

DON'T F*CK UP YOUR CHILD

A **One-Hour** Read That Could
Change Your **Family Forever**.

DANIEL RECHNITZER

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The perspectives shared in this book are based on the author's personal experience and professional work and are offered as one lens among many. Every child and family is different, and readers should use their own judgment in applying any ideas discussed here.

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www.TalkToTheUniverse.com

About The Author

Daniel Rechnitzer is first and foremost the proud father of two beautiful children, whom he absolutely adores. To him, they are far more than just his children—they are inspirational, intelligent, and infinite beings who have become two of his greatest teachers. Like many parents, they have challenged him to grow, to question his own beliefs, and to become a better human being. This book is as much a reflection of that journey as it is a guide for others.

Everything Daniel knows has been earned through the school of hard knocks. His life has been filled with extraordinary highs, painful lows, incredible success, heartbreaking loss, and countless lessons that could never have been learned from a classroom. Rather than allowing those experiences to define him, he chose to let them teach him. His work has always been about one thing: understanding what truly helps people heal, grow, and reconnect with who they really are. Alongside that journey, Daniel has always possessed a remarkable gift—an intuitive ability to see beneath the surface of people's lives, recognise the patterns that hold them back, and help them uncover the answers that already exist within them. For more than twenty-five years, he has worked with thousands of people from around the world through private coaching, workshops, seminars, retreats, books, online programs, and transformational experiences.

Daniel is an author, international speaker, filmmaker, entrepreneur, inventor, and the creator of innovative personal development technologies designed to support wellbeing, self-awareness, and personal growth. His documentaries, including *Your Money Vibes*, have featured many of the world's leading voices in neuroscience, psychology, spirituality, and human potential, continuing his passion for bringing life-changing ideas to a global audience.

Throughout his career, Daniel has written books, developed transformational programs, created wellbeing products, and explored new ways to help people reconnect with themselves. Whether through the written word, film, live events, or his inventions, his mission has remained remarkably consistent: to help people remember their own inner wisdom and discover that they are capable of far more than they ever imagined. Yet, of everything he has created, Daniel believes this book may be his most important work. Because if we can raise children who feel deeply loved, emotionally safe, confident in who they are, and connected to their own worth, we don't just change individual lives—we change families. We change communities. We change future generations. And ultimately, we change the world.

"I hope this book helps you let go of the myth that it's inevitable to 'screw up' your child—because it isn't. My hope is that these pages leave you feeling confident, empowered, and equipped to know, 'You've more than

got this!'—a message I hope you'll pass on to your children as well." Daniel Rechnitzer

PS: To book a one-on-one intuitive session with Daniel and receive the support and breakthrough you're looking for, use this link to schedule a time:

<https://cal.com/danielrechnitzer/45min>

Introduction

Before We Begin

Take a breath.

If you're expecting this book to judge you, criticize you, or tell you you've already ruined your child, you're in the wrong place. That's not what this book is. This isn't another parenting manual filled with impossible standards or endless rules. I'm not here to tell you to lift your game and become the perfect parent, nor to point out everything you've done wrong. Because "perfect parent" and "doing it wrong" are ideas we've inherited—standards we've measured ourselves against that were never real in the first place.

Parenting is one of the hardest jobs in the world. You'll lose your patience. You'll say things you wish you hadn't. You'll swear, you'll cry, you'll hide, and you'll want to escape. You'll throw tantrums that look surprisingly familiar. You'll disconnect, long for life before children, and may even wonder whether becoming a parent was the right choice. And that's parenting. Despite the moments you're not proud of, you'll also do things that will shape your child's life forever simply by loving them the best way you know how.

So before we go any further, I want you to hear something that I hope you'll truly let in.

I love you.

I don't know your story, but I know this: you're here because you care. You're reading this because you want to give your child the best life you can. That already tells me something beautiful about you.

So if you've ever yelled, punished your child in a way you regret, felt completely overwhelmed, watched your marriage end, worked too much, or missed moments you wish you could have back, please don't spend this book drowning in guilt.

Forgive yourself.

Your child doesn't need a parent weighed down by shame. They need a parent who is willing to learn, to repair, to grow, and to love. This book isn't about blame. It's about awareness. Because awareness gives us choice, and choice changes everything.

The first thing to become aware of is this:

Your child isn't the only child you're learning to parent.

Most people believe they're an adult raising a child.

I see it a little differently.

Yes, you have your own children standing in front of you.

But there's another child in the room.

The child you once were.

Although you now live in an adult body, that younger version of you never completely disappeared. They still live within you.

For some, that inner child feels deeply loved and secure.

For many others, they are still quietly longing for the love, attention, safety, acceptance and guidance they never fully received.

Whether we realize it or not, that child often influences how we think, how we love, how we react, how we parent and how we see ourselves.

You likely believe that as a parent you're responding as the adult you've become. And often, you are. But have you ever noticed how quickly that can change? A slammed door. A defiant "No!" A child who won't listen. A tantrum in the middle of the supermarket. The fifth interruption in ten minutes. Another sleepless night. Suddenly, you're no longer calm, patient, or thoughtful. You react. You defend yourself. You yell. You shut down. You withdraw. You want to run away. It's almost as though someone else has taken over.

In a way, someone has.

The child you once were.

The child who was hurt, yelled at, rejected, unseen, taught to stay quiet, be perfect, put everyone else's needs before their own, or believe that love had to be earned.

