OUR FAMILY FIELD GUIDE

A Wisdom Workbook

for Caregivers of Young Children



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Lifeproof Parenting × Evolve Early Learning

Belongs to:

The Most Important 2000 Days of Life

The Garden of Life

In The Gardener and the Carpenter, Alison Gopnik offers a parenting metaphor that best illustrates the true nature of the parent-child relationship.

Parenting was once thought of as carpenter work- follow directions and get a finished product. Now with our understanding of co-regulation, attachment, and countless ancient wisdoms we can better see our role as parents like a gardener. A gardener tries to create more ideal conditions for something living to grow and eventually give back to it's enviroment.

Just like seeds, our children arrive with their own temperament, gifts, sensitivities, needs, and unique brilliance already inside them. Our job is not to shape them into a predetermined version of who we think they should be but instead to notice, nurture, and create the conditions where they can grow.

In the early years, we can create the most fertile soil but centering connection and bridge building as our compost. Always ensuring we have the right mixture of boundaries, unconditional love, and true self-expression. When children are seen, heard, and valued for their unique brilliance they gain life-long self-confidence.



Power of Connection

It only takes one connected and empowering adult to change the trajectory of a child's life. Mirror nuerons allow families to build strong relationships, grow resilient brains, and collaborate even with the youngest of learners. Children use our brains, actions, emotions to make sense of the world. Once we understand that power we can begin to harness it to help our chilren learn and feel secure.

Responsive caregiving doesn't mean you have to show up all the time everytime it means understanding the powerful role you play and finding moments in your day to activate that connection.

"Just look to the baby. If you're doing something wrong, the baby will tell you. If you're doing something right, the baby will tell you that too. Babies know exactly what they need. People say the baby doesn't come with a book, but they do... the baby is the book!" -Jan Hunt

The First 2,000 Days

A Foundation for a Lifetime

Each stage builds on the last. Healthy development happens through the connected growth of body, mind, self, relationships, and environment.

Rooted in connection.

Evolve Early Learning

Curious Contributing Connected



	Prenatal Laying the Foundation	0–1 Trusting the World	1–2 Exploring and Belonging	2–3 Finding My Power	3–4 Imagining and Creating	4–5 Belonging and Developing Skills	5–6 Understanding and Contributing	6–7 Expanding Independence
Body	Organs and brain develop. Baby feels, hears, and responds. Maternal health, nutrition, movement, and emotional well-being matter.	Rapid brain growth. Develops through senses, movement, feeding, sleep, and touch. Regulation happens through co-regulation.	Movement explodes. Walking, climbing, carrying, and exploring. Sensory experiences build brain pathways.	High physical energy. Needs movement, practice, and repetition. Emotions live in the body.	Growing coordination and strength. Still needs lots of gross-motor play, rest, and sensory experiences.	More physical control, but impulse control is still developing. Needs movement, rest, nutrition, and sensory regulation.	Increased stamina and coordination. Still needs active play and time in nature. Brains and bodies learn through movement.	Greater physical capability. Still developing fine motor control and self-regulation. Needs balanced time for movement, rest, and focus.
