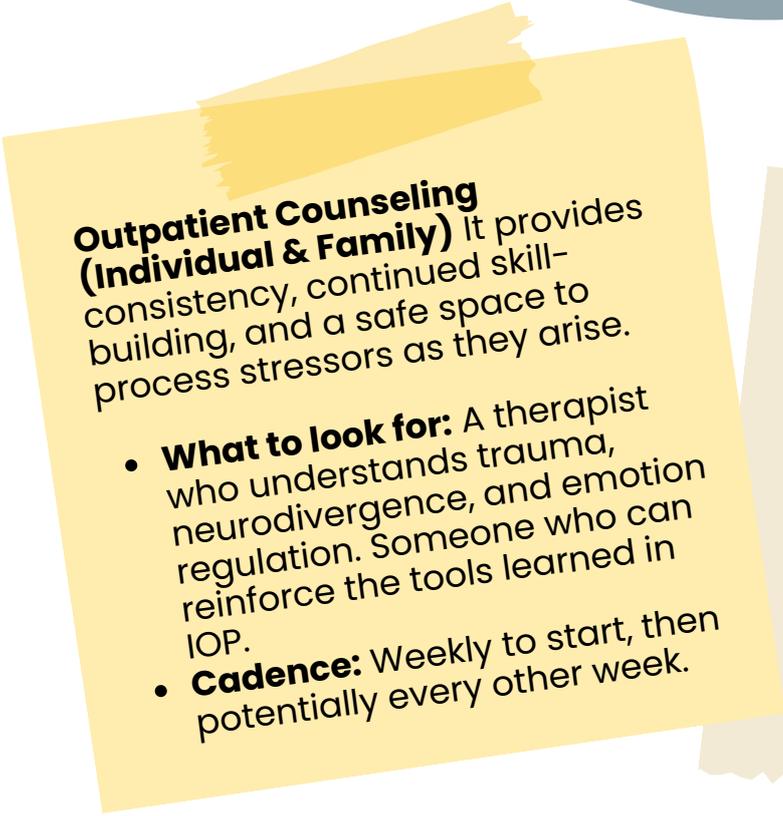


# Build Your Ongoing Support Team



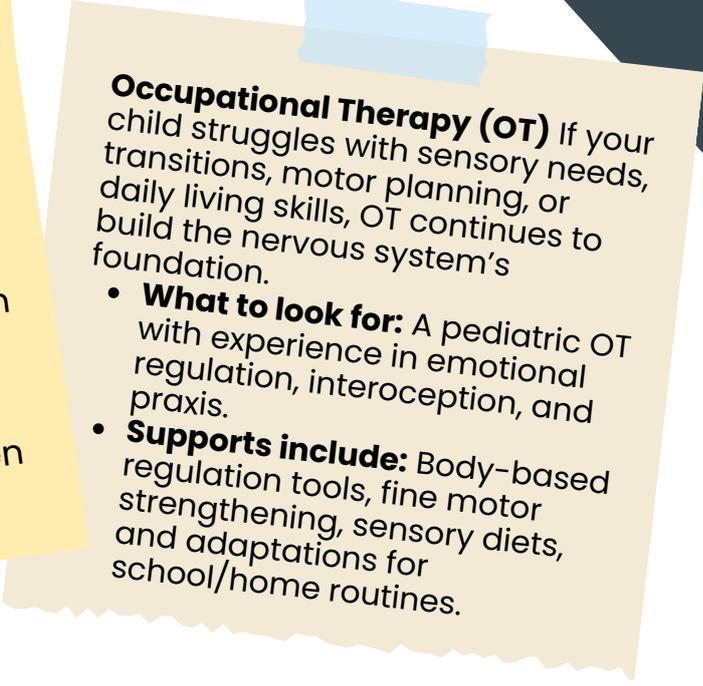
Just like a cast comes off after a broken arm but PT continues, your child may no longer need the daily structure of IOP—but they do need scaffolding as they keep healing.

Here are the core supports we recommend:



**Outpatient Counseling (Individual & Family)** It provides consistency, continued skill-building, and a safe space to process stressors as they arise.

- **What to look for:** A therapist who understands trauma, neurodivergence, and emotion regulation. Someone who can reinforce the tools learned in IOP.
- **Cadence:** Weekly to start, then potentially every other week.



**Occupational Therapy (OT)** If your child struggles with sensory needs, transitions, motor planning, or daily living skills, OT continues to build the nervous system's foundation.

- **What to look for:** A pediatric OT with experience in emotional regulation, interoception, and praxis.
- **Supports include:** Body-based regulation tools, fine motor strengthening, sensory diets, and adaptations for school/home routines.