There is a wounded child in all of us, and children have an extraordinary ability to find that child. Not because they're trying to make our lives difficult or punish us, but because they naturally press against the places within us that still long to be seen, understood, and healed.

This is one of parenting's greatest hidden gifts. We think we're here to raise our children, but all the while, our children are quietly raising us too. Every challenge, every frustration, and every moment that pushes your buttons is an invitation—not to become a better actor pretending to be the perfect parent, but to become a more whole human being.

Understanding this won't just transform the way you parent. It will transform the way you see yourself.

What Do I Know About Parenting?

It's a fair question.

The answer is simple.

It's more about what I know about wounded children. Not because I've spent decades studying them, but because I was one. Or perhaps more accurately, I spent much of my life believing I was a F*cked Up Child*.

I was hit. I yelled at. I was taught I was a mistake, a nuisance, unloved, a disappointment, and the cause of my mother's depression. Things I loved were taken away. Toys were broken. I was undermined, embarrassed and compared to others. Like so many children, I quietly built a story about who I believed I was.

I believed I wasn't enough. I believed I was unwanted—despised, in fact. I believed I wasn't intelligent. I was convinced I'd never be good with money. Every decision felt overwhelming. I expected relationships to become controlling, painful and eventually take away my freedom. I always felt different, like I didn't quite belong, like I was the black sheep. I was frightened of life and what it meant to become a responsible adult.

Over the years, I've lived through breakdown after breakdown. I've experienced incredible success and painful loss. I've given away my power more times than I can count. I've watched relationships fail, made decisions I deeply regret, and spent years searching for answers without realizing I was asking the wrong questions.

Then I became a parent, of two beautiful children.

And that's when I discovered something I never expected.

The child I thought I'd left behind was still living inside me.

Every sleepless night, every tantrum, every disagreement, every moment I lost my patience didn't just challenge me as a parent—it awakened the wounds of the child I used to be.

I came to realize that I wasn't just raising my children.

I was being given an opportunity to finally heal myself.

That healing journey has become my life's work. I've worked with thousands of adults and had the privilege of hearing their stories. Again and again, I've seen the same invisible wounds that I carried within myself. Different childhoods. Different families. Different lives. Yet the same fears, the same beliefs, and the same longing to finally feel enough.

This book isn't written by someone who believes they've mastered parenting. It's written by someone who has lived the consequences of childhood wounds, made plenty of parenting mistakes, and spent decades trying to understand how those wounds are created, how they shape our lives, and, most importantly, how we can stop passing them on to the next generation.

If this book helps you understand your child a little better, I'll be grateful.

If it also helps you understand yourself, then together we may change two lives instead of one.

Throughout my adult life, I've devoted myself to understanding why we think, feel, react, and suffer the way we do. My journey has taken me around the world, having written books, run workshops, made films, and coached thousands of people from all walks of life.

Yet the greatest lessons I've ever learned didn't come from a classroom or a qualification. They came from looking honestly at my own life, facing the parts of myself I'd spent years trying to hide, and discovering that healing the child within me changed every relationship I had, including the one with my own children.

That journey transformed my life, but it also transformed my work. Over the years, people came to me looking for answers. Some came with money problems, others with illness, relationship struggles, addiction, anxiety,

depression, questions on their life purpose, low self-worth, people-pleasing, fear, or simply the feeling that something was missing. At first, I believed those were the problems we were there to solve.

But after thousands of conversations, I realized something I could no longer ignore. No matter where we started, we almost always ended up in the same place: childhood. Beneath the struggling adult was almost always a struggling inner child who had learned something about themselves that simply wasn't true. A child who believed, *I'm not enough. I'm not lovable. I don't matter. I'm not safe. My voice doesn't count. I have to earn love and countless other limiting beliefs.*

It didn't matter whether someone came to me because they were drowning in debt, terrified of intimacy, unable to say no, battling anxiety, living with addiction, or searching for purpose. The surface problem was rarely the real problem. The real problem was almost always a child who had adapted to survive—a child who had created beliefs that once made perfect sense, but were now quietly shaping and ruining an adult life.

That's when something profound dawned on me. I wasn't really helping adults. I was helping the wounded child still living inside them.

If so much of an adult's suffering begins in childhood, then perhaps the greatest gift we can give our children isn't a perfect childhood. It's an understanding of what

truly shapes one. If we can recognise the moments that become lifelong beliefs, understand how a child's inner world is formed, and learn to repair instead of striving to be perfect, perhaps we can spare them decades of carrying stories about themselves that were never true.

That's why I wrote this book.

Not to teach you how to become a perfect parent... you are already that.

I wrote it to help you recognise the invisible moments that shape a child's beliefs about themselves, about other people, and about the world. The moments that quietly determine whether they grow into an adult who spends decades healing old wounds or decades confidently living the life they were born to live.

It's our job as a parent not just to keep our children safe but to keep them safe from making up stories about themselves. Stories that wound, injure, disempower, distract and disable them from being everything they came here to be.

I don't expect you to agree with everything I've written. Nor should you.

Read these pages with an open mind. Keep what resonates. Question what doesn't. Reflect on your own experiences, your own childhood, and your own children.

Above all, let this book become a conversation—not just about how we raise our children, but about how we continue to raise ourselves.

