

Safe Again

Volume 1

A Healing-Centered Parent & Child

Interaction Workbook

Emotional Safety Foundations

BY DR. JANET OLIVARES

Live Edition: fill in the blanks using an iPad or computer



PARENT RESPONSE COLOR



CHILD RESPONSE COLOR



Safe Again Volume 1

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Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV), unless otherwise noted.

Safe Again ***Volume 1***

**A Healing-Centered Parent & Child Interaction Workbook
Emotional Safety Foundations**

BY DR. JANET OLIVARES



Glorybound Publishing
Camp Verde, Arizona USA
in the year 2026

◀ DISCLAIMER ▶

This workbook was created to support emotional awareness, healthy communication, family connection, and healing-centered interactions between children, parents, and families.

The material within this workbook is educational and faith-based in nature and is not intended to diagnose, treat, or replace professional medical, psychological, psychiatric, or legal services.

Families participating in this workbook are encouraged to seek appropriate professional support when needed, especially in situations involved:

- abuse
- self-harm
- suicidal thoughts
- severe mental health concerns
- domestic violence
- addiction
- unsafe living environments
- or legal/court-related matters requiring licensed professional intervention

This workbook is designed to encourage:

- emotional safety
- accountability
- healthy boundaries
- calm communication
- nervous system regulation
- emotional healing
- and family reconnection

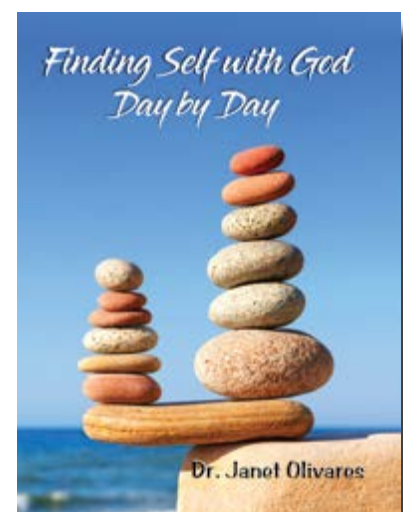
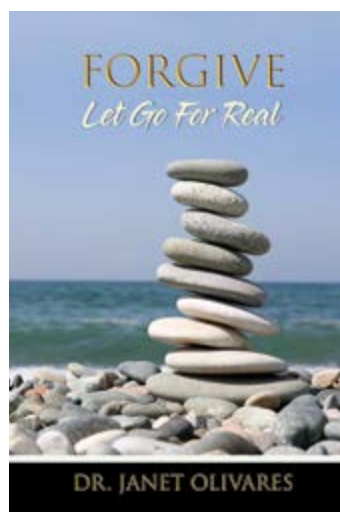
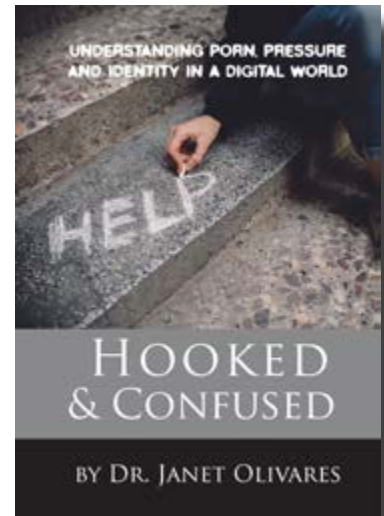
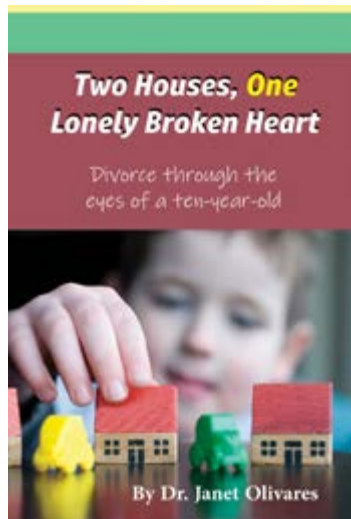
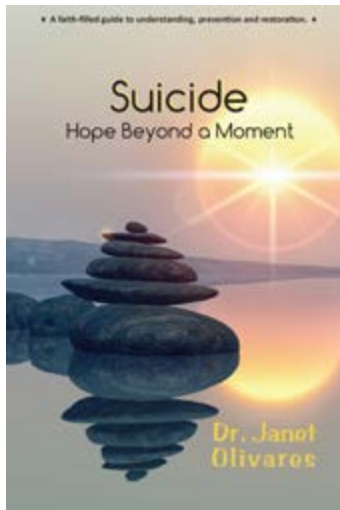
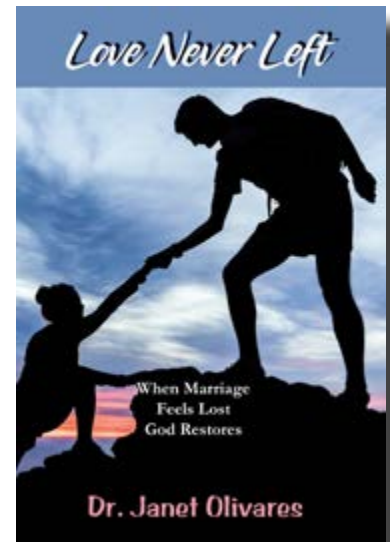
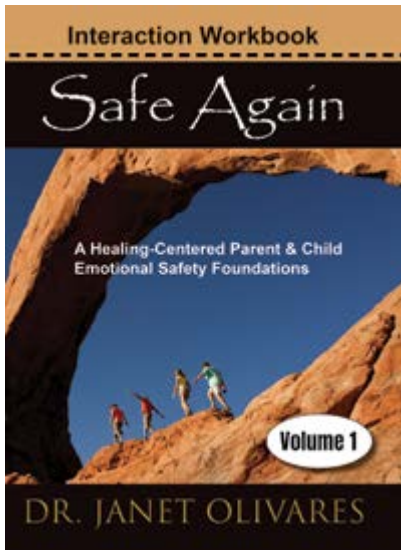
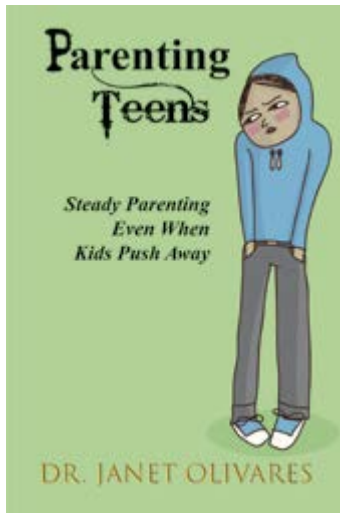
Participation in this workbook should always occur in emotionally and physically safe environments.

The goal of this workbook is not blame, shame, or forced reconciliation.

The goal is to help families:

- slow down emotionally,
- understand one another more clearly,
- rebuild trust safely,
- and create healthier patterns of communication and connection over time.

Healing and reunification are processes that often require patience, consistency, emotional safety, and support.



SAFE AGAIN

A Healing-Centered Parent & Child Interaction Workbook

Supporting Emotional Safety, Healthy Communication, Accountability, and Family Reconnection After Trauma, Conflict, and Separation

- Rebuild Trust
- Improve Communication
- Create Emotional Safety
- Heal Family Conflict
- Strengthen Parent & Child Relationships
- Develop Healthy Boundaries
- Practice Accountability Without Shame
- Restore Hope and Connection

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DEDICATION

This workbook is dedicated to children, parents, grandparents, stepparents, and families carrying silent pain while longing for peace, understanding, and reconnection.

*To every child who has felt unheard, unsafe, overwhelmed, or emotionally alone:
may you discover that your feelings matter, your voice has value, and healing is possible.*

*To every parent carrying guilt, frustration, exhaustion, or fear:
may you find grace, wisdom, and hope as you learn new ways to build emotional safety and connection within your family.*

*To the families trying to rebuild after conflict, separation, trauma, misunderstanding, or emotional distance:
may this workbook become a place where healing conversations begin again.*

Healing does not happen through fear or perfection.

Healing happens one safe conversation at a time.

*With compassion and hope,
—Dr. Janet Olivares*



INTRODUCTION

Families today are carrying more emotional pain, stress, conflict, fear, and disconnection than many people realize.

Some families are trying to heal after:

- divorce
- separation
- trauma
- conflict
- emotional distance
- blended family changes
- court involvement
- loss of trust
- or years of feeling misunderstood

Many children feel unheard, overwhelmed, emotionally unsafe, or unsure how to explain what is happening inside them.

Many parents feel exhausted, blamed, frustrated, heartbroken, or afraid of losing connection with their children as conflict continues growing over time.

Too often, families become trapped in cycles of:

- yelling
- shutting down
- blame
- defensiveness
- fear
- emotional distance
- dishonesty
- or repeated hurt

This workbook was created to help families begin again.

- Not through shame
- Not through fear
- Not through perfection

But through emotional safety, accountability, healthy communication, and healing-centered connection.

Safe Again was designed as a parent and child interaction workbook to help families:

- slow down emotionally
- understand the feelings underneath behaviors
- learn healthier ways to communicate
- rebuild trust
- calm overwhelming emotions
- and reconnect safely over time

This workbook teaches that:

- behavior is often communication,
- emotions are important,
- accountability can happen without shame,
- and healing grows when people begin feeling emotionally safe enough to tell the truth and listen with compassion.

Each week will guide families through:

- emotional teaching
- family discussions
- reflection exercises
- nervous system calming tools
- communication practice
- accountability exercises
- and trust-building activities

This is not about creating perfect families.

It is about helping families create safer, healthier, calmer, and more connected relationships one conversation at a time.

- Healing happens slowly
- Trust rebuilds slowly
- But healing is possible

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook was created to help children, parents, caregivers, and families build healthier emotional connection through emotional safety, calm communication, accountability, healing, and reconnection.

Some families using this workbook may be:

- rebuilding trust
- healing from conflict
- adjusting to separation or divorce
- working through emotional hurt
- learning healthier communication
- reconnecting after emotional distance
- or strengthening already healthy relationships

This is not a workbook about blame or punishment.

This is a healing-centered workbook designed to help families:

- slow down emotionally
- understand what is happening underneath behavior
- build emotional safety
- improve communication
- strengthen connection
- and practice healthier ways of interacting together

Each session includes:

- emotional teaching
- reflection questions
- family interaction activities
- nervous system calming tools
- practical communication exercises
- and healing-centered discussions

Families are encouraged to move through the workbook at a steady and emotionally safe pace.

Some sessions may bring up:

- emotions
- memories
- grief
- frustration
- sadness
- or difficult conversations

That is okay.

Healing often happens through honesty, patience, emotional safety, and continued healthy connection over time.

You do not need perfection to benefit from this workbook.

Growth happens one safe step at a time.

Take breaks when needed.

Slow conversations down when emotions become overwhelming.

Return to emotional safety often.

The goal is not to become a perfect family.

