



# THE 20-SECOND CIRCUIT BREAKER CHEAT SHEET

T U R N I N G   T A N T R U M S   I N T O  
C O M M U N I C A T I O N

## THE CORE PRINCIPLE

***Calm isn't optional—it's the method.***

When your child is dysregulated, they need you to be their external nervous system. Your calm is contagious. Their chaos doesn't have to be.

HONEST ABOUT PARENTING



# THE 3-STEP CIRCUIT BREAKER

## STEP 1: CATCH IT

### Notice your nervous system spike:

- Tight jaw or clenched fists
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Heart racing
- Thought: "They're doing this TO me"

**This is your signal.** You're about to absorb their stress instead of sharing your calm.



# THE 3-STEP CIRCUIT BREAKER (CONT'D)

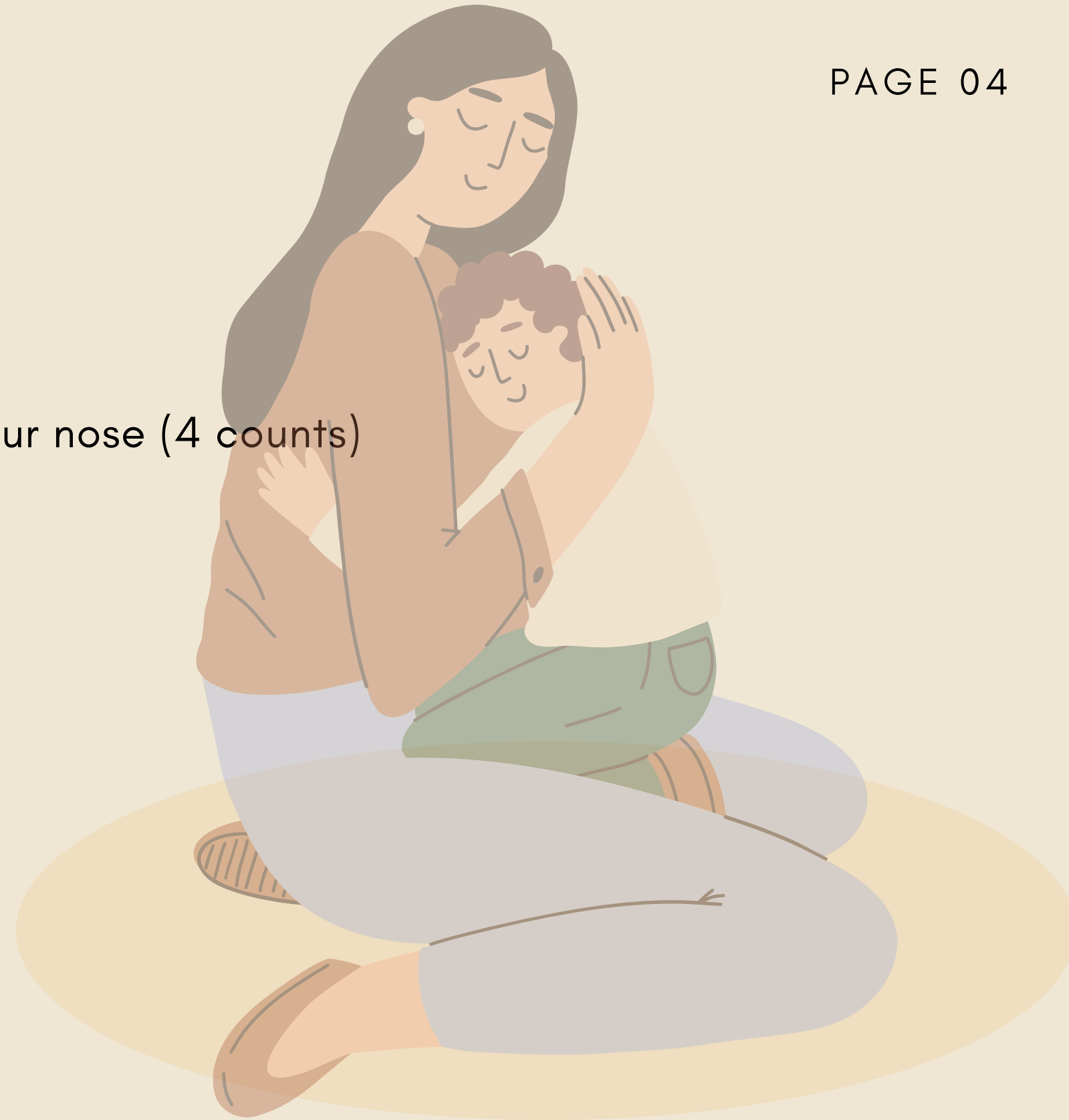
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## STEP 2: BREAK THE CIRCUIT