**Group Therapy or Social Navigation Groups** Practicing emotional regulation and problem-solving in peer settings supports real-life skill generalization.

- **Examples include:**
  - Social Navigation Groups
  - DBT Skills Groups
  - Friendship Clubs or Emotion Coaches for tweens and teens
- **Cadence:** Weekly or biweekly group sessions provide accountability and connection.

**Wellness Practices (Movement, Art, Nature)** Not all healing is cognitive. Body-based, creative, and nature-based therapies keep the nervous system flexible and supported.

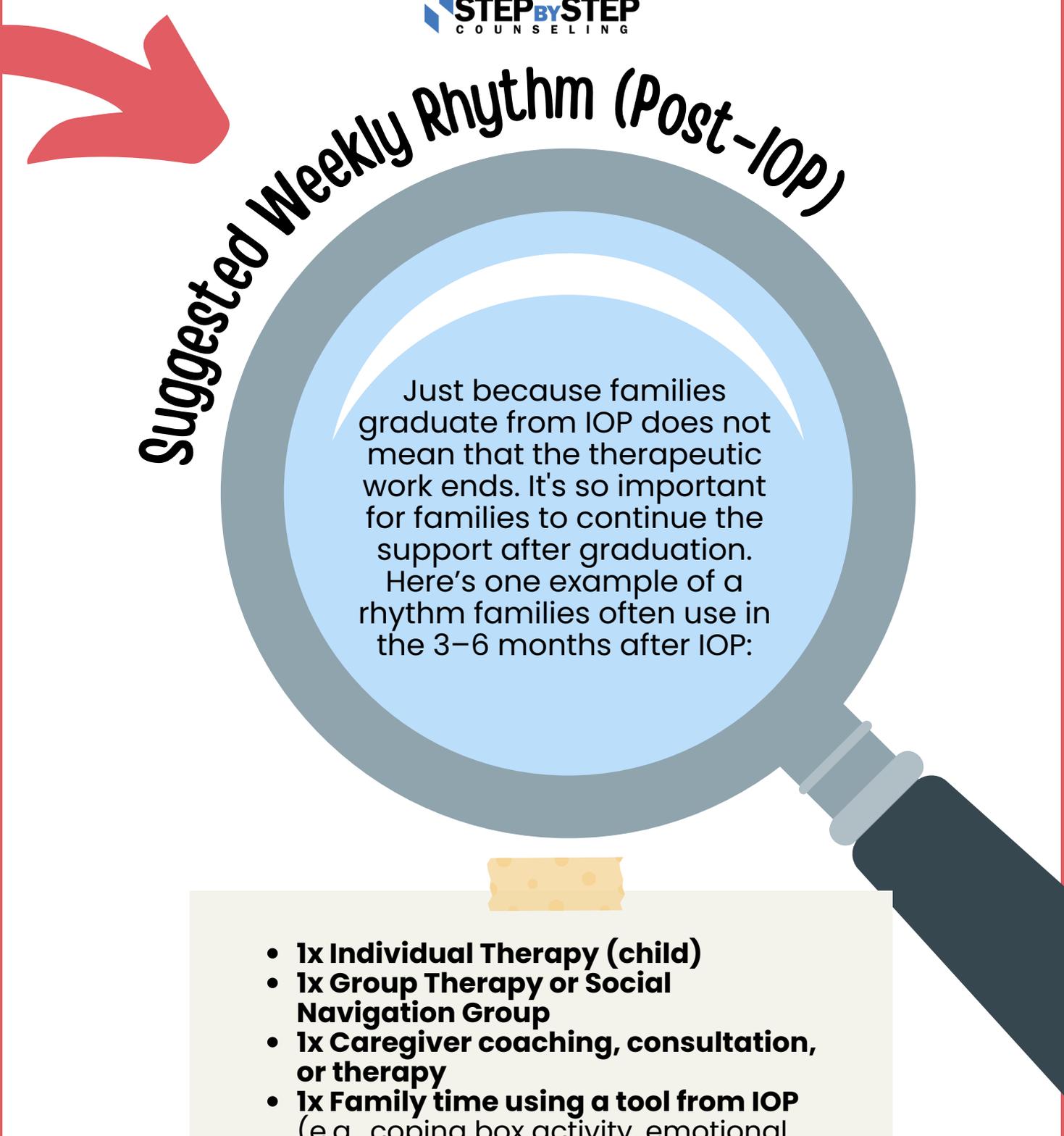
- **Ideas to explore:**
  - Kids yoga or mindfulness clubs
  - Therapeutic horseback riding
  - Art classes with an emotional focus
  - Gardening or nature-based programs for sensory grounding