The goal is to create a healthier family environment where:

- people feel heard
- emotions are respected
- communication becomes safer
- accountability is healthy
- and connection continues growing over time

May this workbook help your family move toward:

- healing
- emotional safety
- understanding
- calmer communication
- and stronger connection one safe conversation at a time

**TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR THE SAFE AGAIN PROGRAM
INCLUDES VOLUME 1 AND 2. BOTH ARE NEEDED TO
COMPLETE THE PROGRAM.**

VOLUME 1 INCLUDES:

PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

1. Creating Emotional Safety Again
2. Understanding Hurt Beneath Behavior
3. Healthy Communication Without Blame
4. Rebuilding Trust One Safe Step at a Time
5. Learning Calm During Big Emotions
6. Repairing After Conflict
7. Understanding Boundaries and Emotional Safety
8. Learning Honesty Without Fear

VOLUME 2 INCLUDES PART 2 AND 3:

**PART 2 & 3 — Understanding Deeper Emotional
Wounds & Moving Forward with Healing and
Connection**

PART 2 — Understanding Deeper Emotional Wounds

1. Healing Childhood Hurt
2. Understanding Fear and Emotional Protection
3. When Families Feel Emotionally Stuck
4. Grief, Loss, and Emotional Disconnection
5. Understanding Loyalty Conflicts and Emotional Pressure
6. Understanding Shame, Identity, and Self-Worth
7. Relearning Safe Connection

PART 3 — Moving Forward with Healing and Connection

8. Rebuilding Parent and Child Relationships
9. Healthy Accountability Without Shame
10. Creating a Safer Family Culture
11. Rebuilding Hope After Emotional Hurt
12. Moving Forward with Healing, Growth, and Connection

Facilitator Guide

Certification of Completion

PROGRAM PURPOSE

Safe Again is a healing-centered parent and child interaction program designed to help families rebuild emotional safety, improve communication, strengthen trust, and reconnect after trauma, conflict, separation, or emotional disconnection.

This workbook was created for:

- children
- parents
- stepparents
- grandparents
- blended families
- divorced families
- married couples
- reunifying families
- and court-involved families seeking healthier communication and emotional connection

The program focuses on helping families:

- understand emotional reactions,
- recognize the feelings underneath behavior,
- calm nervous system responses,
- communicate more safely,
- practice accountability without shame,
- rebuild trust,
- and strengthen healthy family relationships.

Throughout this workbook, families will learn:

- emotional awareness
- nervous system calming tools
- communication skills
- conflict repair strategies
- trust-building exercises
- healthy boundaries
- emotional accountability
- and healing-centered family interaction

The goal is not perfection.

The goal is to create a safer emotional environment where healing and reconnection can begin again.

STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

Each weekly session in this workbook is designed to help families learn, reflect, communicate, and practice healing together.

Every week includes:

Truth to Remember

Each week ends with a healing-centered truth statement families can practice together throughout the week.

Healing happens one safe conversation at a time.

Emotional Teaching

Simple teaching sections that help children and adults understand:

- emotions
- fear responses
- communication patterns
- trauma reactions
- and emotional safety

Real-Life Family Stories

Stories are designed to help families recognize common struggles and understand the emotions underneath behaviors.

Reflection Questions

Questions that help children and adults identify:

- feelings
- fears
- emotional triggers
- communication struggles
- and personal growth areas

Parent + Child Interaction Activities

Guided conversations that help families:

- listen safely
- understand one another
- practice calm communication
- and reconnect emotionally

Nervous System Reset Tools

Simple calming tools that help families:

- slow emotional reactions
- regulate stress
- calm the body
- and improve emotional control

Accountability & Repair Exercises

Activities that teach:

- honesty
- responsibility
- healthy apologies
- trust rebuilding
- and emotional repair

Weekly Family Prayer

A closing prayer focused on healing, wisdom, peace, connection, and emotional safety.

Truth to Remember

Each week ends with a healing-centered truth statement families can practice together throughout the week.

Healing happens one safe conversation at a time.

Why Some Concepts Repeat Throughout This Workbook

Families experiencing emotional stress, trauma, conflict, separation, or emotional overwhelm often need repeated reminders of healthy emotional skills and healing-centered communication.

Many people do not learn emotional safety, calm communication, accountability, or nervous system regulation through one conversation or one experience alone.

Healing-centered learning often requires:

- repetition
- practice
- consistency
- emotional reinforcement
- and repeated safe experiences over time

Throughout this workbook, families will notice repeated reminders about:

- emotional safety
- slowing down emotionally
- calm communication
- accountability without shame
- healthy repair
- nervous system calming
- and safe reconnection

This repetition is intentional.

The goal is not simply reading these concepts once.

The goal is helping children, parents, and families remember and practice these skills during real-life emotional moments outside the workbook.

Healing grows when healthier emotional patterns are practiced repeatedly over time.

Small safe conversations practiced consistently can slowly transform family relationships, communication patterns, emotional safety, and connection.

Healing happens one safe conversation at a time.

THE SAFE AGAIN PRINCIPLES

Throughout this workbook, families will continue practicing the Safe Again Principles:

1. Emotional Safety Matters

People communicate more honestly when they feel emotionally safe.

2. Slow Down Before Reacting

Calm conversations help families understand one another more clearly.

3. Hurt Often Hides Beneath Behavior

Many emotional reactions are connected to fear, overwhelm, hurt, or emotional stress.

4. Connection Before Correction

People learn best when they feel heard, understood, and emotionally safe.

5. Calm Bodies Create Calmer Conversations

Learning to regulate the nervous system helps families communicate more safely.

6. Accountability Can Happen Without Shame

Healthy accountability helps people grow without fear, humiliation, or emotional disconnection.

7. Repair Is Possible

Families can reconnect after conflict through honesty, humility, patience, and safe communication.

8. Healing Happens Through Repeated Safe Experiences

Trust and healing grow slowly through consistency, emotional safety, and healthy interactions over time.



SAFE AGAIN

Introduction

How to Use this Workbook

TOC

Program Purpose

Structure Overview

The Safe Again Principles

PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

- 1- Creating Emotional Safety Again
- 2- Understanding Hurt Beneath Behavior
- 3- Healthy Communication Without Blame
- 4- Rebuilding Trust One Safe Step at a Time
- 5- Learning Calm During Big Emotions
- 6- Repairing After Conflict
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- 8- Learning Honesty Without Fear

Author Credentials

**Certificate of Completion is at the end of Volume 2*

PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations**CHAPTER 1*****Creating Emotional Safety Again*****Truth to Remember**

Healing begins when people feel emotionally safe enough to be honest, calm, and understood.

Focus

This session helps families begin understanding emotional safety, nervous system reactions, and the importance of creating calm, safe communication during stressful moments.

Scripture

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. — James 1:19

Before We Begin (Heart Check)

Sometimes families want healing, but emotions feel too big, too painful, or too overwhelming to talk about safely.

Before starting this session, take a moment to slow down and answer honestly.

Child Reflection

When conflict happens in my family, I usually feel:

nervous	unheard
angry	overwhelmed
afraid	sad
confused	emotionally alone
blamed	shut down

Something I wish adults understood about me:

Parent Reflection

When conflict happens in our family, I usually feel:

frustrated	emotionally overwhelmed
exhausted	defensive
worried	afraid of losing connection
helpless	misunderstood
blamed	unsure what to do

Something I wish my child understood about me:

Emotional Teaching Moment

What Is Emotional Safety?

Emotional safety means people feel:

- heard
- respected
- calm enough to talk
- emotionally accepted
- and safe expressing feelings without fear of humiliation, screaming, rejection, or emotional harm.

Children and adults communicate best when they feel emotionally safe.

When emotional safety is missing, people often:

- yell
- shut down
- lie
- become defensive
- avoid conversations
- become emotionally distant
- or react before thinking.

Many families are not trying to hurt each other.

Many families are reacting from:

- stress
- fear
- hurt
- emotional overload
- or past experiences that still feel painful inside.

Healing begins when families stop asking:

“Who is the problem?”

Parent Response:

Child Response:

and begin asking:

“What is happening inside each person emotionally?”

Parent Response:

Child Response:

Understanding the Nervous System

Sometimes emotions become so strong that the body reacts before the brain has time to think calmly.

This is called a stress response.

When people feel emotionally unsafe, the body may respond by:

Fight

- yelling
- arguing
- controlling
- blaming
- anger

Flight

- avoiding
- leaving
- shutting people out
- staying busy to avoid emotions

Freeze

- silence
- emotional shutdown
- staring blankly
- feeling numb
- not knowing what to say

These reactions do not always mean someone is “bad.”

Often, it means the nervous system feels overwhelmed or unsafe.

Learning to calm the body helps families communicate more safely.

Life Story

Big Feelings Benny flopped dramatically across the couch like sad noodles while Mama Jo and Papa Pete talked loudly in the kitchen.

Even the family dog slowly backed out of the room.

Lately, almost every conversation in the house felt stressful.

If Benny tried explaining his feelings, someone corrected him before he could finish talking.

If Mama Jo asked questions, Benny's stomach tightened because he worried he might say the wrong thing.

If Papa Pete became frustrated, Benny immediately felt nervous inside, even when nobody meant to scare him.

So instead of talking honestly, Benny had started doing what felt safer:

- staying quiet,
- shrugging his shoulders,
- hiding in his room,
- or pretending he did not care.

At school, Benny's teacher noticed he seemed distracted and emotionally tired.

At home, Mama Jo and Papa Pete felt confused because they missed the happy, talkative Benny they used to know.

One evening during another stressful conversation, Benny suddenly whispered:

"I don't feel safe talking anymore."

The room became completely quiet.

Mama Jo stopped talking.

Papa Pete slowly sat down.

For the first time in a long time, nobody interrupted.

Nobody corrected.

Nobody defended themselves.

They simply listened.

And underneath Benny's frustration, they finally began hearing something much deeper:

Benny was not trying to be difficult.

He was overwhelmed emotionally and afraid of conflict.

That moment did not fix everything overnight.

But it became the beginning of a different kind of conversation.

Not a perfect conversation.

But a safer one.

The Real Thought

Sometimes behavior is really communicating:

Parent

“I feel afraid.”
“I don’t feel heard.”
“I’m scared of getting in trouble.”
“I feel emotionally overwhelmed.”
“I don’t know how to explain my feelings.”
“I’m afraid people will misunderstand me.”
“I feel pressure all the time.”
“I don’t feel emotionally safe.”

Child

“I feel afraid.”
“I don’t feel heard.”
“I’m scared of getting in trouble.”
“I feel emotionally overwhelmed.”
“I don’t know how to explain my feelings.”
“I’m afraid people will misunderstand me.”
“I feel pressure all the time.”
“I don’t feel emotionally safe.”

Reflection Questions

Child Reflection

When do you feel most emotionally safe?

What makes conversations feel harder for you?

When you become upset, what usually happens inside your body?

my stomach tightens	my heart races
I cry	I want to leave
I shut down	I stop talking
I become angry	I feel nervous

Parent Reflection

What do you think your child may need emotionally during conflict?

What usually happens inside you during stressful family situations?

What kind of communication did you grow up around as a child?

yelling	avoidance
silence	fear
criticism	emotional shutdown
calm conversations	healthy communication

How might your own childhood experiences affect the way you respond now?

Parent + Child Interaction Time

Take turns answering slowly

No interrupting

No correcting

Only listening and understanding

What helps you feel emotionally safe with me?

Child Response:

What do you wish adults understood about kids during conflict?

Child Response:

What do you wish children understood about adults during stressful moments?

Parent Response:

What would help our home feel calmer and safer emotionally?

Child Response:

What would help our home feel calmer and safer emotionally?

Parent Response:

Nervous System Reset Tool

The Family Pause Practice

When emotions become too big:

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Stop the conversation for a moment.

STEP 2 — BREATHE

Take 3 slow breaths together.

Breathe in slowly...

Breathe out slowly...

STEP 3 — CALM THE BODY

Relax shoulders.

Unclench hands.

Slow your voice.

STEP 4 — RESTART SAFELY

Use calm words like:

- “Can we try again?”
- “Help me understand.”
- “I want to talk calmly.”
- “I’m feeling overwhelmed.”
- “I need a moment.”

Big emotions are not wrong.

Learning how to handle them safely takes practice.

Saying It In A Healthy Way

Child Can Say:

- “I feel overwhelmed.”
- “I’m afraid to talk.”
- “I need you to listen first.”
- “I don’t know how to explain my feelings.”
- “I want to feel safe talking.”