As you read this book, you may notice moments that stir something — a memory, an emotion, a pattern you recognize in yourself. That's normal, and it's welcome. This book is designed to raise awareness, not resolve everything on the page.

If you'd like personal support with your parenting, your children, your life, or any other area you're currently dealing with or navigating, Daniel has worked with thousands of people one-on-one over the years.

If support resonates with you, or you simply feel drawn to connect with Daniel personally, you can book a one-on-one session below:

We have the power to change generations.

Daniel Rechnitzer
Author.

.....

Book Your One-On-One Session With Daniel Here:

<https://cal.com/danielrechnitzer/45min>

What I Started Seeing

Over the years, people booked sessions with me for almost every problem imaginable across every area of life. At first, they seemed like completely different problems.

But the more work I did on myself and the more people I met, the more impossible it became to ignore the patterns.

The dots began to join.

The riddles slowly started to solve themselves.

Because where there is an effect, there is always a cause.

What looked like an adult problem was often a child's adaptation that had never been questioned.

What follows are just some of the most common patterns I've witnessed all these years. They are not labels or diagnoses. They are invitations to understand how the smallest moments in childhood can quietly shape an entire lifetime.

Let me share some of what I've seen of Cause & Effect...

Adults with Money Problems

Here were adults who felt guilty spending money. They found it difficult to receive it. They undervalued themselves and rarely asked for what their time or expertise was truly worth. They avoided investment opportunities because they were terrified of losing what they had. Some worked incredibly hard, yet seemed to sabotage every opportunity to create wealth. Others believed that if they had more money, someone else would somehow miss out.

At first glance, these looked like financial problems. But looking closer it was a childhood problem. Many had watched Mum and Dad argue about money for years, while others watched one or both parents work endlessly, sacrificing their health, relationships, and happiness in the pursuit of earning a living. As children, it was easy to conclude that money created problems! Money mattered more than people—that work came before family, earning came before connection, and survival came before wellbeing.

They didn't just develop beliefs about money. They developed beliefs about themselves. They learned that their needs could wait, that their worth was tied to what they produced, that rest was selfish, and that money was the source of safety and security.

Is it any wonder that, as adults, they struggled to earn money, receive it, keep it, grow it, or spend it without

guilt and fear—or found themselves sacrificing their own health, happiness, and relationships in pursuit of it?

Adults Who Couldn't Say No

The people pleasers. The ones who had no boundaries, handed over their power. The ones who apologized for everything, struggled to ask for what they needed, and felt guilty whenever they put themselves first.

Many had learned as children that love came when everyone else was happy. They watched a father relentlessly trying to please their mother, or a mother sacrificing her own wants, dreams, and wellbeing to keep the peace. They learned that being "good" meant making everyone else comfortable, even at their own expense.

Others learned that boundaries weren't safe. Whenever they said "no," questioned an adult, or expressed what they wanted, they were yelled at, criticized, shamed, ignored, or had love, attention, or privileges taken away. Over time, they learned that saying "no" came at a cost.

So they stopped.

Their needs came last. Their feelings came last. Their voice came last. Eventually, they came last. As adults, many no longer knew where they ended and everyone else began. They confused self-sacrifice with kindness, approval and validation with love, and believed that

protecting other people's feelings was more important than honoring their own. Setting a boundary felt selfish, disappointing someone felt dangerous, and saying "no" often filled them with guilt.

They didn't struggle with boundaries because they were weak.

They struggled because, as children, boundaries had never felt safe.

Adults Who Believed Their Voice Didn't Matter

Many adults struggle to speak up, ask for what they deserve, or express what they're really thinking. They stay silent in meetings, avoid difficult conversations and confrontations, and often let life happen around them instead of actively shaping it.

For many, this didn't begin in adulthood. It began in childhood.

They grew up in homes where they were rarely asked what they thought. Their opinions weren't sought, their feelings weren't considered, and their ideas weren't part of family decisions. Whether it was moving house, choosing a school, buying a car, or making everyday

family decisions, they learned that adults decided and children simply followed.

Others were interrupted, dismissed, ignored, or told to "be quiet." Some were yelled at whenever they expressed themselves. Others found that even when they did speak, no one really listened.

Slowly, they stopped believing their voice mattered.

They learned that children were to be seen and not heard. That speaking up didn't change anything. That keeping quiet was easier than risking rejection, criticism, or being ignored.

As adults, those beliefs often remain. They hesitate to ask for a pay rise, avoid expressing their needs in relationships, stay silent when boundaries are crossed, and struggle to trust their own opinions.

Not because they have nothing to say...

But because, somewhere deep inside, they're still carrying the belief that their voice doesn't count.

Adults Trapped in Unhealthy Relationships

Many had grown up watching unhealthy relationships. Criticism became normal. Control became normal. Fighting, yelling, emotional manipulation, silence, resentment, or even violence became normal. They

watched two people stay together while both suffered, quietly learning that this was simply what love looked like.

Children don't just witness relationships—they absorb them. They learn what to expect from love, how conflict is handled, what they deserve, and what they should tolerate. If betrayal, criticism, control, or emotional distance are repeatedly modelled, those behaviors become familiar, and familiarity is often mistaken for safety.

As adults, some found themselves drawn to relationships that felt painfully similar to the ones they grew up watching. Others went to the opposite extreme. They feared commitment, avoided intimacy, or kept one foot out the door, terrified of being trapped, controlled, rejected, betrayed, or losing their freedom. After all, if love looked painful growing up, why would they trust it now?