Mind	Brain cells form and connect. Baby recognizes voices, rhythms, and emotions.	Learns through senses, repetition, and relationship. Beginning to notice patterns and cause-and-effect.	Cause-and-effect thinking emerges. Loves repetition. Begins to solve simple problems.	Language and imagination explode. Thinking is concrete and in the moment. Difficulty with time, logic, and perspective-taking.	Imagination is powerful. Begins to tell stories, ask big questions, and think symbolically.	Questions multiply. Can hold more complex ideas and sequences. Loves to investigate and understand how things work.	Growing logical thinking. Can plan, problem-solve, and connect ideas. Still thinks concretely but is ready for more complex play and learning.	Increasing ability to think ahead, reflect, and understand different perspectives. Ready for more structured learning with curiosity.
Self / Identity	Lays the groundwork for a sense of safety and belonging.	No separate self yet. Sense of self develops through consistent, responsive care.	First signs of autonomy, "Me," "mine," and "do it myself" emerge.	Tests boundaries. Experiments with independence and power. Strong emotions are part of this growth.	Identity expands through imagination and play. Absorbs labels and messages deeply.	Wants to feel capable and valued. Begins to compare with others.	Develops a stronger sense of self and interests. Seeks competence and recognition.	Growing internal identity. Begins to understand personal values and what matters. Increasing self-direction.
Relationships	Feels caregiver's emotions. Early attachment begins.	Trust grows through consistent, loving responses.	Moves away and returns repeatedly. Independence and attachment grow together.	Negotiates needs but still requires enormous adult support to share, wait, and repair.	Wants other children. Learning how to enter play, manage conflict, and build friendships.	Friendships matter more. Learning fairness, cooperation, and belonging.	Group play and peer relationships become central. Development of empathy and moral reasoning.	More complex social understanding. Builds deeper friendships and a sense of community. Develops empathy, leadership, and collaboration.
Environment	A calm, supportive, nurturing environment supports healthy development.	Needs warmth, rhythm, simplicity, close connection, and sensory richness without overstimulation.	Needs safe spaces to move, explore, and imitate. Real materials and meaningful participation.	Needs predictable routines, clear boundaries, and opportunities for autonomy within limits.	Thrives with open-ended materials, nature, art, music, and long stretches of play.	Needs a balance of structure and freedom. Opportunities to create, explore, solve problems, and contribute.	Benefits from rich experiences, nature, projects, and community engagement.	Needs meaningful responsibilities, real-world experiences, and opportunities to contribute.
Big Question	**Is this world safe and welcoming?**	**Can I trust this world and the people in it?**	**Can I explore while staying connected?**	**Do I have power? Does my voice matter?**	**What can I imagine and make happen?**	**Am I capable, and do I belong?**	**What can I do with what I know?**	**Who am I, and how can I contribute?**
Try This (Partnership)	Slow down, nourish yourself, talk to baby, and build your support system.	Respond quickly, hold often, mirror cues, and create simple rhythms.	Make room to explore, name what is happening, and stay close.	Offer two choices, keep boundaries calm, and invite participation.	Protect long play, use imagination, and coach feelings with few words.	Give real jobs, ask simple problem-solving questions, and practice repair.	Encourage contribution, support friendships, and let them help make plans.	Support growing independence, listen deeply, and coach responsibility gently.