Parent Can Say:

- “Help me understand.”
- “Your feelings matter.”
- “Let’s slow this conversation down.”
- “I want our home to feel emotionally safe.”
- “We can work through this together calmly.”

Let’s Try Again

What happened during a recent conflict?

Child Response:

What was I feeling inside?

Child Response:

What was I afraid would happen?

Child Response:

What would have helped me feel safer emotionally?

Child Response:

A healthier way we can communicate next time:

Parent Response:

A healthier way we can communicate next time:

Child Response:

Family Connection Activity

Our Safe Again Family Agreement

As a family, we want to practice:

Parent

listening calmly
telling the truth respectfully
taking breaks when overwhelmed
using kind words
apologizing sincerely
asking questions before assuming
speaking honestly about feelings
working toward repair instead of punishment
slowing conversations down
helping each other feel emotionally safe

Child

listening calmly
telling the truth respectfully
taking breaks when overwhelmed
using kind words
apologizing sincerely
asking questions before assuming
speaking honestly about feelings
working toward repair instead of punishment
slowing conversations down
helping each other feel emotionally safe

One thing we want to improve in our family this week:

Parent Response:

One thing we want to improve in our family this week:

Child Response:

Truth to Live By

Emotional safety helps families heal, reconnect, and communicate with greater honesty and peace.

Truth Practice This Week (Together)**Parent**

Practice calm breathing before reacting
 Pause conversations when emotions
 become overwhelming
 Listen without interrupting
 Share one honest feeling each day
 Practice saying: "Help me understand."
 Practice restarting conversations calmly

Child

Practice calm breathing before reacting
 Pause conversations when emotions
 become overwhelming
 Listen without interrupting
 Share one honest feeling each day
 Practice saying: "Help me understand."
 Practice restarting conversations calmly

Parent Reminder

Children communicate best when they feel:

- emotionally safe
- heard
- respected
- calm
- and understood

Correction without emotional safety may increase:

- fear
- shutdown
- anger
- defensiveness
- avoidance
- or emotional distance

Connection helps children become more open to guidance. Healing begins when families learn how to slow down, listen, and create safety together.

Healing Prayer

God,

*Help our family become a place of emotional safety,
 honesty, calmness, and healing.*

Teach us how to listen with patience instead of reacting in frustration.

*Help us understand the feelings underneath our
 words and behaviors.*

*Give us wisdom to slow down during difficult moments
 and reconnect with love, accountability, and compassion.*

Teach us how to rebuild trust one safe conversation at a time.

Amen.



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Author Credentials

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PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

CHAPTER 2

Understanding Hurt Beneath Behavior

Truth to Remember

Sometimes behavior is communicating hurt that has not yet found safe words.

Focus

This session helps families recognize the hurt, fear, overwhelm, and emotional pain that often exist underneath behavior and emotional reactions.

Scripture

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” — Psalm 147:3

Before We Begin (Heart Check)

Sometimes people react strongly because something deeper inside feels hurt, overwhelmed, rejected, embarrassed, or emotionally unsafe.

Before beginning today’s session, answer honestly.

Child Reflection

When I feel hurt inside, I usually:

become quiet	shut down
become angry	become defensive
avoid people	say hurtful things
pretend I’m okay	lie to avoid trouble
cry alone	try to make everyone happy

Something that hurts my feelings easily:

Parent Reflection

When I feel emotionally overwhelmed, I usually:

become frustrated	avoid difficult conversations
raise my voice	become defensive
shut down emotionally	feel exhausted
become impatient	feel disrespected
try to control situations	become emotionally distant

One thing that emotionally overwhelms me most as a parent:

Emotional Teaching Moment

Hurt Often Hides Underneath Behavior

Sometimes families only see:

- the anger
- the attitude
- the disrespect
- the silence
- the shutdown
- the lying
- or the defensiveness

But underneath those reactions is often:

- fear
- sadness
- rejection
- embarrassment
- loneliness
- disappointment
- emotional overload
- or feeling emotionally unsafe.

Children do not always know how to explain pain with words.

Adults sometimes struggle with this too.

Instead of saying:

“I feel hurt,” people may:

- yell
- avoid
- shut down
- blame
- cry
- become controlling
- or emotionally disconnect

This does not excuse unhealthy behavior.

But understanding the hurt underneath behavior helps families respond with greater wisdom and calmness.

Healing begins when people feel safe enough to talk about what is really happening inside them.

Understanding Emotional Triggers

An emotional trigger happens when something causes a strong emotional reaction inside the body or mind.

Sometimes the reaction feels bigger than the situation itself because:

- old hurt
- fear
- rejection
- trauma
- or painful memories
are being activated internally

Examples:

- feeling ignored
- hearing yelling
- being criticized
- feeling rejected
- feeling misunderstood
- conflict between parents
- disappointment
- fear of punishment
- fear of abandonment

When emotional triggers happen, the nervous system may react quickly before calm thinking happens.

That is why learning about emotional awareness is important.

Life Story

Moody Max stomped through the front door after school like an angry tornado wearing sneakers.

His backpack flew across the hallway so dramatically that Worrybug Wyatt nearly spilled his juice trying to dodge it.

From the kitchen, Nana Grace called out gently:

“Whoa there, Grumpy Gus Junior... rough day?”

“Nothing happened!” Max snapped quickly.

Then he disappeared into his room and slammed the door so hard the family picture frame tilted sideways.

From the outside, it looked like:

- attitude,
- disrespect,
- and anger.

But something much deeper was happening inside him.

Earlier that day at school, Max had forgotten part of his class presentation.

A few kids laughed.

One whispered,
“Nice job, genius.”

Even though the comment only lasted seconds, embarrassment stayed stuck inside Max like a heavy rock all afternoon.

By the time he got home, his emotions were already overflowing.

When Nana Grace asked what was wrong, Max did not know how to explain:

- the embarrassment,
- the shame,
- the hurt,
- and how small he suddenly felt inside.

So instead of talking about the pain,
he reacted to it.

Later that evening, Nana Grace quietly knocked on his bedroom door carrying two giant chocolate chip cookies and one ridiculously tiny glass of milk.

Max looked confused.

Nana Grace smiled softly and said:

“I figured if we’re having hard feelings tonight, we probably need emergency cookies.”

For the first time all day, Max almost smiled.

Then Nana Grace sat beside him quietly and asked:

“What hurt your heart today?”

This time, Max answered.

Not because the embarrassment magically disappeared...

But because someone finally made it feel emotionally safe enough to talk about it.

The Real Thought

Parent & Child to respond

Sometimes reactions are really saying:

Parent

“I feel hurt.”
 “I feel embarrassed.”
 “I don’t feel understood.”
 “I’m afraid.”
 “I feel rejected.”
 “I feel emotionally overwhelmed.”
 “I don’t know how to explain my feelings.”
 “I don’t feel emotionally safe.”

Child

“I feel hurt.”
 “I feel embarrassed.”
 “I don’t feel understood.”
 “I’m afraid.”
 “I feel rejected.”
 “I feel emotionally overwhelmed.”
 “I don’t know how to explain my feelings.”
 “I don’t feel emotionally safe.”

Child Reflection Questions

What usually hurts your feelings the most?

Child Response:

When you become upset, what do you wish adults would understand about you?

Child Response:

What emotions are hard for you to talk about?

Child Response:

sadness	rejection
fear	anger
embarrassment	disappointment
loneliness	anxiety

Parent Reflection

What behaviors are hardest for you to stay calm during?

Parent Response:

What emotions are hardest for you to express calmly?

Parent Response:

When you were growing up, were emotions talked about openly?

Parent Response:

yes
no
sometimes

How were emotions usually handled in your childhood home?

Parent Response:

Parent + Child Interaction Time

Take turns listening slowly
No interrupting
No defending
Focus only on understanding

Parent (asking child): What do you think hurts you emotionally the most right now?

Child Response:

Parent (asking child): What do you need most from adults when you feel upset?

Child Response:

Child (asking parent): What do you wish children understood about adult stress and emotions?

Parent Response:

Parent (asking child): What helps our family feel emotionally calmer during difficult moments?

Child Response:

Child (asking parent): What helps our family feel emotionally calmer during difficult moments?

Parent Response:

Nervous System Reset Tool

Naming Feelings Helps Calm the Brain

Sometimes emotions become less overwhelming when we slow down and identify them clearly.

When emotions rise:

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Stop before reacting immediately.

STEP 2 — NOTICE THE BODY

What is happening physically? (Parent or Child may answer)

Parent
tight chest
fast heartbeat
stomach pain
clenched fists
crying
shaking
headache
feeling numb

Child
tight chest
fast heartbeat
stomach pain
clenched fists
crying
shaking
headache
feeling numb

STEP 3 — NAME THE FEELING

Instead of reacting, try saying:

- “I feel embarrassed.”
- “I feel overwhelmed.”
- “I feel hurt.”
- “I feel afraid.”
- “I feel misunderstood.”

STEP 4 — BREATHE SLOWLY

Take 3 calm breaths together.

Naming emotions helps the nervous system begin calming down.

Saying It In A Healthy Way

Child Can Say:

- “I felt embarrassed.”
- “I didn’t know how to explain my feelings.”
- “I felt hurt inside.”
- “I need you to listen before reacting.”
- “I felt emotionally overwhelmed.”

Parent Can Say:

- “Help me understand what hurt.”
- “Your feelings matter.”
- “I want to understand what’s happening inside you.”
- “We can talk calmly together.”
- “You are safe to share your feelings.”

Let’s Try Again

What happened during a recent emotional moment?

Parent Response:

What happened during a recent emotional moment?

Child Response:

What behavior did people see on the outside?

Parent Response:

What behavior did people see on the outside?

Child Response:

What feelings were happening underneath the behavior?

Parent Response:

What feelings were happening underneath the behavior?

Child Response:

What would have helped the situation feel emotionally safer?

Parent Response:

What would have helped the situation feel emotionally safer?

Child Response:

A healthier way we can respond next time:

Parent Response:

A healthier way we can respond next time:

Child Response:

Family Connection Activity

Looking Beneath the Behavior

Each family member answers:

One feeling I hide often:

Parent Response:

One feeling I hide often:

Child Response:

One thing that emotionally overwhelms me:

Parent Response:

One thing that emotionally overwhelms me:

Child Response:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe:

Parent Response:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe:

Child Response:

One way our family can respond more calmly: Parent Response

One way our family can respond more calmly: Child Response

Truth to Live By

Understanding the hurt underneath behavior helps families respond with greater compassion, wisdom, and emotional safety.

Truth Practice This Week

Parent	Child
Pause before reacting Practice naming emotions calmly Share one honest feeling each day Listen without interrupting What may be happening underneath this behavior? Practice calm breathing during stress	Pause before reacting Practice naming emotions calmly Share one honest feeling each day Listen without interrupting What may be happening underneath this behavior? Practice calm breathing during stress

Parent Reminder

Children often express emotional pain through:

- anger
- withdrawal
- defensiveness
- lying
- avoidance
- disrespect
- or emotional shutdown

Behavior is often communication.

Children heal when adults:

- stay calm
- listen carefully
- slow conversations down
- help identify feelings
- and create emotional safety during difficult moments.

Correction without connection may increase emotional distance.

Healing grows when families begin understanding the emotions underneath reactions.

Healing Prayer

God,

**Help our family learn to see beyond behavior
and understand the feelings underneath our reactions.
Teach us how to respond with wisdom, patience, calmness,
and compassion.**

**Help us slow down during emotional moments
and communicate safely with one another.**

**Give us courage to speak honestly about our hurt
instead of hiding behind anger, silence, or fear.**

**Help our family become a place where healing,
understanding, and emotional safety continue growing.**

Amen.



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Author Credentials

**Certificate of Completion is at the end of Volume 2*

PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations**CHAPTER 3*****Healthy Communication Without Blame*****Truth to Remember**

Healthy communication begins when people feel heard instead of attacked.