They didn't struggle with relationships because they were incapable of love.

They struggled because the only blueprint for love they had ever known was one built on pain and betrayal.

Adults Living with Anxiety

Adults came to me with all kinds of fears. Some were afraid of leaving the house. Others dreaded driving, speaking in public, meeting new people, or simply being seen. Some were terrified of success because they feared the responsibility or attention that might come with it. Others feared failure so deeply that they never pursued the life they dreamed of. Many struggled to trust people, be alone, start a business, leave an unhealthy relationship, or make even the smallest decision without second-guessing themselves.

On the surface, these looked like completely different problems, but underneath, the same causes were there.

Many had grown up walking on eggshells. They'd been yelled at, criticized, hit, or lived in homes shaped by anger, depression, alcoholism, substance abuse, or constant emotional unpredictability. They never knew which version of Mum or Dad they were coming home to, or whether a simple mistake would be met with love, silence, rage, or punishment.

A child should never have to fear their parent. A parent is meant to be a child's greatest source of safety, comfort, and protection. But when the very people who are meant to make us feel safe become the source of fear, the nervous system adapts. It learns that home isn't safe, people aren't predictable, and danger can appear at any moment.

For many, that state of vigilance never switched off. Their nervous system continued scanning for threats long after childhood had ended. As adults, they found themselves expecting the worst, overthinking conversations, avoiding conflict, struggling to relax, catastrophizing and feeling anxious even when nothing was wrong.

They weren't born anxious.

They learned that the world wasn't safe because the place that should have felt safest never truly was.

Adults Trying to Prove Themselves

The overachievers. The workaholics. The perfectionists.

Many had grown up being compared with brothers and sisters, constantly corrected, or made to feel that whatever they did could always be done better. Praise was often replaced by criticism. Success was expected, while mistakes were magnified. Over time, they learned to criticise themselves before anyone else could, believing that if they found every flaw first, they could protect themselves from rejection, embarrassment, or failure.

Others grew up in families where everyone else's achievements were celebrated. Rich people were admired. Successful relatives were talked about. Celebrities, athletes, and high achievers became the

standard. Yet they rarely felt seen for simply being themselves. The message wasn't always spoken aloud, but it was deeply felt: if you wanted attention, love, or significance, you had to earn it. You had to achieve. You had to become someone worth talking about.

They learned that achievement was the price of acceptance and that who they were was never quite enough. So they spent adulthood trying to become enough. They chased promotions, built businesses, collected qualifications, accumulated wealth, or pursued impossible standards of perfection, hoping that the next achievement would finally bring the feeling they had been searching for all along.

And for many, it did bring success. Some of the world's highest achievers were fuelled by this very wound. But at what cost?

Because no achievement can ever convince a wounded child they are enough when they first learned they weren't.

The answer was never becoming more.

It was discovering they had always been enough.

Because you can't fix on the inside by what you achieve on the outside.

Adults Who Hated Themselves

This section is a difficult one for me to write. Because, I have seen what this leads to in clients, and for much of my life, I was one of them.

In my experience, there are very few things more painful than believing you're fundamentally unworthy of love, and unworthy of life flowing through your veins.

When you hate yourself, it colors everything. It changes the way you speak to yourself, the relationships you choose, the opportunities you pursue, the money you believe you deserve, the way you allow others to treat you, and sometimes even whether you believe life is worth living.

Over the years, I met countless adults carrying that same invisible burden.

Many had grown up feeling like they were a nuisance. A burden. Too much. Too emotional. Too difficult. An inconvenience. Some were left feeling they hadn't been wanted in the first place, or that they weren't the child their parents had hoped for. Others were constantly criticized, humiliated, physically abused, emotionally abused, neglected, or sexually abused. Some were punished so harshly for ordinary childhood mistakes that they didn't just believe they'd done something wrong—they believed there was something wrong with them.

Children depend on their parents and caregivers for love, safety, and belonging. When the very people who are meant to protect them become the source of fear, rejection, pain, or abuse, children rarely conclude, *"The adults in my life are hurting or behaving wrongly."* Instead, they conclude, *"It must be me."* If they feel hated, rejected, unwanted, or like an inconvenience, they begin to see themselves through the eyes they believe their parents see them.

"I'm a burden."

"I'm too much."

"I'm not wanted."

"I'm not enough."

"I've ruined everyone's life."

Over time, those beliefs become their identity. They reject themselves before someone else can. They criticize themselves before anyone else does. They convince themselves they are unworthy of love because, deep down, that's how they believe the people they needed most saw them.

As adults, that inner voice rarely disappears. They struggle to accept love, dismiss compliments, sabotage healthy relationships, and often carry a quiet belief that they don't deserve happiness or that the world would somehow be better off without them.

They didn't hate themselves because they were unlovable.

They hated themselves because, somewhere in childhood, they came to believe that's how the people they loved most saw them.

And if Mum or Dad saw them that way...

To a child, it had to be true.

But it wasn't just psychological—it was physiological. I watched the body carry the child's story into adulthood, the contents of the mind continuously reflected in the physical self. If you think all illness starts in the body, think again. Time and time again, I've seen it: the thoughts we absorb as children become the reality we inhabit as adults.