HEALTHY ROOTS • BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

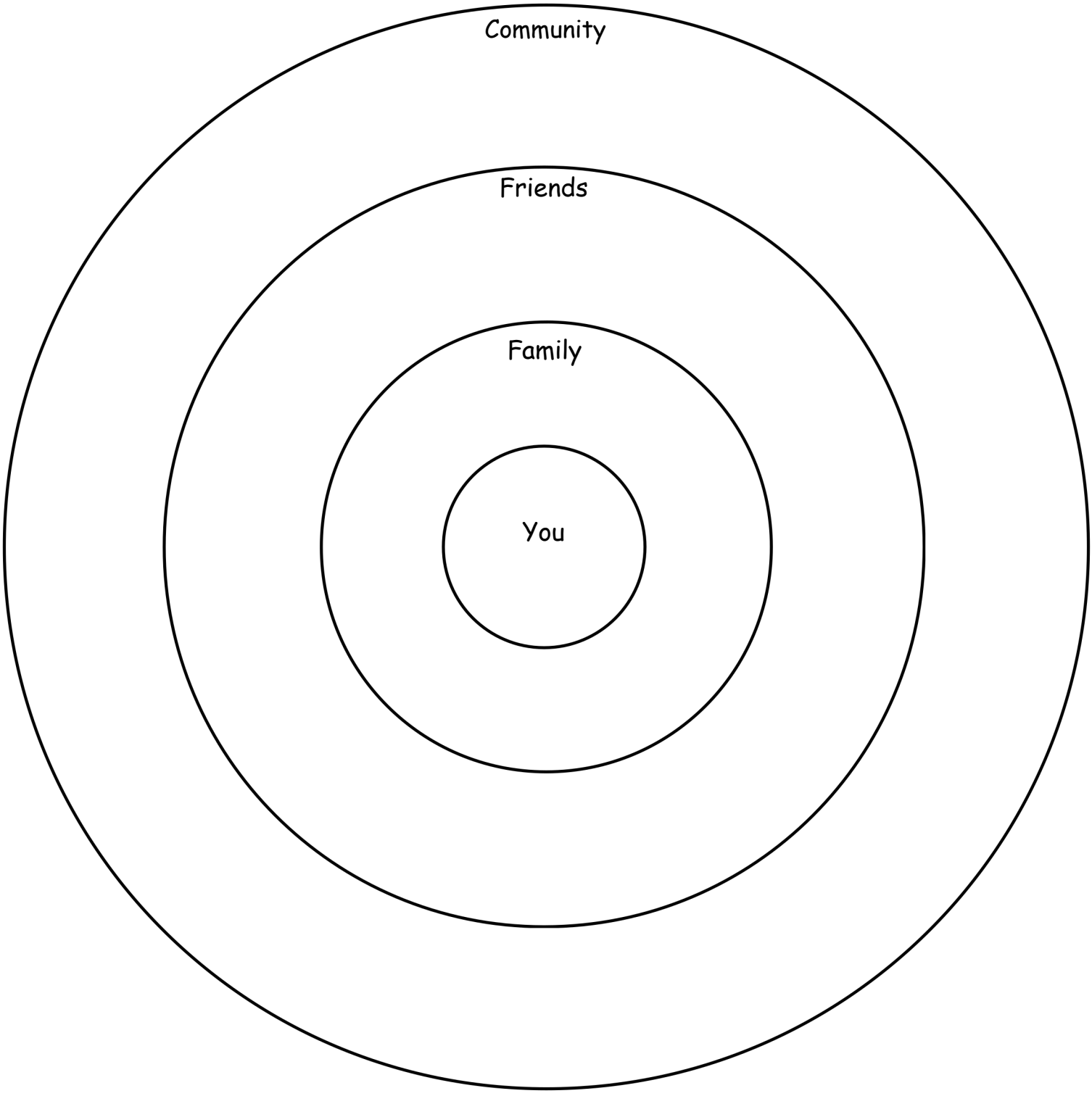
When children feel safe, seen, and supported, they don't just learn — they flourish.