Focus

This session helps families practice healthier listening, calmer communication, emotional understanding, and safer conversations during conflict.

Scripture

“Let your conversation be always full of grace.” — Colossians 4:6

Before We Begin (Heart Check)

Sometimes families stop listening because emotions become louder than understanding.

When people feel blamed, criticized, interrupted, or misunderstood, communication often becomes unsafe very quickly.

Before beginning today’s session, answer honestly.

Child Reflection (Child Response)

During conflict, I usually:

stop talking
become defensive
cry
yell
avoid the conversation

feel misunderstood
feel blamed
become angry
shut down emotionally
wish someone would listen first

Something that makes communication hard for me: Child Response

Parent Reflection (Parent Response)

During stressful conversations, I usually:

interrupt	focus on correcting behavior
become frustrated quickly	become defensive
repeat myself often	shut down emotionally
feel unheard	feel disrespected
become emotionally overwhelmed	raise my voice

Something I wish communication felt like in our family:
Parent Response

Emotional Teaching Moment

Communication Is More Than Words

Healthy communication is not only about:

- talking
- correcting
- or explaining

Healthy communication also includes:

- listening
- emotional safety
- patience
- body language
- tone of voice
- calmness
- understanding
- and respect

Many family arguments are not actually about the original problem.

They become about:

- not feeling heard
- feeling blamed
- feeling misunderstood
- feeling emotionally unsafe
- or feeling attacked instead of understood

When people feel emotionally unsafe, the nervous system often reacts quickly.

People may:

- interrupt
- yell
- shut down
- avoid eye contact
- become defensive
- or stop listening completely

Healing communication happens when families slow down enough to:

listen before reacting.

Understanding Defensive Communication

Sometimes people become defensive because they feel:

- criticized
- ashamed
- blamed
- emotionally unsafe
- embarrassed
- afraid of disappointing others

Defensiveness may sound like:

- “That’s not what happened.”
- “You always blame me.”
- “You don’t understand.”
- “I didn’t do anything wrong.”
- “Why are you attacking me?”

Defensiveness usually protects emotions underneath such as:

- fear
- hurt
- shame
- rejection
- or emotionally overwhelmed

Learning calm communication helps families feel safer and more connected.

Life Story

Rocket Riley burst into the kitchen talking so fast that half his words crashed into each other like bumper cars.

“NobodyEVERlistensandit’sNOTfairandIdidn’teven—”

“Slow down,” Papa Pete interrupted quickly.

“I AM trying to explain!” Riley shouted back.

Within seconds, the whole kitchen felt emotionally stormy.

Mama Jo crossed her arms.

Papa Pete sighed loudly.

Rocket Riley threw himself dramatically into a chair like his entire life had just ended before dinner.

Meanwhile, Giggles Gabby slowly backed out of the room holding a garlic breadstick like it was emergency survival equipment.

The truth was...

Riley had already had a really hard day.

At school, his teacher corrected him in front of the class after he blurted out answers too quickly again.

Some kids laughed.

By the time he got home, Riley already felt:

- embarrassed,
- frustrated,
- and misunderstood.

So when Papa Pete interrupted him at dinner, Riley’s nervous system reacted immediately.

Inside, Riley was not thinking:

“I want to be disrespectful.”

Inside, Riley was thinking:

“Nobody listens long enough to understand me.”

At the same time, Papa Pete was not trying to hurt Riley either.

Papa Pete had worked all day, felt emotionally exhausted, and was already overwhelmed by the noise and chaos in the house.

Both people were frustrated.

Both people felt unheard.

Both nervous systems were reacting faster than their calm thinking.

Finally, Mama Jo gently raised her hand and said:

“Everybody pause.”

The room became quiet.

Then Mama Jo looked at Riley and calmly said:

“Let’s start over slower this time.
We want to understand you, not fight with you.”

Riley took a deep breath.

Papa Pete sat down beside him instead of standing over him.

And for the first time that evening, the conversation became calmer because everyone stopped trying to defend themselves long enough to listen.

Not perfectly.

But more safely.

And sometimes safety is where healing begins.

The Real Thought

Sometimes reactions are really saying:

Parent

“I don’t feel understood.”
“I feel blamed.”
“I’m embarrassed.”
“I’m afraid of disappointing people.”
“I don’t feel emotionally safe.”
“I wish someone would listen first.”
“I feel attacked.”
“I don’t know how to explain my feelings.”

Child

“I don’t feel understood.”
“I feel blamed.”
“I’m embarrassed.”
“I’m afraid of disappointing people.”
“I don’t feel emotionally safe.”
“I wish someone would listen first.”
“I feel attacked.”
“I don’t know how to explain my feelings.”

Reflection Questions

Child Reflection

What makes communication feel unsafe for you?

Child Response

What helps you feel listened to?

Child Response

What usually happens inside you during conflict?

Child Response

stomach tightens

I cry

I become angry

I shut down

my heart races

I stop listening

I feel afraid

I feel blamed

Parent Reflection

What communication habits do you want to improve?

Parent Response

What usually causes communication to escalate in your family?

Parent Response

How was communication handled in your childhood home?

Parent Response

yelling

criticism

silence

avoidance

healthy discussion

emotional shutdown

fear

calm communication

How might those experiences affect your communication today?

Parent Response

Parent + Child Interaction Time

Take turns speaking calmly.

The goal is understanding, not winning.

Parent Asks question to child

What helps you feel heard during conversations?

Child Response:

Child Asks question to Parent

What do you wish adults would do differently during conflict?

Parent Response:

Parent Asks question to child

What do you wish children understood about adult stress and worry?

Child Response:

What communication habits would help our family feel calmer and safer?

Parent Response:

What communication habits would help our family feel calmer and safer?

Child Response:

Nervous System Reset Tool

The Slow Down Practice

When communication starts becoming emotionally overwhelming:

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Stop the conversation for one moment.

STEP 2 — LOWER THE VOLUME

Speak more slowly and softly.

STEP 3 — BREATHE

Take 3 calm breaths.

STEP 4 — USE SAFE COMMUNICATION

Try saying:

- “Help me understand.”
- “I want to listen.”
- “I’m feeling overwhelmed.”
- “Can we slow down?”
- “I want this conversation to feel safe.”

Slowing the nervous system helps people listen more clearly.

Saying It In A Healthy Way

Child Can Say:

- “I need you to listen first.”
- “I feel overwhelmed.”
- “I’m trying to explain myself.”
- “I feel blamed.”
- “I want to talk calmly.”

Parent Can Say:

- “Help me understand your feelings.”
- “I’m listening.”
- “Your feelings matter.”
- “Let’s slow this conversation down.”
- “We can work through this together calmly.”

Let's Try Again

What happened during a recent difficult conversation?

Parent Response:

What happened during a recent difficult conversation?

Child Response:

What feelings were happening underneath the conflict?

Parent Response:

What feelings were happening underneath the conflict?

Child Response:

What words or tone made the conversation harder?

Parent Response:

What words or tone made the conversation harder?

Child Response:

What would have helped the conversation feel emotionally safer?

Parent Response:

What would have helped the conversation feel emotionally safer?

Child Response:

A healthier way we can communicate next time:

Parent Response:

A healthier way we can communicate next time:

Child Response:

Family Connection Activity

Listening Without Interrupting Each family member answers:

One thing I wish people understood about me:

Parent Response:

One thing I wish people understood about me:

Child Response:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe:

Parent Response:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe:

Child Response:

One communication habit I want to improve:

Parent Response:

One communication habit I want to improve:

Child Response:

One thing our family already does well:

Parent Response:

One thing our family already does well:

Child Response:

Truth to Live By

Families heal when communication becomes calmer, safer, kinder, and more emotionally aware.

Truth Practice This Week (one for each)

Parent

Practice listening without interrupting
Pause before reacting emotionally
Speak calmly during frustration
Ask questions before assuming
Share one honest feeling each day
Practice saying: "Help me understand."

Child

Practice listening without interrupting
Pause before reacting emotionally
Speak calmly during frustration
Ask questions before assuming
Share one honest feeling each day
Practice saying: "Help me understand."

Parent Reminder

Children communicate best when they feel:

- emotionally safe
- listened to
- respected
- calm
- and understood

Correction without listening may increase:

- defensiveness
- emotional shutdown
- anger
- fear
- or emotional distance

Connection helps communication become safer and more productive. Families grow stronger when people feel heard instead of attacked.

Healing Prayer

God,

**Help our family communicate with patience, calmness, wisdom,
and understanding.**

Teach us to listen carefully before reacting emotionally.

**Help us slow down during difficult conversations and speak
with kindness and respect.**

**Give us courage to communicate honestly while creating
emotional safety for one another.**

**Help our family become a place where people feel heard,
valued, understood, and loved.**

Amen.



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PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

CHAPTER 4

Rebuilding Trust One Safe Step at a Time

Truth to Remember

Trust is rebuilt slowly through honesty, safety, consistency, and small healthy choices over time.

Session Focus

This session helps families understand how trust is damaged, how emotional protection develops, and how trust can be rebuilt through repeated safe experiences.

Scripture

“Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” — 1 Corinthians 13:7

Before We Begin (Heart Check)

Sometimes trust becomes damaged after:

- yelling
- dishonesty
- broken promises
- emotional hurt
- conflict
- separation
- fear
- disappointment
- betrayal
- or repeated emotional pain

When trust feels broken, families may begin protecting themselves emotionally instead of staying connected.

Before beginning today’s session, answer honestly.

Child Reflection (Child Response)

When trust feels broken, I usually:

stop talking openly	shut down emotionally
become nervous	pretend I don't care
avoid people	become defensive
expect disappointment	feel unsafe
become angry	keep my feelings hidden

Something that makes trust hard for me:

Parent Reflection (Parent Response)

When trust feels damaged in our family, I usually:

become frustrated	repeat myself often
worry more	become fearful
become controlling	expect problems
struggle to relax	feel emotionally exhausted
become emotionally distant	struggle to trust again

One thing that feels hardest about rebuilding trust:

Emotional Teaching Moment

Trust Is Built Through Repeated Safe Experiences

Trust usually does not disappear all at once.

And trust usually does not rebuild all at once either.

Trust grows slowly when people begin experiencing:

- honesty
- emotional safety
- consistency
- accountability
- calm communication
- respect
- follow-through
- and emotional repair

Sometimes families want trust to return immediately after someone says:

- “I’m sorry.”
- “I didn’t mean it.”
- “It won’t happen again.”

But trust often needs more than words.

Trust rebuilds through repeated safe actions over time.

Understanding Emotional Protection

When people have been hurt emotionally, they often begin protecting themselves inside.

Children may:

- stop sharing feelings
- avoid conversations
- lie to avoid conflict
- become emotionally distant
- expect rejection
- fear disappointment

Adults may:

- become controlling
- react quickly
- monitor everything closely
- struggle to relax emotionally
- become fearful of being hurt again

These reactions often develop because the nervous system is trying to feel emotionally safe again.

Healing begins when families create new safe experiences consistently over time.

Life Story

Trusty Theo and the Cracked Bridge

Trusty Theo loved building giant block bridges across the living room.

Every afternoon he carefully stacked:

- blocks
 - books
 - pillows
 - and sometimes even cereal boxes
- into what he proudly called, “The Super Mega Safe Bridge of Awesomeness.”

One afternoon, Little Lou accidentally crashed into the bridge while chasing the dog wearing superhero socks.

CRASH.

Blocks exploded everywhere.

Theo froze.

His face turned red instantly.

“You ruined it!” he shouted.

Little Lou looked scared immediately.

“I didn’t mean to...”

But Theo crossed his arms and refused to talk the rest of the evening.

