

THE MOMENT BEFORE THE PATTERN

A guided reflection for creating emotional safety with children

“My activation is information, not instruction.”

For parents, educators, therapists, and other caring adults

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A companion to the guided audio practice. Listen first if possible, then return to these pages whenever you want to reflect more deeply.

Before You Begin

This guide is not an evaluation of whether you are a “good” parent, educator, therapist, or caregiver. It is a place to become more honest and compassionate about what happens inside you when a child’s behavior activates an automatic response.

Children do not need perfectly regulated adults. They need adults who are increasingly able to notice themselves, stay curious, hold clear boundaries without withdrawing connection, and repair when disconnection occurs.

Choose a small, ordinary interaction for this reflection—not the most overwhelming or painful experience you have lived through.

A few gentle agreements

- Keep the child’s identity and story as private as needed.
- Move at a pace that respects your nervous system.
- Pause if the reflection becomes too activating.
- Allow uncertainty; you do not have to understand everything today.
- Approach yourself with the same dignity you want to offer the child.

The moment I want to explore

What happened, described without blame or interpretation?

The Seven Movements

These movements are not rigid steps. They are ways of returning to relationship—with yourself first, and then with the child.

1. NOTICE

What begins to happen in my body?

Tightening, heat, pressure, numbness, urgency, collapse, restlessness, an impulse to move closer or pull away.

2. NAME

What feelings, thoughts, or impulses are present?

“Something in me feels afraid.” “Something in me wants this to stop.” “Something in me feels helpless.”

3. ACKNOWLEDGE

How might my response make sense in light of what I have lived?

This is recognition, not blame. You do not need to analyze your entire history.

4. DIFFERENTIATE

What belongs to this present moment, and what may belong to an older story?

“This child is here now. I am here now. Their behavior may activate my history, but it is not the whole of that history.”

5. ACCOMPANY

How can I stay with the part of me that is activated?

“I am here with you. You do not have to solve everything in this instant.”

6. CHOOSE

What do connection, safety, and appropriate boundaries need now?

The next choice may be smaller, slower, clearer, quieter, or more honest.

7. APPRECIATE

What can I recognize without forcing gratitude or pretending the moment was easy?

Awareness is movement. Repair is possible. One new choice matters.

Listening Beneath Behavior

Behavior is not the whole child. It may be the visible expression of a nervous system seeking protection, connection, autonomy, predictability, rest, belonging, understanding, movement, or relief from overwhelm.

Instead of beginning with “How do I stop this behavior?” you might gently wonder:

- What might the child’s nervous system be communicating?
- What capacity may be unavailable to them in this moment?
- What feeling or need is asking to be recognized?
- What limit is genuinely needed for safety?
- How can I hold that limit without making belonging conditional?

What I first assumed about the child’s behavior

What else might be true?

What the child may have needed—even if I could not provide all of it

Emotional safety does not mean saying yes to everything. It means a child does not have to lose dignity or belonging in order to meet a boundary.

Language That Protects Connection

These phrases are invitations, not formulas. Choose only the words that feel congruent and appropriate to the child, relationship, and moment.

When a child is overwhelmed

- “I can see this is hard.”
- “I’m here. We can slow this down.”
- “You do not have to explain everything right now.”
- “Would you like me closer, farther away, or right here?”

When a boundary is needed

- “Your feelings can be here, and I will not let anyone be hurt.”
- “The answer is still no, and I will stay with you while this is hard.”
- “I want to understand. We also need to find a way that protects everyone.”

When you need time

- “I want to respond with care. I need a moment to settle before we continue.”
- “I’m not leaving the relationship. I’m creating enough space to come back more present.”

A phrase that feels natural in my voice

Repair: Returning After Disconnection

Repair is not a perfect apology, an explanation of why you reacted, or a request for the child to reassure you. Repair centers responsibility, care, and renewed curiosity.

A simple repair pathway

- **Name what you did.** Be specific and avoid blaming the child for your response.
- **Take responsibility.** Let the child know your reaction was not theirs to carry.
- **Recognize the impact.** Make space for how the experience may have felt to them.
- **Reconnect with curiosity.** Ask what was happening for them without demanding an answer.
- **Choose what comes next.** Restate a necessary boundary with greater clarity and connection.

"I became overwhelmed and spoke more sharply than I wanted to. That was not your fault. I imagine that may have felt scary or lonely. I want to understand what was happening for you. Can we begin again?"

Something I may want to repair

The responsibility that belongs to me

The invitation I want to offer the child

Your Next Life-Giving Choice

You do not have to transform every interaction at once. Choose one small practice that can become more available through repetition.

The earliest sign that I am becoming activated is...

One way I can accompany myself in that moment is...

One response I want to practice with a child is...

One reminder I want to carry forward

There is a moment before the pattern. I can learn to meet myself there.

About Gloria

Gloria Lybecker is an Equine-Guided Resonance Coach, Constellations Facilitator, and founder of Healing You Sanctuary. Her work integrates relational neuroscience, resonant language, somatic awareness, experiential learning, and partnership with horses and the natural world. She helps adults recognize the patterns shaping their responses so they can remain connected to themselves while creating greater emotional safety for others.

Continue the exploration: [GloriaLybecker.com](https://www.glorialybecker.com)

Listen: The Healing You Method Podcast

Educational note: This resource is for educational and reflective purposes and is not a substitute for medical, psychological, or mental-health care. If you or a child is in immediate danger or needs clinical support, contact an appropriately qualified professional or emergency service in your area.