The early programming—*I'm not safe, I'm in danger, I'm a burden, people take from me, my body is weak, sickness runs in our blood*—doesn't just stay in memory. It gets written into our biology. And guess where it shows up? In our chronic gut issues, our tense shoulders, our autoimmune flares, and our exhausted nervous systems. The mind whispers, but the body carries the megaphone. If you're looking to heal the body, you have to look at what's been running through the mind. I dove deep into the psychological origins of illness in my first book, *The All-Knowing Diary*, so I won't repeat it all here. But the takeaway is simple: if you're

struggling to fix the physical symptoms, best
acknowledge the mental wounds that created them.

So, again and again...

Different people.

Different families.

Different lives.

Yet virtually the same patterns.

But if we can understand what shapes a child...

We have an extraordinary opportunity to prevent so
much unnecessary suffering before it ever begins. We
get to raise children that don't need to recover from their
childhood.

Before You Turn the Page

By now, you might be thinking:

"I've already screwed my kids up."

"My children are teenagers."

"My children are adults."

*"I want to become a parent one day, and now I'm
terrified I'll get it wrong."*

Or perhaps the biggest fear of all:

"I'm too damaged to raise a healthy child."

If any of those thoughts have crossed your mind, I want you to know something.

That isn't wisdom speaking.

That isn't truth speaking.

That's your wounded child speaking.

Whether you realize it or not, every time your child triggers you, they are holding up a mirror. That mirror doesn't just reflect your child's behaviour—it reflects your own childhood. It reveals the experiences that shaped you, the wounds that still ache, and the parts of yourself that are still asking to be seen.

This brings me to what I believe is one of the most important realizations about parenting.

Whenever your child's behavior, attitude, emotions, neediness—or even their love—triggers something in you, every parent has two choices.

- 1) We can allow our child to awaken the wounded child within us and find the courage to heal the pain we've carried for years, preventing those wounds from being passed down. Or

- 2) We can react from that wounded child, unleashing our anger, fear, frustration, resentment, shame, and unresolved pain onto the very child who unknowingly brought it to the surface, creating the same wounds in them.

One choice ends with healing. The other ends with history repeating itself.

This book is about helping you recognize the difference.

Because every interaction with your child is shaping something. Every word. Every reaction. Every moment of connection. Every moment of disconnection. Every repair. Every missed repair. Every one of those moments teaches your child something about themselves.

As you read this, I invite you to pause in those moments and ask yourself one simple question:

Who's parenting my child right now?

The adult I've become... or the wounded child I once was?

Every trigger is an invitation.

Not just to become a better parent.

But to become a freer, healthier, and more whole human being.

Because the answer to that question has the power to change not only your child's life, but your own.

So please don't read this book through the lens of guilt. You're not here because you've failed. You're here because you're choosing a different future. And that choice alone may become one of the greatest gifts you ever give yourself, your child, and every generation that follows.

Chapter 1

Your Child Was Never Broken

Before we talk about behavior, school, confidence, or anything else, there is one thing to understand.

Your child was never broken.

They didn't arrive in this world needing to be fixed. They didn't arrive incomplete or not enough. They arrived whole—curious, creative, loving, connected, and enough.

Your job isn't to turn them into someone extraordinary. Your job is to stop the world convincing them they're not.

One of the greatest lessons I've learned is this: children grow into the space we hold for them.

Think of a fish living in a small tank. It can only grow within the limits of the environment it's been given. Place that same fish in a vast lake, and suddenly it has the space to become what it was always capable of becoming.

Children are no different.

The way you see your child becomes the space they grow inside. If you see them as difficult, they'll begin to believe they're difficult. If you see them as naughty, they'll begin to believe they're naughty. If you see them as a problem, they'll eventually see themselves that way too.

But what if you saw something different?

What if, beneath the tears, the tantrums, the mistakes and the frustration, you saw a beautiful human being trying to work out who they are?

Instead of asking, *"What's wrong with my child?"* ask, *"What does my child need right now?"*

That one question changes everything.

Children borrow our eyes before they develop their own. The way you look at them slowly becomes the way they look at themselves. See possibility, and they'll begin to see possibility. Believe in them before they believe in themselves, and one day your belief will become theirs.

Never confuse behavior with identity.

Behavior is something a child does. It is never who they are.

There's a world of difference between saying, *"That wasn't a kind choice,"* and *"You're a naughty child."* One corrects behaviour. The other defines identity. And

identity is something children carry for the rest of their lives.

This idea reaches far beyond childhood.

One day your child will stand in front of a mirror. They'll make friends, choose partners, apply for jobs, chase dreams, and face setbacks. In every one of those moments, a quiet voice will speak inside their mind.

The question is: whose voice will it be?

Will it be the voice that says, *"You'll never be good enough,"* or the voice that says, *"You'll figure it out. I believe in you."*

For many of us, that voice was borrowed from the adults who raised us. We spend decades trying to silence criticism that was never ours to begin with.

Your child is borrowing that voice from you right now.

Every encouragement, every label, every look of disappointment, every expression of belief is helping to build the voice they'll one day call their own.

That doesn't mean you have to be perfect.

You will lose your patience. You'll make mistakes. You'll say things you wish you hadn't. Every parent does.

What matters most isn't perfection. It's repair.

When you apologise, take responsibility, and reconnect, you teach your child something even more powerful than getting it right every time. You teach them that relationships can heal. That mistakes don't define us. That love doesn't disappear when things get hard.