Later that night, Grandpa Ray sat beside Theo quietly.

“You worked really hard on that bridge, huh?”

Theo nodded silently.

Grandpa Ray smiled gently.

“You know... trust can feel a lot like bridges.”

Theo looked up curiously.

Grandpa Ray continued:

“When people get hurt, it can feel like the bridge between them cracked.”

Theo whispered softly,

“Then what happens?”

Grandpa Ray pointed at the broken blocks.

“You rebuild it one block at a time.”

The next morning, Little Lou walked into the living room carrying one single block.

“I know I can’t fix it all at once,” Lou said quietly,

“but I want to help rebuild it.”

Theo stared at him for a moment.

Then slowly slid a second block across the floor.

And together...

they started rebuilding.

Not perfectly.

Not instantly.

But one safe step at a time.

The Real Thought

Sometimes reactions are really saying:

Parent

“I’m afraid of getting hurt again.”
 “I don’t know if I feel safe yet.”
 “I want to trust again.”
 “I’m afraid of disappointment.”
 “I feel emotionally guarded.”
 “I need consistency.”
 “I want honesty.”
 “I need time to heal.”

Child

“I’m afraid of getting hurt again.”
 “I don’t know if I feel safe yet.”
 “I want to trust again.”
 “I’m afraid of disappointment.”
 “I feel emotionally guarded.”
 “I need consistency.”
 “I want honesty.”
 “I need time to heal.”

Reflection Questions

Child Reflection

What helps you trust someone?

Child Response:

What makes trust feel harder for you?

Child Response:

When trust feels broken, what emotions do you usually feel?

Child Response:

sadness	confusion
anger	loneliness
fear	nervousness
embarrassment	emotional shutdown

Parent Reflection

What do you think helps children feel emotionally safe again?

Parent Response:

What makes rebuilding trust difficult for adults?

Parent Response:

How was trust handled in your childhood home?

Parent Response:

promises were kept
trust was often broken
people apologized sincerely
feelings were ignored

people avoided difficult conversations
honesty felt unsafe
communication felt calm
fear controlled the home

How might those experiences affect trust in your family today?

Parent Response:

Parent + Child Interaction Time

- Take turns answering slowly
- No interrupting
- No correcting
- Only listening and understanding

What helps you feel emotionally safe enough to trust me?

Parent Response:

What helps you feel emotionally safe enough to trust adults?

Child Response:

What is one thing I can do more consistently to help rebuild trust?

Parent Response:

What would help our family feel safer and more connected this week?

Parent Response:

What would help our family feel safer and more connected this week?

Child Response:

Nervous System Reset Tool

The Safe Consistency Practice

Trust rebuilds when the nervous system begins experiencing safety repeatedly.

When emotions feel uncertain:

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Slow the conversation down.

STEP 2 — NOTICE FEAR

Ask:

“What am I afraid might happen right now?”

STEP 3 — SPEAK CALMLY

Use a calm tone and slower words.

STEP 4 — PRACTICE SMALL SAFE ACTIONS

Examples:

- following through
- listening calmly
- telling the truth
- apologizing sincerely
- showing patience
- staying emotionally present

Small safe moments help trust grow again.

Saying It In A Healthy Way

Child Can Say:

- “I’m still learning to trust again.”
- “I need consistency.”
- “I felt hurt.”
- “I want to feel emotionally safe.”
- “I need you to listen calmly.”

Parent Can Say:

- “I understand trust takes time.”
- “I want to rebuild trust safely.”
- “Your feelings matter.”
- “I will work on consistency.”
- “We can rebuild this together slowly.”

Let’s Try Again

Think about a recent situation where trust felt damaged.

What happened?

Parent Response:

What happened?

Child Response:

What emotions were underneath the hurt?

Parent Response

What emotions were underneath the hurt?

Child Response:

What would have helped the situation feel emotionally safer?

Parent Response:

What would have helped the situation feel emotionally safer?

Child Response:

One healthy step we can practice this week.

Parent Response:

One healthy step we can practice this week.

Child Response:

Family Connection Activity
Rebuilding Trust Together
Each family member answers.

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe.

Parent Response:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe.

Child Response:

One thing that damages trust for me.

Parent Response:

One thing that damages trust for me.

Child Response:

One healthy action that helps rebuild trust.

Parent Response:

One healthy action that helps rebuild trust.

Child Response:

One way our family can practice consistency this week.

Parent Response:

One way our family can practice consistency this week.

Child Response:

Truth to Live By

Trust grows through honesty, consistency, emotional safety, accountability, and repeated healthy experiences over time.

Truth Practice This Week

Parent

Practice calm honesty
Follow through on small promises
Pause before reacting emotionally
Practice listening without interrupting
Share one honest feeling each day
Practice saying: "We can rebuild this together."

Child

Practice calm honesty
Follow through on small promises
Pause before reacting emotionally
Practice listening without interrupting
Share one honest feeling each day
Practice saying: "We can rebuild this together."

Parent Reminder

Children often rebuild trust through:

- consistency
- emotional safety
- calm communication
- honesty
- patience
- listening
- and predictable healthy behavior

Trust is not rebuilt through fear or pressure.

Trust grows when families experience repeated moments of emotional safety over time.

Healing Prayer

God,

**Help our family rebuild trust with patience, wisdom,
honesty, and compassion.**

**Teach us how to create emotional safety
through our words, actions, and choices.**

**Help us stay calm during difficult moments and continue
rebuilding connections one safe step at a time.**

**Give us courage to tell the truth, repair hurt with humility,
and grow stronger together through healing and understanding.**

**Help our family become a place where trust, peace,
and emotional safety continue growing.**

Amen.



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PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

CHAPTER 5

Learning Calm During Big Emotions

Truth to Remember

Big emotions are not bad. Learning how to handle them safely helps families heal and reconnect.

Session Focus

This session helps to learning to recognize calm and respond to big emotions in healthy ways.

Scripture

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” — Proverbs 15:1

Before We Begin (Heart Check)

Sometimes emotions become so big that people react before they have time to think calmly.

During stressful moments, families may:

- yell
- cry
- shut down
- interrupt
- become defensive
- walk away
- say hurtful things
- or feel emotionally overwhelmed

Many people were never taught how to calm their nervous system in healthy ways.

Before beginning today’s session, answer honestly.

Child Reflection (Child Response)

When my emotions become really big, I usually:

cry	say things I regret
yell	feel overwhelmed
shut down	stop listening
leave the room	become quiet
become angry	feel out of control

Something that helps me calm down is:

Parent Reflection (Parent Response)

When I become emotionally overwhelmed, I usually:

raise my voice	feel emotionally exhausted
become impatient	stop listening
shut down emotionally	react too quickly
become defensive	become frustrated
try to control the situation	feel helpless

One thing that makes staying calm difficult for me:

Emotional Teaching Moment

Big Emotions Affect the Body

Emotions do not only happen in the mind.

They also affect:

- the body,
- the nervous system,
- breathing,
- heart rate,
- thoughts,
- and reactions.

When people feel emotionally overwhelmed, the nervous system may react automatically.

This is why people sometimes:

- yell before thinking,
- cry suddenly,
- shut down emotionally,
- interrupt,
- become defensive,
- or struggle to calm down quickly.

This does not always mean someone is trying to be difficult.

Sometimes the body feels emotionally unsafe and reacts before calm thinking can happen.

Learning calming skills helps families slow down reactions and communicate more safely.

Understanding Emotional Escalation

Emotional escalation happens when feelings continue growing bigger without slowing down.

Some signs of escalation include:

- louder voices
- faster talking
- interrupting
- crying
- shutting down
- blaming
- tight muscles
- stomach pain
- fast heartbeat
- feeling unable to think clearly

When emotional escalation continues, communication often becomes unsafe.

That is why calming the nervous system is important before trying to solve problems.

Calm bodies help create calmer conversations.

Life Story

Dizzy Daisy and the Volcano Feelings

Dizzy Daisy was trying very hard not to explode.

Very hard.

But unfortunately, her little brother Bumble Ben had just spilled orange juice across her homework, her favorite hoodie, and somehow even the cat.

Again.

Daisy's face turned bright red.

Her chest tightened.

Her hands were clenched.

Inside, it felt like a giant volcano was bubbling higher and higher.

"I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE!" Daisy shouted.

Bumble Ben froze like a nervous squirrel holding a spoon.

Mom stepped into the kitchen quickly.

At first, Mom felt her own frustration rising too.

The kitchen was sticky.

The cat looked offended.

And somebody was somehow crying over a math worksheet.

For a moment, everybody's emotions were getting louder at the same time.

Then Mom paused.

Instead of yelling back, she slowly took a deep breath and said:

"Everybody stop for one minute."

The room became quiet.

Mom gently looked at Daisy and said:

"I think your feelings got really big really fast."

Daisy nodded while wiping tears from her face.

Then Mom said something unexpected:

"Big feelings are not bad.

But we need to learn how to handle them safely."

A few minutes later, everyone sat at the table calmer than before.

The juice still needed cleaning.

The homework still needed fixing.
But the family was no longer fighting each other.

And that changed everything.

Because sometimes the most important healing happens when families learn how to calm down before emotions completely take over.

The Real Thought

Sometimes reactions are really saying:

Parent

“I feel emotionally overwhelmed.”
“I don’t know how to calm down yet.”
“Everything feels too big right now.”
“I need help feeling safe.”
“My body feels stressed.”
“I feel out of control.”
“I need a moment to breathe.”
“I want someone to understand my feelings.”

Child

“I feel emotionally overwhelmed.”
“I don’t know how to calm down yet.”
“Everything feels too big right now.”
“I need help feeling safe.”
“My body feels stressed.”
“I feel out of control.”
“I need a moment to breathe.”
“I want someone to understand my feelings.”

Reflection Questions

Child Reflection (Child Response)

What happens inside your body when emotions become big?

stomach hurts
fast heartbeat
crying
shaking
anger
feeling hot
shutting down
tight muscles

What usually helps you calm down safely?

Parent Reflection (Parent Response)

What situations make emotions escalate quickly in your home?

What calming skills were you taught growing up?

Parent Response:

deep breathing
talking calmly
taking breaks
no calming skills

yelling
emotional shutdown
avoidance
fear-based reactions

How might those experiences affect your reactions today?

Parent Response:

Parent + Child Interaction Time

Take turns speaking slowly and calmly.
The goal is understanding, not fixing everything immediately.

What helps you feel calmer during difficult moments?

Parent Response:

What do you need from adults when your emotions become overwhelming?

Child Response:

What is one thing I can practice to stay calmer during stress?

Parent Response:

What calming tools would help our family during difficult moments?

Parent Response:

What calming tools would help our family during difficult moments?

Child Response:

Nervous System Reset Tool

The Calm Down Together Practice

When emotions begin escalating:

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Stop the conversation for one moment.

STEP 2 — BREATHE SLOWLY

Take 3 slow breaths together.

Breathe in slowly...

Breathe out slowly...

STEP 3 — CALM THE BODY

Relax shoulders.

Unclench hands.

Lower your voice.

Slow your breathing.

STEP 4 — NAME THE FEELING

Try saying:

- “I feel overwhelmed.”
- “I feel frustrated.”
- “I need a moment.”
- “My emotions feel big right now.”
- “Can we slow down?”

STEP 5 — RESTART SAFELY

Return to the conversation calmly once emotions settle.

Calming the nervous system helps families communicate more safely.

Saying It In A Healthy Way

Child Can Say:

- “I feel overwhelmed.”
- “I need a break.”
- “My emotions feel too big right now.”
- “I need help calming down.”
- “I want to talk calmly.”

Parent Can Say:

- “Let’s slow down together.”
- “Big emotions are okay.”
- “We can calm down first.”
- “Your feelings matter.”
- “Let’s try again calmly.”