### Interrupt your stress response:

1. Take ONE intentional breath  
Inhale through your nose (4 counts)
  - a. Exhale through your mouth (6-8 counts)
  - b. Make exhale LONGER than inhale
2. Place hand on chest and say quietly:
  - a. "I'm the adult here" OR
  - b. "There is no danger here" OR
  - c. "That's their meltdown, not mine"

**This shifts you from REACTIVE to RESPONSIVE.**



# THE 3-STEP CIRCUIT BREAKER (CONT'D)

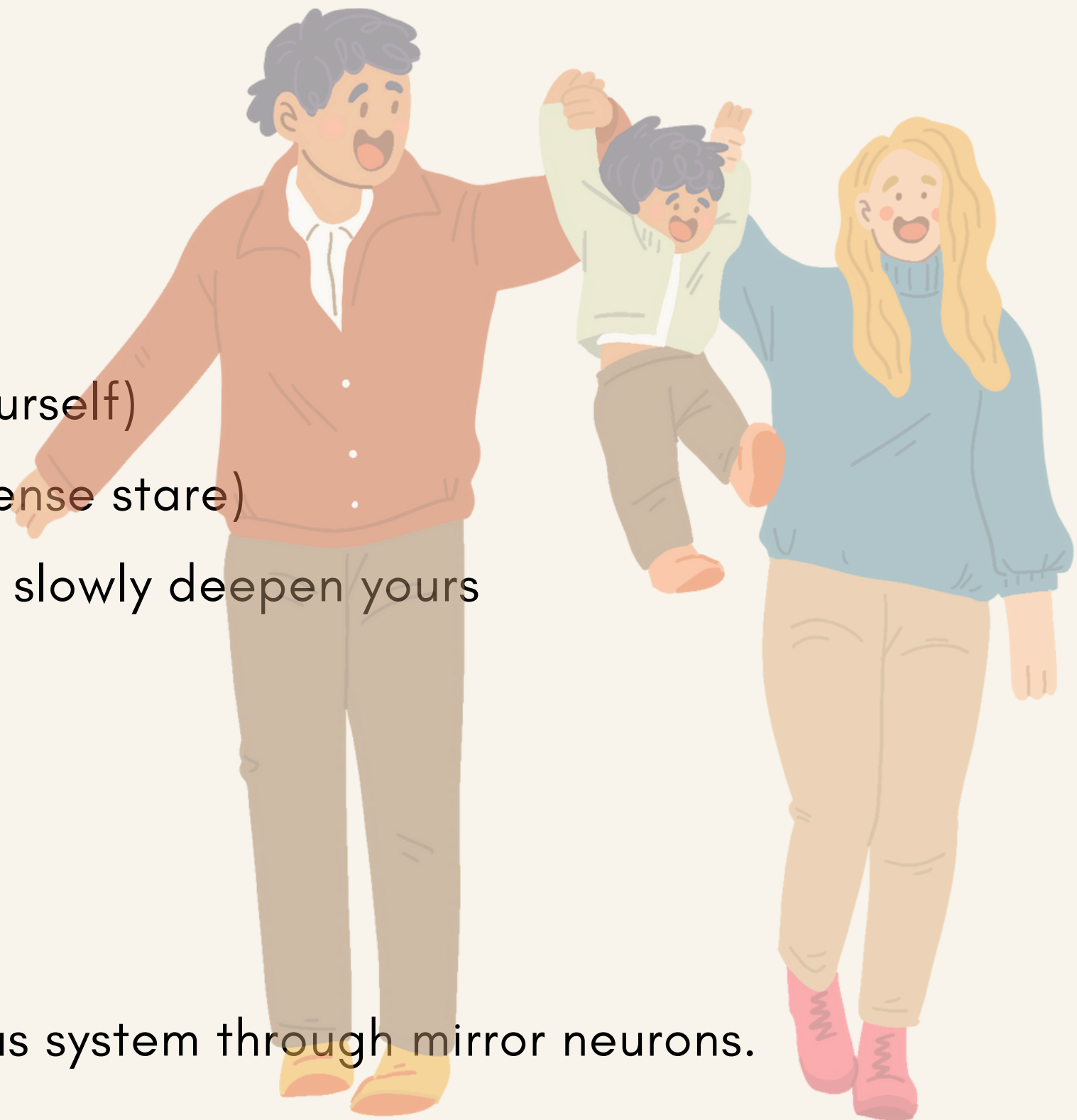
## STEP 3: BROADCAST CALM

### Become their safe harbor:

1. Get down to their level (physically lower yourself)
2. Make gentle eye contact (soft eyes, not intense stare)
3. Match their breathing for 2-3 breaths, then slowly deepen yours
  - Use simple, warm words: "I'm here"
  - "You're safe"
  - "I've got you"

### Time needed: 20 seconds total

Your regulated state literally calms their nervous system through mirror neurons.