**School-Based Support** Transferring gains from therapy to school is essential for sustained success.

- **Action steps:**
  - Share your discharge summary and behavior support plans with school
  - Request an IEP/504 review or schedule a team meeting to align supports
  - Offer a one-page "About Me" for teachers outlining strengths, triggers, and helpful strategies
- **Helpful tools to request:** Break passes, calm corners, visual schedules, lunch bunch, or sensory tools in the classroom

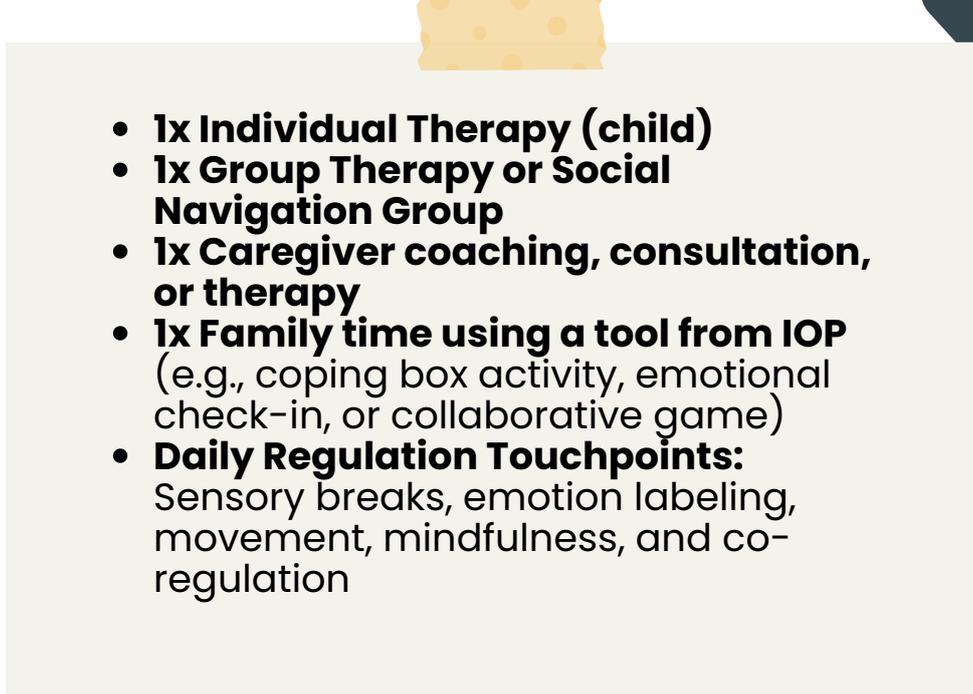
**Caregiver Coaching or Support Groups** You are still the most important support person in your child's life. Having your own place to ask questions, learn, and regroup makes a difference.

- **What it can look like:**
  - Monthly coaching calls
  - Parent-only workshops on behavior, trauma, or neurodivergence
  - Peer-led support groups through community orgs, Facebook groups, or our clinic's ongoing offerings



## Suggested Weekly Rhythm (Post-IOP)

Just because families graduate from IOP does not mean that the therapeutic work ends. It's so important for families to continue the support after graduation. Here's one example of a rhythm families often use in the 3–6 months after IOP:

- 
- **1x Individual Therapy (child)**
  - **1x Group Therapy or Social Navigation Group**
  - **1x Caregiver coaching, consultation, or therapy**
  - **1x Family time using a tool from IOP** (e.g., coping box activity, emotional check-in, or collaborative game)
  - **Daily Regulation Touchpoints:** Sensory breaks, emotion labeling, movement, mindfulness, and co-regulation

**You can customize this based on what your child tolerates and needs. The key is consistency and predictability—not perfection.**



# What If Progress Slips?

Setbacks can and will happen.  
Regression is a signal, not a failure.

## Watch for:

- More frequent meltdowns or withdrawal
- Avoidance of school, friends, or new situations
- Increased sibling conflict or sleep dysregulation
- Shifts in appetite or energy

## What to do:

- Reintroduce structure from IOP: visual schedules, reward charts, sensory supports
- Stay calm and steady—return to “We are a team. Let’s figure this out together.”
- Consider a “booster” session with a therapist or group re-entry for extra support
- Review your weekly rhythm of therapeutic supports. Do you need to re-add family therapy or group therapy, caregiver coaching, etc?

## Final Words of Encouragement

Graduating IOP is a brave, beautiful milestone. But the healing journey isn’t over—it’s evolving.

Your child is still growing into their skills. You are still adjusting to the new family rhythm. There will be progress, pauses, and pivots. The most important thing is to stay connected, curious, and consistent.

You’ve already proven you can do hard things together. The next chapter is about sustaining...not sprinting.