Let’s Try Again

Think about a recent emotional situation.

What happened?

Parent Response:

What happened?

Child Response:

What emotions were happening inside each person?

Parent Response:

What emotions were happening inside each person?

Child Response:

What signs showed emotions were escalating?

Parent Response:

What signs showed emotions were escalating?

Child Response:

What calming tools could have helped?

Parent Response:

What calming tools could have helped?

Child Response:

One healthy thing we can practice next time.

Parent Response:

One healthy thing we can practice next time.

Child Response

Family Connection Activity

Our Family Calm Plan

Each family member answers:

One thing that helps me feel calmer.

Parent Response:

One thing that helps me feel calmer.

Child Response:

One sign my emotions are getting too big.

Parent Response:

One sign my emotions are getting too big.

Child Response:

One calming tool I want to practice.

Parent Response:

One calming tool I want to practice.

Child Response:

One way our family can help each other stay calm.

Parent Response:

One way our family can help each other stay calm.

Child Response:

Truth to Live By

Families grow stronger when they learn how to calm emotions safely, communicate respectfully, and reconnect during difficult moments.

Truth Practice This Week

Parent

Practice deep breathing during stress
Pause before reacting emotionally
Speak more slowly during conflict
Practice naming emotions calmly
Use safe calming words
Practice restarting conversations peacefully

Child

Practice deep breathing during stress
Pause before reacting emotionally
Speak more slowly during conflict
Practice naming emotions calmly
Use safe calming words
Practice restarting conversations peacefully

Parent Reminder

Children often need adults to help them:

- slow down emotionally,
- regulate stress,
- feel emotionally safe,
- and learn calming skills through example.

Children learn emotional regulation by experiencing calm, safe, and supportive interactions repeatedly over time.

Calmness helps healing grow.

Healing Prayer

God,

**Help our family learn how to handle big emotions with wisdom,
patience, calmness, and self-control.**

**Teach us how to slow down during stressful moments and
respond with gentleness instead of fear or anger.**

**Help us create emotional safety through calm communication,
healthy boundaries, and understanding.**

**Give us wisdom to recognize when emotions are becoming
too overwhelming and courage to pause before reacting hurtfully.**

**Help our family continue growing in peace, healing, patience,
and connection one safe conversation at a time.**

Amen.



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Author Credentials

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PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

CHAPTER 6

Repairing After Conflict

Truth to Remember

Healthy families are not families without conflict. Healthy families learn how to repair after conflict with honesty, humility, and care.

Session Focus

This session helps families practice healthy emotional repair, sincere accountability, reconnection after conflict, and safer ways to rebuild relationships after hurt.

Scripture

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other.” — Ephesians 4:32

Before We Begin (Heart Check)

Every family experiences conflict sometimes.

People become:

- frustrated
- overwhelmed
- defensive
- hurt
- emotionally reactive
- or exhausted

Sometimes words are spoken too quickly.

Sometimes feelings get hurt.

Sometimes people shut down emotionally or pull away from each other.

Conflict itself is not always the greatest damage.

Often the greatest damage happens when repairs never happen afterward.

Before beginning today’s session, answer honestly.

Child Reflection (Child Response)

After conflict happens, I usually:

stay upset for a long time	feel emotionally alone
avoid people	stay angry inside
pretend I'm okay	wait for someone to apologize
feel embarrassed	become quiet
want someone to comfort me	feel nervous about talking again

One thing that helps me feel better after conflict:

Parent Reflection (Parent Response)

After conflict happens, I usually:

replay the situation in my mind	struggle to apologize
feel guilty	feel misunderstood
become emotionally exhausted	want things to calm down quickly
avoid talking about it again	become emotionally distant
stay frustrated	worry about the relationship

One thing I wish happened after difficult moments:

Emotional Teaching Moment Repair Helps Relationships Heal

All relationships experience moments of hurt.

Even loving families sometimes:

- misunderstand each other
- react emotionally
- say things poorly
- interrupt
- yell
- shut down
- or make mistakes

Repair means returning to the relationship with:

- honesty
- humility
- calmness,
- accountability
- and care

Repair may sound like:

- “I’m sorry.”
- “I understand why that hurt.”
- “Can we try again?”
- “I should have handled that differently.”
- “Your feelings matter.”
- “I still love you even though we had conflict.”

Repair helps the nervous system begin feeling emotionally safe again.

Without repair, hurt often grows quietly over time.

Understanding Healthy Apologies

A healthy apology is not only about ending conflict quickly.

Healthy apologies help people feel:

- heard
- valued
- respected
- emotionally safe
- and understood

Healthy apologies usually include:

- honesty
- accountability
- empathy
- and changed behavior over time

Sometimes people avoid apologizing because they fear:

- shame
- embarrassment
- rejection
- looking weak
- or losing control

But healthy repair strengthens relationships.

Repair teaches families:

“We can make mistakes and still reconnect safely.”

Life Story

Forgetful Frankie and the Broken Science Project

Forgetful Frankie was usually full of energy, big ideas, and accidental disasters.

Unfortunately, this disaster involved:

- one missing science project,
- glitter glue,
- and a family dog wearing half a volcano model on its tail.

Frankie's older sister, Penny, stared at the destroyed project in complete horror.

"My project is ruined!" Penny shouted.

Frankie immediately panicked.

"I didn't mean to!"

But Penny was already crying.

Mom looked overwhelmed.

The dog looked suspiciously proud of himself.

Within minutes, everyone in the house felt upset.

Frankie ran to his room feeling terrible inside.

At first, he wanted to hide and pretend nothing happened.

But later that evening, Grandpa Ray knocked softly on his bedroom door.

"You know," Grandpa said gently,

"mistakes feel a lot heavier when we try to run away from them."

Frankie looked down quietly.

"I didn't mean to ruin it."

"I know," Grandpa replied.

"But repairing hurt is still important."

A few minutes later, Frankie slowly walked into Penny's room carrying:

- tape,
- glue,
- fresh poster board,
- and two badly crushed cookies from the kitchen.

Penny looked at him cautiously.

Frankie took a deep breath.

"I know I can't fix everything instantly...

but I really am sorry.

And I want to help make it better."

For a moment, the room stayed quiet.

Then Penny quietly moved over and made space beside her on the floor.

And together...
they started rebuilding the project.

Not perfectly.

Not instantly.

But with honesty, accountability, and care.

And slowly, the hurt began softening too.

The Real Thought

Sometimes reactions are really saying:

Parent

“I want us to feel okay again.”
“I feel hurt.”
“I don’t know how to fix this.”
“I need reassurance.”
“I’m afraid of rejection.”
“I want to reconnect.”
“I feel guilty.”
“I still care about this relationship.”

Child

“I want us to feel okay again.”
“I feel hurt.”
“I don’t know how to fix this.”
“I need reassurance.”
“I’m afraid of rejection.”
“I want to reconnect.”
“I feel guilty.”
“I still care about this relationship.”

Reflection Questions

Child Reflection

What helps you feel cared about after conflict?

Child Response

What kind of apology feels sincere to you?

Child Response

When conflict is not repaired, how do you usually feel?**Child Response**

sad	lonely
angry	confused
nervous	hurt
emotionally distant	overwhelmed

Parent Reflection**What makes apologizing difficult sometimes?****Parent Response****What repair behaviors help relationships feel safer?****Parent Response****How were mistakes handled in your childhood home?****Parent Response**

healthy apologies	punishment
yelling	avoidance
blame	calm discussion
silence	emotional shutdown

How might those experiences affect repair in your family today?**Parent Response**

Parent + Child Interaction Time

Take turns speaking calmly.

The goal is to have reconnection, not perfection.

Parent (Asking Child)

What helps you feel emotionally cared for after conflict?

Child Response:

Child (Asking Parent)

What helps you feel safe reconnecting after hurt feelings?

Parent Response:

What is one repair skill I want to practice more often?

Parent Response:

What helps our family reconnect after difficult moments?

Parent Response

What helps our family reconnect after difficult moments?

Child Response

Nervous System Reset Tool

The Repair Pause Practice

When conflict happens:

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Allow emotions time to calm before continuing the conversation.

STEP 2 — NOTICE THE HURT

Ask:

“What feelings might still be hurting right now?”

STEP 3 — TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Practice honest accountability.

Examples:

- “I raised my voice.”
- “I interrupted.”
- “I reacted too quickly.”
- “I hurt your feelings.”
- “I should have slowed down.”

STEP 4 — RECONNECT SAFELY

Use calm repair language:

- “Can we try again?”
- “I care about you.”
- “I want to understand.”
- “I’m sorry.”
- “We can work through this together.”

Repair helps emotional safety grow again.

Saying it in a Healthy Way

Child Can Say:

- “My feelings were hurt.”
- “I need reassurance.”
- “I want us to feel okay again.”
- “I need time to calm down.”
- “I want to talk safely.”

Parent Can Say:

- “I understand why that hurt.”
- “I’m sorry for how I reacted.”
- “Your feelings matter.”
- “We can repair this together.”
- “I love you even when conflict happens.”

Let's Try Again

Think about a recent conflict.

What happened?

Parent Response:

What happened?

Child Response:

What feelings were underneath the conflict?

Parent Response:

What feelings were underneath the conflict?

Child Response:

What repair could have helped afterward?

Parent Response:

What repair could have helped afterward?

Child Response:

What healthy step can we practice next time?

Parent Response:

What healthy step can we practice next time?

Child Response:

Family Connection Activity
Rebuilding Connection After Conflict

Each family member answers: Parent/child

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe after conflict.

Parent Response:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe after conflict.

Child Response:

One repair phrase that helps me feel cared about.

Parent Response:

One repair phrase that helps me feel cared about.

Child Response:

One repair skill I want to improve.

Parent Response:

One repair skill I want to improve.

Child Response:

One way our family can reconnect more safely.

Parent Response:

One way our family can reconnect more safely.

Child Response:

Truth to Live By

Repair strengthens relationships by helping people feel emotionally safe, valued, understood, and connected again after hurt.

Truth Practice This Week

Parent

Practice calm apologies
Pause before reacting emotionally
Practice honest accountability
Use kind repair language
Ask questions before assuming
Practice reconnecting calmly after conflict

Child

Practice calm apologies
Pause before reacting emotionally
Practice honest accountability
Use kind repair language
Ask questions before assuming
Practice reconnecting calmly after conflict

Parent Reminder

Children learn emotional repair when adults:

- apologize sincerely
- stay calm
- take responsibility
- reconnect after conflict
- and create emotional safety during difficult moments

Repair teaches children:

- mistakes can be corrected
- relationships can heal
- and conflict does not have to destroy connection

Healthy repair helps trust continue growing.

Healing Prayer

God,

**Help our family learn how to repair hurt with humility,
wisdom, patience, and compassion.**

**Teach us how to take responsibility for our words and
actions while creating emotional safety for one another.**

**Help us reconnect after difficult moments with honesty,
gentleness, and understanding.**

**Give us courage to apologize sincerely, forgive wisely,
and continue rebuilding trust through
healthy communication and loving actions.**

**Help our family become a place where healing, grace, peace,
and reconnection continue growing one safe conversation at a time.**

Amen.



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PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

CHAPTER 7

Understanding Boundaries and Emotional Safety

Truth to Remember

Healthy boundaries help people feel emotionally safe, respected, and protected within relationships.

Session Focus

This session helps families understand healthy emotional boundaries, respectful communication, personal safety, and how boundaries strengthen trust and connection.

Scripture

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” — Proverbs 4:23

Before We Begin (Heart Check)

Boundaries help families understand:

- what feels emotionally safe,
- what feels respectful,
- what behaviors are healthy,
- and how to protect relationships from ongoing hurt.