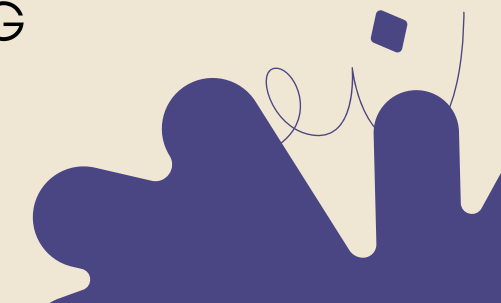
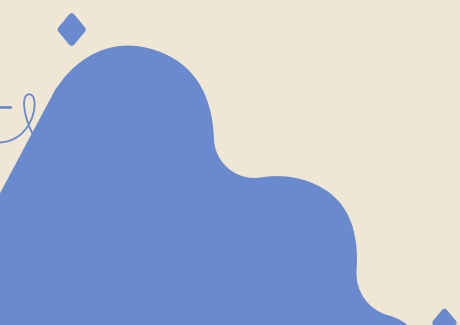
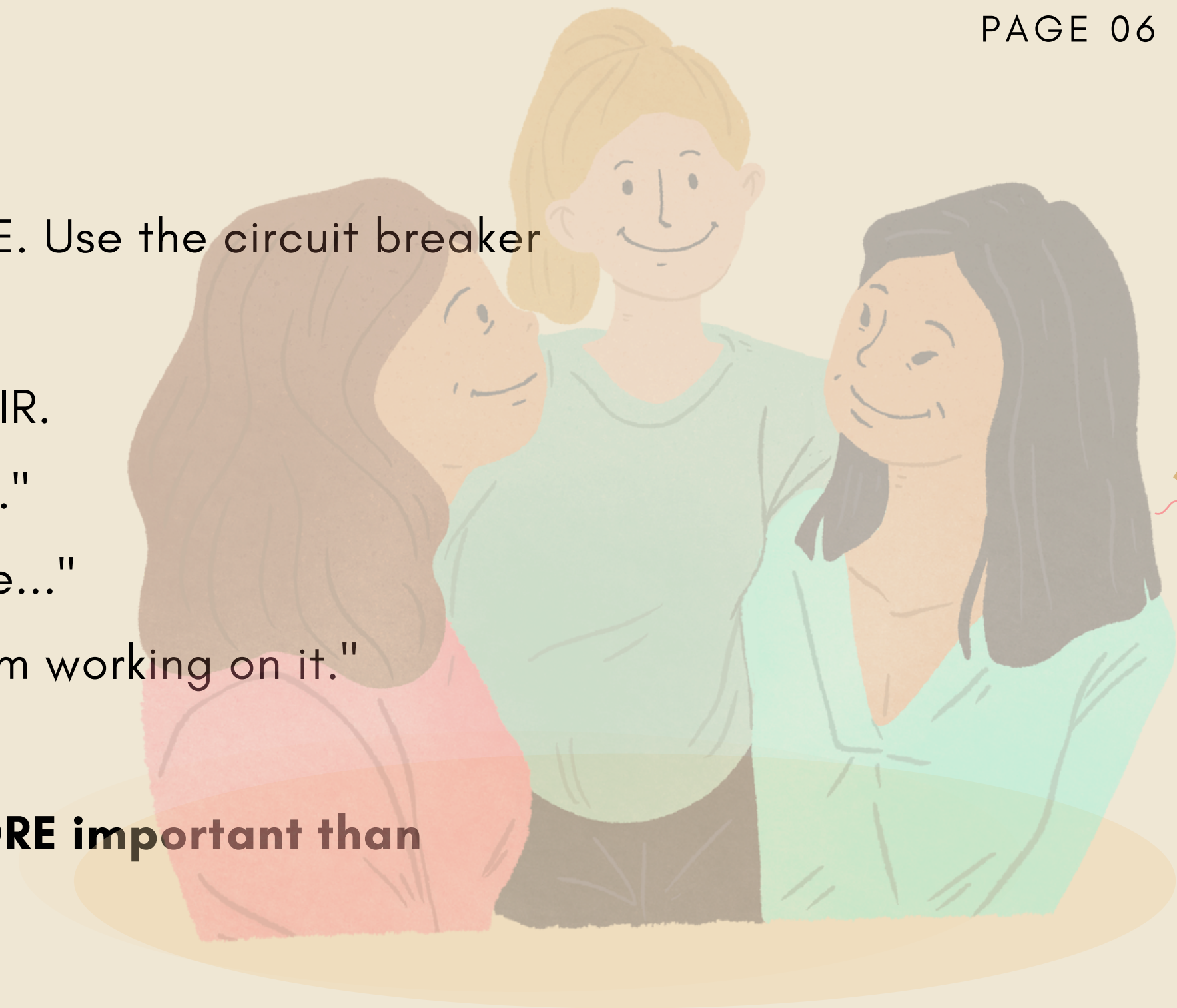
# WHEN YOU MISS IT (AND YOU WILL)

**If you catch yourself mid-yell:** PAUSE. Use the circuit breaker right then. Model recovery.

**If you don't catch it until after:** REPAIR.

- "I'm sorry I yelled. That wasn't okay."
- "Here's what I'll do better next time..."
- "Even grown-ups make mistakes. I'm working on it."

**Research shows: Repair may be MORE important than getting it right the first time.**



## YOUR NEW IDENTITY STATEMENT

Write this down. Read it daily:

*"I am living Coffee-Still-Hot-Life. When my child has big emotions, I stay grounded and help them find calm."*

HONEST ABOUT PARENTING





## QUICK REMINDERS

- ✓ It takes about 20 seconds of your calm to help your child start regulating
- ✓ Scripts don't work when your state doesn't match your words—kids read bodies, not just words
  - ✓ You're not just self-regulating—you're teaching them how to regulate by watching you
- ✓ Coffee-Still-Hot-Life is when your calm becomes so contagious your children seek YOU out for it

## PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Next meltdown: Use the 20-Second Circuit Breaker.

**Catch** your spike → **Break** the circuit →  
**Broadcast** calm.

Notice what happens when YOU stay steady.

## ANY QUESTION? FEEL FREE TO ASK!



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