Perhaps that's one of the greatest gifts a parent can give.

Not the gift of never getting it wrong, but the gift of showing a child what it looks like to make things right.

So before you turn the page, make yourself one promise.

Whenever your child is testing your patience, pause. Look beyond the behaviour and remember who they really are.

Your child was never broken. Your greatest responsibility isn't to make them enough.

It's to protect the part of them that has always known they already are.

Chapter 2

Don't Let Their Little Bodies Fool You

I want to ask you a question that most of us—even as parents—have never really asked.

What is a child?

It sounds like a simple question, but I don't think most of us have ever really stopped to consider it. Because if we misunderstand what a child is, we will misunderstand everything that follows.

Don't let their little bodies fool you. Don't mistake their size for their significance. Don't mistake their age for a lack of wisdom. Don't mistake their dependence for weakness. They may be small, but they are not small beings.

Every child arrives in this world carrying something extraordinary. They bring their own energy, their own gifts, their own curiosity, their own way of seeing the world, their own inner guidance, and their own unique purpose. They don't arrive as a blank canvas waiting for us to decide who they should become. They arrive already carrying the seeds of who they are.

Your child is not your project. They are not your possession. They are not a punching bag to take out your anger at yourself. We literally have no right to yell at them, abuse them, hurt them in anyway, just because we gave birth to them. That's a fact. And it may be confronting to hear, but it's something I realized by crossing that line.

They are not here to fulfill the dreams you never achieved. They are not here to impress your friends, your parents, or the other parents at school. They are not here to make you look successful, nor to carry your disappointments, your fears, or your frustrations.

They are here to be themselves.

When most people look at a child, they see a small, vulnerable human who needs to be fed, dressed, schooled, and guided. But if you zoom out—if you look at a child through the combined lens of physics, biology, and consciousness—you realize something far more profound.

1. Built from the Stars

If you want to get literal about what a body actually is, look at the periodic table. Your child's physical body is built from carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, hydrogen, and iron. These aren't just elements on a classroom chart—they are the literal physical remnants of exploded stars from billions of years ago. The heavy elements that make up

human bones, blood, and neural pathways could only have been forged in the high-heat cauldrons of ancient supernovae.

As astrophysicist Carl Sagan famously pointed out, *we are made of star-stuff*. Your child isn't just standing in the universe; the physical material of the cosmos is standing right there in front of you, breathing and wearing sneakers.

2. Living Fractals and Holograms

Nature doesn't invent a new design rule for every single object; it repeats its best ideas. The universe works in fractals and holographic patterns—where the whole is reflected in every individual part.

- Look at the branching network of a child's lungs, and you are looking at the exact same design as the branches of an oak tree or the tributaries of a river.
- Look at the neural networks firing in their brain, and you are looking at the structural map of the cosmic web that connects galaxies.
- Look at a single cell, and it holds the blueprint for the entire body.

Every atom, molecule, and system inside your child is the universe replicating itself in miniature. They are not separate from the trees, the soil, or the atmosphere—they are a continuous loop of the exact same life force that animates the entire planet.

3. A Unique Spark of Consciousness

Then comes the missing piece that standard material science struggles to capture: consciousness.

Your child isn't just a biological machine taking in physical inputs. They arrive with an intrinsic awareness—an infinite, observing intelligence that exists above and beyond the physical vessel housing it. They aren't an empty vessel waiting for adults to pour

life into them. They arrive as an extraordinary, individual focal point of consciousness, experiencing existence in a way that has never happened before and will never happen again.

I remember when my son was only about a year old. I found myself wondering, *I wonder how he experiences the world.*

As someone who has spent many years teaching intuition, I did something unusual. I became deeply still and intuitively looked through his eyes, into his experience of reality.

What I experienced astonished me.

There wasn't a separate "me" the way adults experience themselves. There was no identity, no story, no self-image. Instead, there was an immense sense of being part of something infinite.

What I saw was the cosmos itself—a vast field of stars and galaxies. Then, on the edge of that infinite expanse, were two tiny eyes. It was as though the universe was looking through those eyes, experiencing life through this little human being.

I remember thinking, *Wow... imagine if we all experienced ourselves like that.*

When you understand a child this way, parenting changes completely. You realize you aren't trying to build a person from scratch. You are tasked with holding space for a living piece of the cosmos. Your role is not to create that person; your role is to protect that person.

Your job isn't to force them into a mold, but to protect the integrity of this incredible being—to keep their system safe, support their biology, and help them navigate the world without forgetting the extraordinary spark they brought with them.

Somewhere along the way, most of us adults forgot who we were. We learned we weren't enough. We learned to perform, to please, to compare ourselves, and to become who everyone else wanted us to be.

Your child will face those same pressures.

The question is this: Will home be the place that reminds them who they really are—or the place where they begin to forget?

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child isn't confidence, success, intelligence, or wealth.

It's the unwavering message that they never have to become enough because they already are.

If you're willing to see it, your child becomes one of your greatest teachers. They invite you to become more patient, more present, more forgiving, and more loving—not only towards them, but towards yourself.

This book isn't simply about raising extraordinary children.

It's about becoming the kind of adult who no longer needs their child to fill the gaps left by their own childhood.

Children don't need perfect parents.

They need parents who are willing to keep remembering who they really are.