Without healthy boundaries, families may begin feeling:

- emotionally overwhelmed,
- unsafe,
- disrespected,
- emotionally exhausted,
- or disconnected.

Before beginning today’s session, answer honestly.

Child Reflection

When I feel emotionally unsafe, I usually.

Child Response:

become quiet	hide my feelings
avoid people	become defensive
become angry	feel overwhelmed
shut down emotionally	stop talking honestly
feel nervous	feel emotionally alone

Something that helps me feel emotionally safe:

Parent Reflection

When family boundaries feel unhealthy, I usually:

Parent Response:

become frustrated	feel disrespected
feel emotionally drained	become emotionally distant
repeat myself often	feel overwhelmed
become reactive	try to control situations
struggle to stay calm	feel helpless

One family boundary I want to improve:

Parent Response:

Emotional Teaching Moment

What Are Healthy Boundaries?

Healthy boundaries help people:

- feel emotionally safe
- understand limits
- communicate respectfully
- and protect relationships from unnecessary emotional harm

Boundaries are not meant to punish people.

Healthy boundaries are meant to create:

- safety
- respect
- consistency
- honesty
- and healthier communication

Examples of healthy boundaries may include:

- speaking respectfully
- taking breaks when emotions escalate
- respecting privacy
- using calm communication
- listening without interrupting
- and allowing people space to calm down safely

Healthy boundaries help relationships feel more predictable and emotionally secure.

Understanding Emotional Safety

Emotional safety means people feel:

- heard
- respected
- emotionally protected
- calm enough to communicate
- and safe expressing feelings honestly

When emotional safety is missing, people may:

- hide emotions
- lie to avoid conflict
- shut down
- become defensive
- avoid conversations
- or react emotionally very quickly

Many unhealthy reactions happen because the nervous system no longer feels emotionally safe.

Healthy boundaries help rebuild emotional safety over time.

Life Story

Careful Casey and the Invisible Bubble

Careful Casey loved personal space.

A lot.

In fact, Casey sometimes imagined walking around inside an invisible bubble that protected:

- feelings,
- thoughts,
- and emotional safety.

Unfortunately, Casey's little cousin Turbo Tyler did not seem to understand invisible bubbles at all.

Turbo Tyler:

- grabbed things without asking,
- interrupted constantly,
- barged into bedrooms,
- and once borrowed Casey's favorite markers without permission and returned them without lids.

It was emotional devastation.

One afternoon, Casey finally exploded.

"Nobody respects my space!"

The room became quiet.

At first, adults thought Casey was simply overreacting.

But Grandma Joy sat beside Casey calmly and asked:

"Do you feel like people are listening to your boundaries?"

Casey shrugged but tears filled their eyes.

"Everybody keeps saying I'm dramatic...
but I just want people to respect my feelings and space."

Grandma Joy nodded gently.

"That's not being dramatic.
That's wanting emotional safety."

Later that evening, the family sat together and talked about:

- knocking before entering rooms,
- asking before borrowing things,
- using respectful words,
- and giving people space when emotions felt overwhelming.

Turbo Tyler even made a handmade sign that said:

"Respect the Bubble."

The sign was crooked.
 The spelling was questionable.
 And somehow glitter ended up on the dog again.

But slowly, the family began understanding something important:

Healthy boundaries do not push families apart.

Healthy boundaries help families feel safer, calmer, and more connected.

The Real Thought

Sometimes reactions are really saying:

Parent

“I need emotional space.”
 “I want my feelings respected.”
 “I don’t feel emotionally safe.”
 “I need calm communication.”
 “I feel overwhelmed.”
 “I want healthy limits.”
 “I need people to listen.”
 “I want to feel respected.”

Child

“I need emotional space.”
 “I want my feelings respected.”
 “I don’t feel emotionally safe.”
 “I need calm communication.”
 “I feel overwhelmed.”
 “I want healthy limits.”
 “I need people to listen.”
 “I want to feel respected.”

Reflection Questions

Child Reflection

What helps you feel emotionally respected?

Child Response

What boundaries help you feel emotionally safe?

Child Response

What situations make you feel emotionally overwhelmed?

Child Response

yelling	feeling ignored
interrupting	conflict
criticism	sarcasm
people entering my space suddenly	feeling blamed

Parent Reflection

What boundaries help your home feel calmer and healthier?

Parent Response

What boundaries were difficult or unclear in your childhood home?

Parent Response

respectful communication
privacy
emotional safety
calm conflict resolution

fear-based control
yelling
unclear rules
emotional shutdown

How might those experiences affect your family today?

Parent + Child Interaction Time

Take turns listening calmly.

The goal is understanding and emotional safety.

Parent asks question to child.

What helps you feel emotionally respected in our family?

Child Response:

What boundaries help you feel emotionally safe?

Child Response:

What is one healthy boundary I want to practice more consistently?

Parent Response:

Together:

What boundaries would help our home feel calmer and safer?

Parent Response

What boundaries would help our home feel calmer and safer?

Child Response

Nervous System Reset Tool

The Emotional Space Practice

When emotions begin feeling overwhelming:

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Slow the conversation down.

STEP 2 — NOTICE THE BODY

Ask:

“Do I feel emotionally overwhelmed right now?”

STEP 3 — ASK FOR SPACE CALMLY

Practice healthy phrases like:

- “I need a moment.”
- “Can we pause for a few minutes?”
- “I want to continue calmly.”
- “I need space to calm down.”

STEP 4 — RETURN SAFELY

After calming down, return respectfully to the conversation.

Healthy boundaries help people calm their nervous systems safely.

Saying It In A Healthy Way

Child Can Say:

- “I need space to calm down.”
- “I want my feelings respected.”
- “I feel emotionally overwhelmed.”
- “Please speak calmly with me.”
- “I need emotional safety.”

Parent Can Say:

- “Your feelings matter.”
- “Let’s slow this down.”
- “We can talk respectfully.”
- “I want our home to feel emotionally safe.”
- “Healthy boundaries help families heal.”

Let’s Try Again

Think about a recent situation where boundaries felt unhealthy.

What happened?

Parent Response:

What happened?

Child Response:

What emotions were underneath the situation?

Parent Response:

What emotions were underneath the situation?

Child Response:

What healthy boundary could have helped?

Parent Response:

What healthy boundary could have helped?

Child Response:

One healthy boundary we can practice this week.

Parent Response:

One healthy boundary we can practice this week.

Child Response:

Family Connection Activity
Building Healthy Family Boundaries

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe.

Parent Response:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe.

Child Response:

One boundary that is important to me.

Parent Response:

One boundary that is important to me.

Child Response:

One respectful communication skill I want to practice.

Parent Response:

One respectful communication skill I want to practice.

Child Response:

One way our family can create healthier emotional safety.

Parent Response:

One way our family can create healthier emotional safety.

Child Response:

Truth to Live By

Healthy boundaries help families create emotional safety, respectful communication, calmness, and stronger connection.

Parent

Practice respectful communication
 Pause when emotions escalate
 Ask for emotional space calmly
 Practice listening without interrupting
 Respect personal space and feelings
 Practice calm reconnection after conflict

Child

Practice respectful communication
 Pause when emotions escalate
 Ask for emotional space calmly
 Practice listening without interrupting
 Respect personal space and feelings
 Practice calm reconnection after conflict

Parent Reminder

Children often feel emotionally safer when families practice:

- healthy boundaries,
- respectful communication,
- calm conflict resolution,
- emotional consistency,
- and emotional safety.

Boundaries are not about punishment.

Healthy boundaries help relationships become safer, calmer, and more connected over time.

Healing Prayer

God,

Help our family learn healthy boundaries that create emotional safety, respect, wisdom, and peace.

Teach us how to communicate calmly, honor one another's feelings, and protect our relationships from unnecessary hurt.

Help us recognize when emotions are becoming overwhelming and give us wisdom to slow down before reacting hurtfully.

Give our family courage to practice honesty, kindness, patience, and healthy limits that strengthen connection instead of fear.

Help our home become a place of emotional safety, healing, calmness, and trust.

Amen.



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PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

CHAPTER 8

Learning Honesty Without Fear

Truth to Remember

Honesty grows best in environments where people feel emotionally safe enough to tell the truth.

Session Focus

This session helps families explore emotional honesty, fear-based reactions, safe truth-telling, and how honesty grows in emotionally safe environments.

Scripture

“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully.” — Ephesians 4:25

Before We Begin (Heart Check)

Sometimes people hide the truth because they are afraid of:

- punishment,
- rejection,
- disappointment,
- conflict,
- embarrassment,
- or emotional disconnection.

Children and adults may:

- avoid difficult conversations,
- leave out details,
- pretend everything is okay,
- or say what they think others want to hear.

Many people are not trying to be dishonest in order to hurt others.

Often, they are trying to protect themselves emotionally.

Before beginning today’s session, answer honestly.

Child Reflection

When I feel afraid of getting in trouble, I sometimes.

Child Response:

hide the truth	feel nervous
avoid conversations	shut down emotionally
say "I don't know"	worry about disappointing others
pretend everything is okay	tell people what they want to hear
become defensive	avoid eye contact

Something that makes honesty feel difficult for me.

Child Response:

Parent Reflection

When difficult truth comes up in our family, I sometimes.

Parent Response:

react too quickly	become fearful
become emotional	struggle to stay calm
become frustrated	want immediate answers
focus only on the mistake	feel disappointed
interrupt before listening fully	become emotionally overwhelmed

One thing I want to improve when listening to difficult truth.

Parent Response:

Emotional Teaching Moment

Honesty Requires Emotional Safety

People communicate more honestly when they believe:

- they will be heard
- emotions can stay calm
- mistakes can be discussed safely
- and relationships will remain connected even during difficult conversations

When people feel emotionally unsafe, they may:

- hide mistakes
- avoid truth
- become defensive
- lie to avoid punishment
- or say what feels safest in the moment

Fear often blocks honesty.

Emotional safety helps honesty grow.

This does not mean unhealthy behavior should be ignored.

It means families respond in ways that help truth feel safer to share honestly.

Understanding Fear-Based Reactions

Sometimes dishonesty develops because people fear:

- rejection
- shame
- conflict
- yelling
- punishment
- disappointment
- or losing connection.

Children especially may think:

- “If I tell the truth, people will be angry.”
- “If I admit mistakes, I’ll disappoint everyone.”
- “If I share my feelings honestly, nobody will understand.”

Adults may also struggle with honesty when emotions feel overwhelming or unsafe.

Healing begins when families create calmer environments where truth can be discussed with wisdom, accountability, and emotional safety.

Life Story

Nervous Nora and the Missing Homework Folder

Nervous Nora was usually very responsible.

Mostly.

Well... except for the fact that her homework folder had completely disappeared somewhere between:

- school
- the car
- soccer practice
- and one suspicious trip through the kitchen involving tacos

Unfortunately, tomorrow was presentation day.

Nora's stomach twisted into giant nervous knots.

All evening she kept thinking:

"If Mom finds out, she's going to be so disappointed."

So when Mom asked,

"Did you finish getting everything ready for tomorrow?"

Nora quietly answered:

"Yep."

Technically... that answer was attached to hope, panic, and emotional survival.

Not actual truth.

Later that night, Mom found Nora crying quietly under a blanket surrounded by:

- missing papers
- markers
- and one very confused cat

Mom sat beside her gently.

At first, Nora expected frustration.

Instead, Mom calmly asked:

"Are you afraid to tell me something?"

Nora nodded with tears in her eyes.

"I lost my folder...

and I thought you'd be really mad."

Mom took a slow breath.

"I'm glad you told me the truth."

Nora looked surprised.

“You’re... not yelling?”

Mom smiled softly.

“Mistakes can be fixed.

But honesty helps us solve problems together.”

The folder still needed replacing.

The project still needed work.

And bedtime became much later than anyone wanted.