What stands out to you about where your child is today?

OUR VILLAGE



This excercise helps families identify support in various aspects of life. It may help you recognize and appreciate the network contributing to your family or identify areas to grow a village. Chosen family counts!



How will you cultivate and celebrate your village?



Finding My Values

What matters most to you shapes the life you create.

How to use this page:

1. Read the word bank.
2. Notice what resonates.
3. Narrow it down.
4. Choose your essential values.

Values Word Bank

Compassion	Courage	Curiosity	Belonging	Joy	Honesty	Peace	Creativity
Family	Growth	Kindness	Justice	Freedom	Faith	Stability	Adventure
Responsibility	Patience	Respect	Service	Learning	Resilience	Connection	
Health	Wonder	Generosity	Simplicity	Gratitude	Humor	Trust	Integrity
Empathy	Play	Nature	Wisdom	Love	Leadership	Hope	Presence
Authenticity	Discipline	Balance	Community	Purpose	Other: _____	Other: _____	Other: _____

My 5 essential values

The values I want to live by.

1	2	3	4	5

Reflection

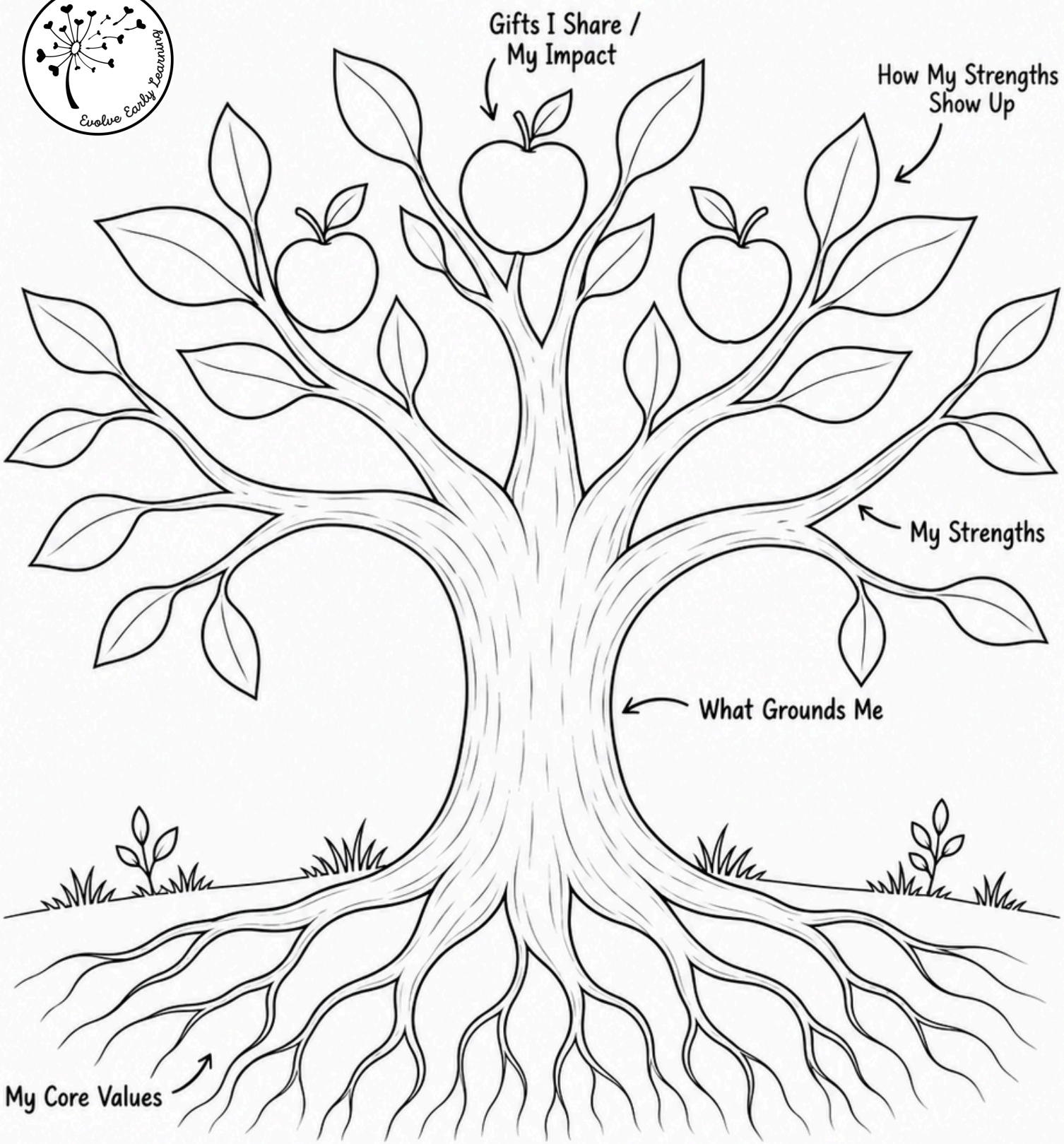
Which of these values feel most important in this season of our family life?

How do I want these values to show up in our home and parenting?