Because as you remember who you are, you give your child permission to remember who they are too.

And that's where this journey begins.

Not by fixing your child.

But by finally seeing them for who they've been all along:

An extraordinary being, already carrying everything they need to become themselves.

Chapter 3

Before Your Child Takes Their First Breath

Most people think parenting begins the day their child is born. I don't.

I believe it begins much earlier.

It begins the moment you start creating the environment your child will grow in. Long before they hear your voice, long before they see your face, and long before they take their first breath, your relationship has already begun.

Whether you're planning a family, trying to conceive, already pregnant, or simply dreaming about becoming a parent one day, this chapter is for you.

For years I've wondered how much of our story begins before we're even born. I've worked with adults carrying fears they could never explain—feelings of not belonging, feeling unwanted, feeling unsafe, feeling like a burden, feeling like a mistake. I carried these too. It made me wonder: how early do we begin learning who and what we are (or are not)?

Whatever your answer to that question, one thing is certain.

Your child is growing inside the environment you create. Not just physically. Emotionally too.

This may surprise you. The thoughts you carry with you into conception, and throughout pregnancy get imprinted onto your children. They don't just hear your thoughts—they feel them through their own body and awareness, just as you experience them through yours. But they don't experience those thoughts as being about you; they experience them as being about themselves. If you're silently thinking, *"I'm not good enough for this,"* your child may unconsciously absorb that feeling as, *"I'm not good enough for this."* What belongs to you can quietly become part of their inner world.

That doesn't mean you need perfect thoughts. Please don't misunderstand me.

Every parent worries. *Will I be a good parent? Can we afford this? Am I ready? What if I get this wrong?*

Those questions don't make you a bad parent.

They make you human.

This chapter isn't about never feeling fear. It's about remembering to return to love.

Talk to your baby. Sing to them. Read to them. Laugh. Rest. Spend time in nature. Put your hands on your belly and let them know they're welcome. Let them know they're loved. Let them know you're excited to meet them. Remind them right from the very beginning they are whole, perfect and divine.

And perhaps, just as importantly, let yourself know those things too.

Because one of the greatest gifts you can give your child is becoming someone who is learning to love themselves. Our bodies respond to thoughts. Thoughts are frequencies, and the more loving these thought frequencies the healthier our bodies and minds become.

Children don't need parents who have it all figured out. They need parents who are willing to keep choosing love over fear, again and again.

If you're reading this after your children are already born, or they're teenagers, or adults, please don't skip this chapter.

The message is exactly the same.

The environment you create today still matters.

The conversations you have today still matter.

The love you express today still matters.

It's never too early to begin parenting with awareness.

And it's almost never too late.

Chapter 4

What's More Damaging Than Sugar?

One of the most damaging things we can give our children isn't actually sugar.

It's beliefs.

But what is a belief? A belief is simply a conclusion we form about ourselves or the world. It's an opinion that feels true, even though it may not be. If it were undeniably true, we wouldn't call it a belief—we'd call it a truth.

As your child grows, they aren't simply collecting memories. They're collecting beliefs. Every single day, they're answering questions they don't even know they're asking:

Who am I? Am I enough? Am I safe? Am I lovable? Do I matter? Can I trust myself? Is it safe to be me?

No child is born believing they're not enough. No child is born believing they have to earn love. No child is born believing they're stupid, ugly, difficult, a burden, or that their voice doesn't matter.

Those beliefs are learned. Not in one big moment, but in thousands of little moments. A look. A sigh. Being ignored. Being interrupted. Being laughed at. Being compared to a brother or sister. Being told to stop crying. Being told they're too sensitive. Being told they're too loud. Being told they're too much. Being praised only when they achieve. Being loved differently when they behave.

None of those moments seem particularly significant on their own. But together, they become their **IDENTITY**. Not their personality—their *identity*. Personality is how they show up to the world, but identity is the deep, stacked reality of every conclusion and belief they've adopted about who they are.

One child spills a glass of milk. A parent smiles and says, "That's okay. Let's clean it up together." That child learns that mistakes are safe. Another child spills a glass of milk. They're yelled at, shamed, and told they're hopeless. That child may begin learning something very different: mistakes aren't safe, I have to get everything right, and if I make mistakes, I lose love.

Same event. Different belief.

That's why this book isn't really about behaviour. It's about belief. Because behaviour changes. Beliefs stay—until we become aware of them.

Over my entire career I've worked on my beliefs and helped adults overcome beliefs they didn't even know

they'd formed: *I'm not enough. I don't deserve success. I have to keep everyone happy. I can't trust myself. I'm too much. I'll never be loved. My opinions don't matter. I have to prove myself. I have to be perfect. If I receive money someone else will miss out.* ...and countless others.

I even wrote two books just dealing with beliefs: '*Mind Lies*' and '*Losing Your Mind It's The Only Thing To Do*'.

Those beliefs didn't appear overnight. They began somewhere. Usually quietly. Usually innocently. In childhood. Then they settled into the subconscious, where they quietly shaped emotions, physical health, learning, attention, behaviour, decisions, actions, relationships, and ultimately, the course of a person's life.

This isn't about blaming parents. Every parent passes on some beliefs. So did your parents. And theirs before them. Most of us are simply passing on what was passed on to us until someone becomes aware.