But something more important happened too.

Nora learned that honesty felt safer when calmness and connection stayed present.

And slowly, fear began losing control over the truth.

The Real Thought

Sometimes reactions are really saying:

Parent

“I’m afraid of getting in trouble.”
 “I don’t want to disappoint people.”
 “I feel embarrassed.”
 “I’m afraid of conflict.”
 “I want to feel emotionally safe.”
 “I don’t know how to admit mistakes.”
 “I’m afraid people will stop loving me.”
 “I need calmness to tell the truth honestly.”

Child

“I’m afraid of getting in trouble.”
 “I don’t want to disappoint people.”
 “I feel embarrassed.”
 “I’m afraid of conflict.”
 “I want to feel emotionally safe.”
 “I don’t know how to admit mistakes.”
 “I’m afraid people will stop loving me.”
 “I need calmness to tell the truth honestly.”

Reflection Questions

Child Reflection

What helps honesty feel emotionally safe for you?

Child Response:

What fears make honesty harder sometimes?

Child Response:

When you feel afraid, what usually happens inside your body?

Child Response:

stomach hurts
fast heartbeat
nervousness
shutting down

crying
avoiding people
fear
emotional overwhelm

Parent Reflection

How do you usually respond when mistakes happen?

Parent Response:

What reactions may accidentally make honesty feel unsafe?

Parent Response:

How was honesty handled in your childhood home?

Parent Response:

calm conversations
punishment
fear
criticism

healthy accountability
yelling
emotional shutdown
avoidance

How might those experiences affect communication today?

Parent Response:

Parent + Child Interaction Time

Take turns listening calmly.

The goal is emotional safety and honest communication.

Parent asks question to Child:

What helps you feel safe telling the truth?

Child Response:

Parent asks question to Child:

What reactions make honesty feel harder?

Child Response:

What is one thing I can improve when responding to mistakes?

Parent Response:

What would help honesty feel safer in our family?

Parent Response:

What would help honesty feel safer in our family?

Child Response:

Nervous System Reset Tool

The Calm Truth Practice

When difficult truth needs to be shared:

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Slow the conversation down.

STEP 2 — BREATHE

Take 3 calm breaths together.

STEP 3 — SPEAK HONESTLY

Practice calm honesty even when feelings feel uncomfortable.

Examples:

- “I made a mistake.”
- “I was afraid to tell the truth.”
- “I need help.”
- “I didn’t know how to explain it.”
- “I want to be honest.”

STEP 4 — RESPOND CALMLY

Focus on:

- listening,
- understanding,
- accountability,
- and healthy problem-solving.

Calmness helps honesty grow more safely.

Saying it in a Healthy Way

Child Can Say:

- “I was afraid to tell the truth.”
- “I made a mistake.”
- “I need help.”
- “I don’t want to disappoint people.”
- “I want to be honest.”

Parent Can Say:

- “Thank you for telling the truth.”
- “We can solve this together.”
- “Mistakes can become learning moments.”
- “Your honesty matters.”
- “Let’s talk calmly about what happened.”

Let's Try Again

Think about a recent situation involving honesty.

What happened?

Parent Response:

What happened?

Child Response:

What fears were underneath the situation?

Parent Response:

What fears were underneath the situation?

Child Response:

What would have helped honesty feel safer?

Parent Response:

What would have helped honesty feel safer?

Child Response:

One healthy honesty skill we can practice this week.

Parent Response:

One healthy honesty skill we can practice this week.

Child Response:

Family Connection Activity
Building Honesty and Emotional Safety

Each family member answers:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe telling the truth.

Parent Response:

One thing that helps me feel emotionally safe telling the truth.

Child Response:

One fear that sometimes makes honesty difficult.

Parent Response:

One fear that sometimes makes honesty difficult.

Child Response:

One healthy response that helps honesty grow.

Parent Response:

One healthy response that helps honesty grow.

Child Response:

One way our family can practice calm honesty this week.

Parent Response:

One way our family can practice calm honesty this week.

Child Response:

Truth to Live By

Honesty grows when families create emotional safety, calm communication, healthy accountability, and loving connection during difficult conversations.

Truth Practice This Week

Parent

Practice calm honesty
Listen without interrupting
Pause before reacting emotionally

Child

Practice healthy accountability
Use calm problem-solving
Practice saying: "Thank you for telling the truth."

Parent Reminder

Children often become more honest when adults:

- stay calm,
- listen carefully,
- focus on learning instead of fear,
- create emotional safety,
- and respond with healthy accountability instead of emotional overwhelm.

Fear may temporarily control behavior.
But emotional safety helps honesty grow from the heart.

Healing Prayer

God,

**Help our family become a place where honesty,
wisdom, emotional safety, and healthy accountability
continue growing.**

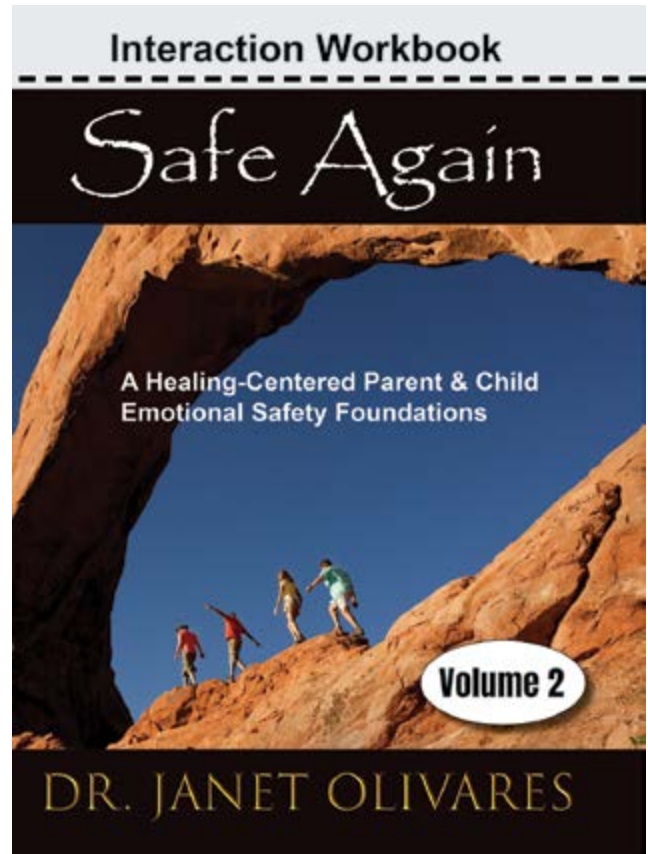
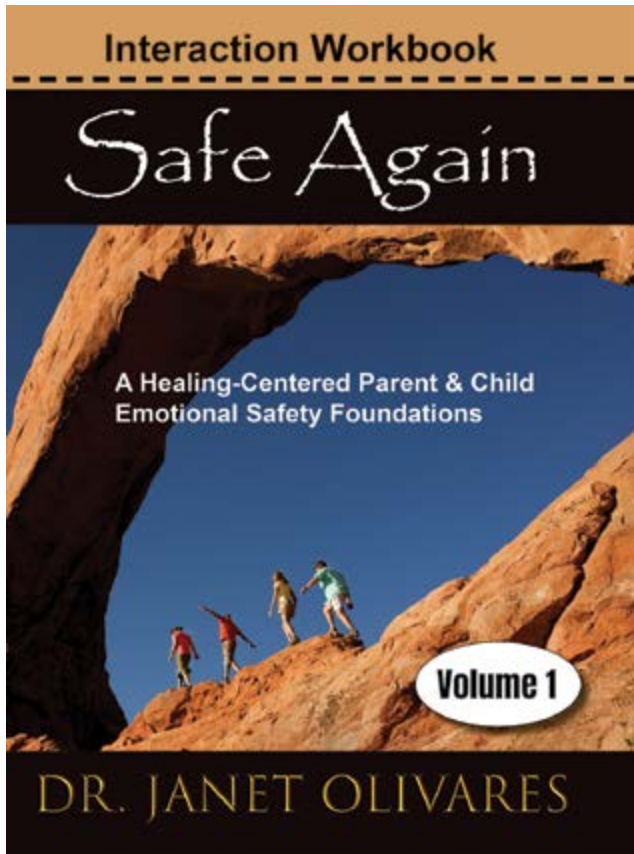
**Teach us how to respond calmly during difficult
conversations and help us create environments where
truth can be shared safely and respectfully.**

**Give us courage to admit mistakes honestly,
wisdom to listen without fear, and compassion to
guide one another with patience and understanding.**

**Help our family grow stronger through honesty,
trust, calm communication,
and loving connection.**

Amen.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR THE SAFE AGAIN PROGRAM
INCLUDES VOLUME 1 AND 2. BOTH ARE NEEDED TO
COMPLETE THE PROGRAM.**



SAFE AGAIN

**A Healing-Centered Parent & Child Interaction Workbook
Supporting Emotional Safety, Healthy Communication, Accountability,
and Family Reconnection After Trauma, Conflict, and Separation**

VOLUME 1 INCLUDES:

PART 1 — Emotional Safety Foundations

1. Creating Emotional Safety Again
2. Understanding Hurt Beneath Behavior
3. Healthy Communication Without Blame
4. Rebuilding Trust One Safe Step at a Time
5. Learning Calm During Big Emotions
6. Repairing After Conflict
7. Understanding Boundaries and Emotional Safety
8. Learning Honesty Without Fear

VOLUME 2 INCLUDES PART 2 AND 3:

PART 2 & 3 — Understanding Deeper Emotional Wounds & Moving Forward with Healing and Connection

PART 2 — Understanding Deeper Emotional Wounds

1. Healing Childhood Hurt
2. Understanding Fear and Emotional Protection
3. When Families Feel Emotionally Stuck
4. Grief, Loss, and Emotional Disconnection
5. Understanding Loyalty Conflicts and Emotional Pressure
6. Understanding Shame, Identity, and Self-Worth
7. Relearning Safe Connection

PART 3 — Moving Forward with Healing and Connection

8. Rebuilding Parent and Child Relationships
9. Healthy Accountability Without Shame
10. Creating a Safer Family Culture
11. Rebuilding Hope After Emotional Hurt
12. Moving Forward with Healing, Growth, and Connection

Facilitator Guide

Certification of Completion

Books by Dr Janet Olivares

Finding Self with God

Day by Day

Forgive

Let Go for Real

Hooked and Confused

Understanding Porn, Pressure and Identity in a Digital World

Love Never Left

When Marriage Feels Lost God Restores

Parenting Teens

Steady Parenting Even When the Kids Push Away

Suicide

Hope beyond a Moment

Two Houses One lonely Heart

Divorce through the Eyes of a Ten Year Old

What I Understand Now

It's the Love I Couldn't See Healing the Distance Between
Parents and Adult Children.

To order books from Amazon directly

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Dr. Janet Olivares

Dr. Janet Olivares, Ph.D., is a clinician certified in Marriage and Family Therapy, Crisis and Abuse Therapy, Domestic Violence and Intervention Therapy, and Substance Abuse and Addiction Therapy with a strong commitment to restoring individuals and families impacted by trauma, separation, and divorce. Her work centers on promoting healing, healthy relationships, and family reunification through compassionate, evidence-informed care.

Dr. Olivares is especially passionate about supporting children and parents navigating the emotional challenges of co-parenting and family transitions. She brings awareness to the long-term impact of relational trauma and advocates approaches that foster stability, communication, and resilience within families.

In addition to her clinical work, Dr. Olivares is an accomplished author. Through her writing, she integrates clinical insight with accessible guidance to support individuals and families facing complex emotional and relational challenges.

Dr. Olivares remains dedicated to empowering others through education, advocacy, and a holistic approach to healing that honors both emotional and relational well-being.