Progress over perfection

My Tree of Values & Strengths

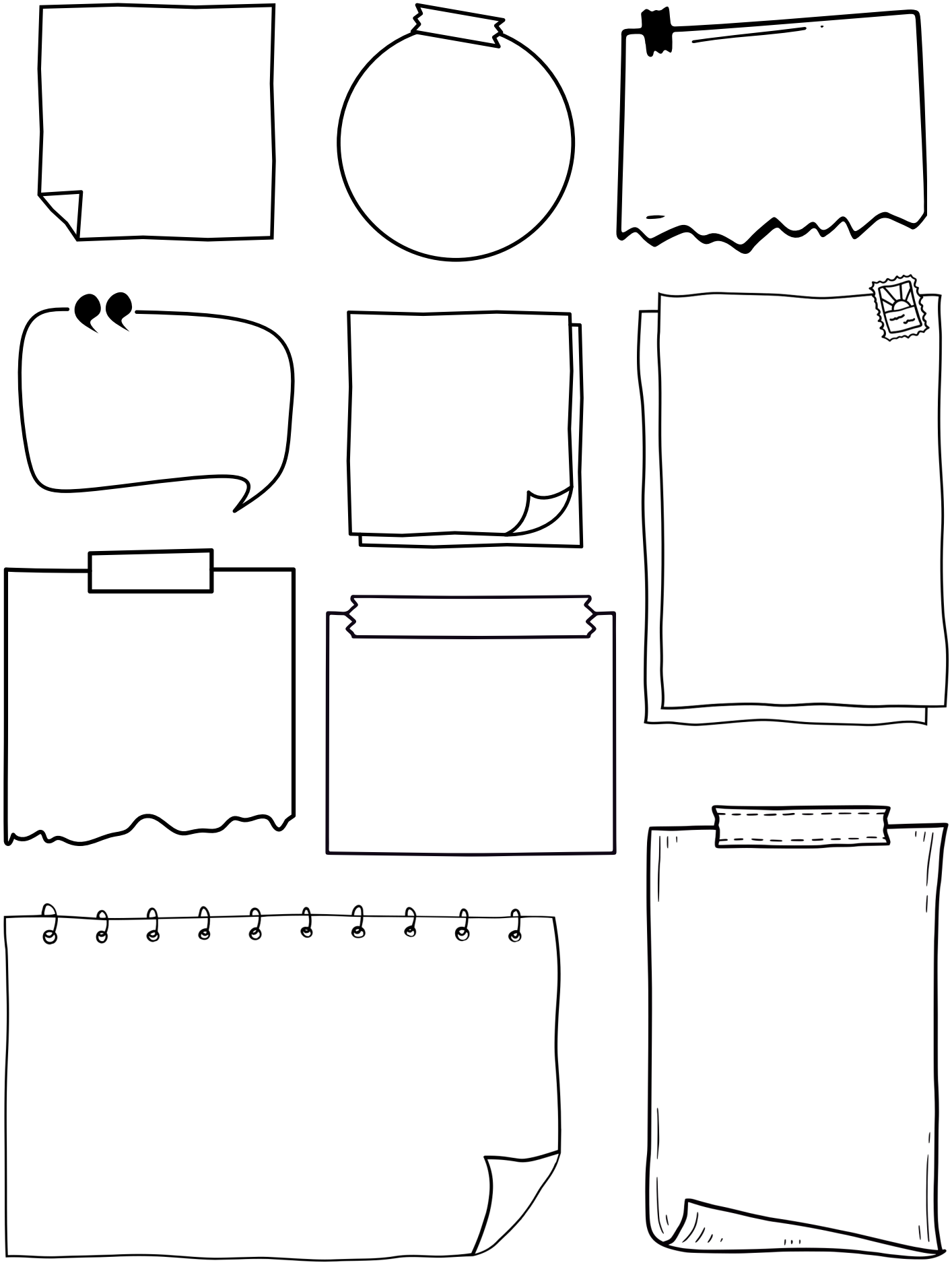
Write your values in the roots, what grounds you in the trunk, your strengths on the branches, how they show up on the leaves, and the gifts you share in the fruit.



What do you notice about your tree?

Which strength grows most naturally from your values?

NOTES *to self*



A place to capture your wisdom & ideas.

MONTHLY Parent *check in*

YEAR

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

How did this month flow? How did it feel?

