

Coloring Session Quick Reference

Print this and keep it with your coloring supplies for easy reference.

Before You Begin

- Choose a time when they're alert (mid-morning is usually best)
- Set up at a table with good natural light
- Turn off TV and minimize background noise
- Lay out 8–12 chunky crayons or thick colored pencils
- Preview the book — pick a page that connects to their life

Starting the Session

- Approach calmly. Make eye contact. Smile.
- Invite, don't instruct: "Would you like to color with me?"
- Let them look at the image first — no crayons yet
- Ask: "Does this remind you of anything?"
- Give them time. Silence is okay.

During the Session

- Color alongside them — you do it too
- Offer simple choices: "Green or blue?"
- Ask sensory questions: "What did this place smell like?"
- Listen more than you talk
- Never correct their coloring. There is no wrong way.

Closing the Session

- Watch for fatigue: restlessness, looking away, pushing the book
- End warmly: "This was really nice. Look what we made."
- Praise their work sincerely
- Display the finished page if possible
- Write down any memories shared (use the Session Log)

Signs It's Working

- Leaning forward or reaching toward the book
- Smiling, humming, or vocalizing
- Picking up a crayon without prompting
- Telling stories or sharing memory fragments
- Relaxed body posture and sustained focus

Signs to Pause

- Pushing the book away or turning away
- Agitation, restlessness, attempts to stand
- Frustration with the crayons or image
- Drowsiness or closing eyes
- Try a different image before stopping entirely

Remember: Five minutes of genuine engagement is worth more than thirty minutes of frustration. Follow their lead. Some days will be magical. Others will be quiet. Both are valuable.