Our Monthy Memories and Milestones

1 2 3 4 5

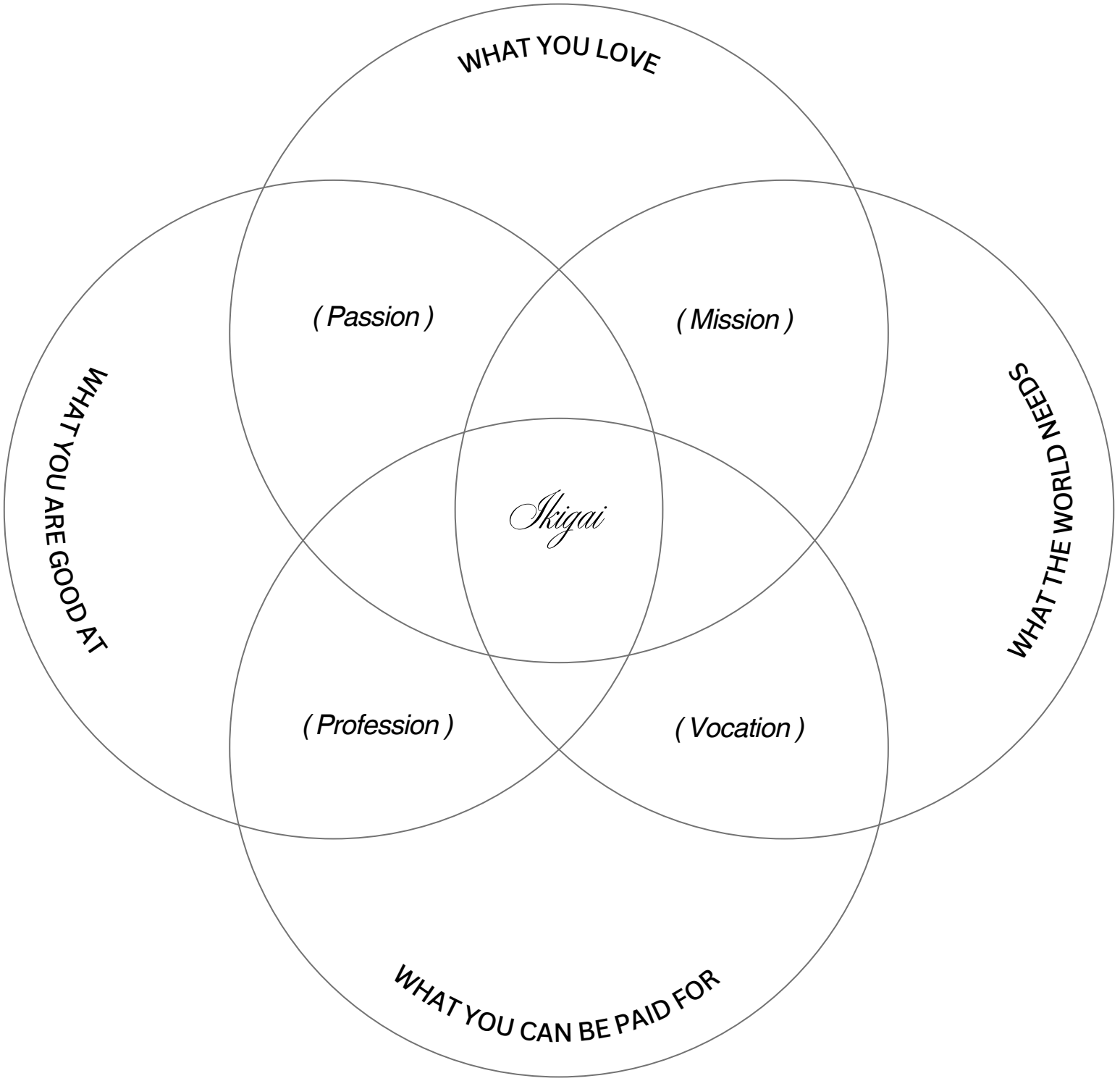
What will you cultivate or celebrate in the coming month?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Ikigai

Ikigai (The Art of a Meaningful Life)

Uncover the intersection of your passions, talents, and purpose to create a fulfilling and meaningful life, while aligning your goals for personal and professional growth. Brainstorm your own life with this chart but also consider how supporting what our child loves and what the world needs may make for a meaningful life in a changing world.



What do you wonder about your child's Ikigai?

Attachment in Action

A STRONG BASE FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

What attachment is:

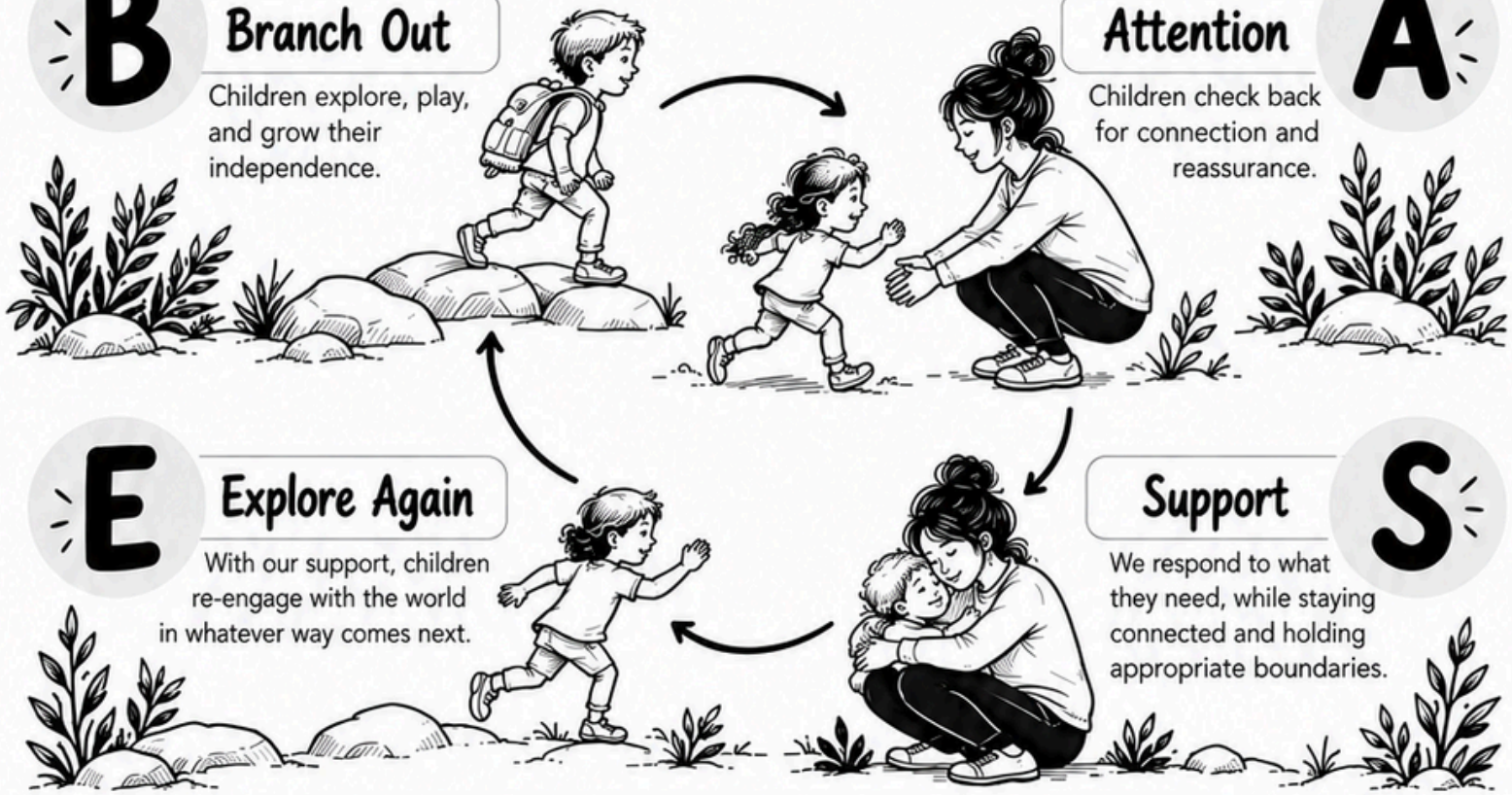
- ✓ A strong, trusting relationship
- ✓ Built through everyday moments
- ✓ Helping children feel seen, heard, and valued
- ✓ A foundation for resilience, learning, and belonging

What attachment is not:

- ✗ Perfect parenting
- ✗ Constant closeness
- ✗ Giving in to every demand
- ✗ Removing boundaries
- ✗ A way to prevent all hard feelings

The BASE Framework

A natural rhythm that helps children feel secure and supported.



B — Branch Out

Children explore, play, and grow their independence.

A — Attention

Children check back for connection and reassurance.

S — Support

We respond to what they need, while staying connected and holding appropriate boundaries.

E — Explore Again

With our support, children re-engage with the world in whatever way comes next.

Behavior is communication.

And sometimes, attention-seeking is connection-seeking.

A Moment to Reflect

Take a moment to notice and appreciate what's happening in your unique journey.

Where has your child been branching out lately?

How does that feel to you?

Evolve Early Learning

Prepare for RAIN. Learn to FLOW.

When the moment gets hard: first check in with yourself, then move through it together.

RAIN

Pause with yourself.

Your calm helps your child feel safe, regulated, and connected.

www.tarabrach.com/rain/



Take a breath. Check in.

R — Recognize
Notice what's happening inside you.



A — Allow
It's okay to have big feelings.



I — Investigate
What do I need right now?



N — Nurture
Support yourself in a way that helps you feel calmer.



Then, turn your attention to your child...

FLOW

Move through the moment together.



F — Feelings
Name the emotion.



L — Link
Connect before moving on.



O — Options
Give two playful choices.



W — Win-Win
Meet both needs.



Big feelings do not change belonging or boundaries.

The FLOW Formula at a Glance

FLOW Stands for = Feelings → Link → Options → Win-Win

FEELINGS – NOTICE AND NAME THE EMOTION FIRST IF NEEDED.



- "Looks like you're hiding and running away. How are you feeling about leaving the park?"
- Why it matters: Acknowledging feelings lowers resistance. It tells the brain you are on the same team and understanding is possible.

LINK – CREATE CONNECTION, CLARIFY THE MOTIVATION FOR CHILD.

- "I love playing here with you. I am here. We can figure this out together. Our plan was to come to the park then go to get groceries. Maybe we can play I spy in the ? (Sometimes this means "giving up" on the mission for a moment.)
- Why it matters: Connection meets the need for safety before action. Once we know the child's motivation it is easy to move forward. Often it is play, connection, novelty, or a preferred activity

OPTIONS – OFFER PLAYFUL, EMPOWERING CHOICES THE CHILD LOVES.

- "Do you want to hop like a frog or tiptoe to the car?"
- Why it matters: Choices shift focus from "I don't want to" to "I get to decide." Fun is a child's love language and changes the mood.

WIN-WIN – A COOPERATIVE SOLUTION THAT VALUES THE CHILD'S NEEDS

- "When we get in the car, let's sing your favorite song."
- Why it matters: When both needs are met, cooperation feels good. Over time practice will become the norm and your child will look for the win-win!

FUN FACT

When kids feel connected and are having fun, their brains release oxytocin and dopamine — chemicals that lower stress, boost mood, and improve focus. That's why playful transitions aren't just easier… they actually prime the brain for learning and cooperation!



SMOOTH TRANSITIONS FRIDGE SHEET

The FLOW Formula

Feelings – Name the emotion: "I see you're..."
Link – Connect before moving on: "I love..."
Options – Give two fun choices: "Do you want..."
Win-Win – Meet both needs: "We both want..."

1 GIVE THEM THE PREVIEW

Kids handle change better when they know what's coming.



Example: "After breakfast, we're getting dressed and heading to Grandma's for Aunt Jenny's Birthday."

2 START BEFORE THE STORM

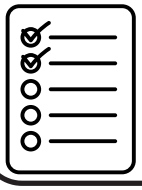
Avoid shifting when kids are tired, hungry, or deep in play.



Example: "Five more minutes, then it's bath time."

3 KEEP IT SIMPLE & STEADY

Do things in the same order and use a chart or checklist.



Example: Let kids help design the bedtime routine poster.

4 CONNECT FIRST, THEN MOVE

Step into their world before giving directions.



Example: "I love seeing what you built—let's take a picture so you can finish later."

5 OFFER TWO FUN CHOICES

Let them choose between two outcomes that work for you & appeal to them.

Example: "Tiptoe or hop to the bathroom?"



6 TURN INTO PLAY

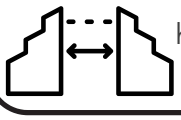
Step into their world before giving directions.

Example: Pretend the floor is lava to the sink.



7 FILL THE WAITING GAPS

Step into their world before giving directions.



Examples: I Spy, Songs, Color match hunt, transition toy or book

8 NOTICE THE GOOD STUFF

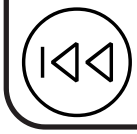
Point out helpful actions. Use gratitude more than praise.



Example: "Thanks for putting your shoes by the door."

9 REWIND & TRY AGAIN

If it flops, reset without drama. Model learning from mistakes and stepping back when overwhelmed.



Example: "Want to try it ninja-style so we don't wake sister?"

10 IF/THEN MOTIVATION

Link what they want to what needs to be done



Example: "When teeth are brushed, then we can read your book."

HOW ARE YOU feeling?



Sad



Tired



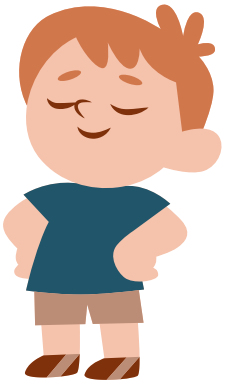
Shy



Happy



Worried



Proud



Sick



surprised



Scared



Confused



Excited



Angry