Through their own experiences, but also by listening to Mum and Dad, grandparents, relatives, teachers, friends, social media, television, and the news, children are constantly forming beliefs about themselves and the world.

How many times have you heard yourself—or another parent—say things like:

"You are so naughty."

"You're a bit of a klutz, aren't you?"

"You're not very bright, are you?"

"You're so lazy."

"You'll never get anywhere in life if you keep behaving like that."

Or perhaps you've said things about life itself:

"Life's a struggle."

"Work sucks."

"You can't trust anyone."

"If you don't do it yourself, it won't get done properly."

"Marriage is a prison sentence."

"Everyone is after your money."

"Money goes as fast as it arrives."

"Cancer runs in our family."

"We're just unlucky with money."

"You're just like your mother/father"

These beliefs become the programs that shape a child's reality from the inside out.

But, they don't need your beliefs—your version of reality, which was passed down to you.

And this isn't about replacing "bad" beliefs with "good" beliefs, as many people suggest. Every belief has an expiry date, no matter how empowering it seems. Beliefs are still conclusions, and conclusions can become limitations.

Instead, consider giving your child something even greater: as few limiting beliefs as possible, and the freedom to discover truth for themselves.

Let them experience life before they draw conclusions about it. Let them remain curious rather than certain. Let them discover who they are, instead of inheriting someone else's version of reality.

The less we burden children with our beliefs, the more space they have to live in truth.

That's why awareness is so powerful. The moment you begin noticing the beliefs you're helping create, you begin changing your child's future. Not because you'll never make another mistake, but because you'll begin asking a different question.

Instead of asking, *"How do I get my child to behave?"* you'll begin asking, *"What belief might my child be creating about themselves right now?"*

And perhaps an even more powerful question:

"What truth can I give them right now so they don't form a limiting belief about themselves?"

That one question has the power to transform the way you parent forever.

Examples of Truths:

- "I'm not upset with you. I'm actually upset with myself. I'm sorry I yelled."
- "It was an accident. Accidents are part of learning."
- "It's okay to feel sad. Your feelings are welcome here."
- "I'm already proud of you—you don't need to do anything to earn it."
- "You are enough exactly as you are."
- "It's not your job to make me happy or to please me. That's my responsibility."
- "You never have to earn my love. You already have it."
- "You are perfect, and lovable as you are whether you make a mistake or not."

Chapter 5

A Voice That Matters

How many adults struggle to speak their truth?
How many never ask for the promotion they deserve or the pay rise they've earned? How many stay in unhappy relationships because they can't find the words, "This isn't okay"? How many apologise before they've even spoken? How many remain silent to avoid conflict, rejection or anger? How many swallow their opinions in meetings, hold back their ideas, or watch someone cross their boundaries without saying a word? How many spend their lives making themselves smaller so they don't take up too much space?

Most people call this a lack of confidence.

I don't think confidence has anything to do with it.

Somewhere in childhood, they quietly stopped believing their voice mattered.

And when you don't believe your voice matters, you stop asking. You stop expressing your needs. You stop setting boundaries. You stop standing up for yourself.

Eventually, you stop believing you deserve to be heard at all.

Children who don't feel heard don't simply become quiet adults. They become adults who question their own worth every time they open their mouths.

The problem is that this belief doesn't suddenly appear when we're adults.

It starts much earlier. They don't arrive in this world believing their voice doesn't matter.

They learn it. Sometimes they learn it because they're constantly interrupted. Sometimes they learn it because Mum or Dad are too busy to really listen. Sometimes they learn it because they have to compete with brothers and sisters just to be noticed. Sometimes they learn it because every conversation seems to end with:

"Be quiet." "Not now." "Stop interrupting." "You're talking too much." "Nobody asked you." "Let the adults talk".
"What do you know you're just a child?".

Other times it's more subtle.

A child comes home excited to share something that happened at school, only to be met with distracted nods while a parent scrolls through their phone. A little voice says, "Mum, look at this!" and hears, "In a minute." A

child shares a fear, only to be dismissed with, "It's nothing, you'll be fine."

They express sadness and hear, "Don't be so sensitive." They cry and are told, "Stop crying."

None of these moments, on their own, define a child.

Parents are busy. We all get distracted. We all say things we wish we hadn't.

It's the pattern that matters. A child doesn't hear those words once and decide they don't matter.

But after hearing them hundreds—or even thousands—of times, a quiet belief begins to take root.

My voice doesn't matter.

And that belief grows up with them. It becomes the employee who never goes anywhere in their career. The partner who never says what they really need. The friend who always replies, "Whatever you want is fine." The entrepreneur who struggles to ask for what their work is worth. The person who says "yes" when every part of them wants to say "no." The teenager who stays silent because fitting in feels safer than being authentic. The adult who spends their life wondering why they never feel fully seen or heard.

The beautiful thing is this is easily avoided in children.

Every time you stop what you're doing...

Every time you put your phone down...

Every time you make eye contact...

Every time you genuinely listen...

You are teaching your child something profound.

My thoughts matter.

My feelings matter.

My voice matters.

I matter.

Listening doesn't mean agreeing with everything your child says. It doesn't mean they always get their own way. It doesn't mean there are no boundaries or consequences. Children need boundaries. Children need guidance. Children need to hear "no."

But there is a world of difference between correcting a behaviour and silencing a person.

You can say, "I understand you're angry, but it's not okay to hit."

Instead of, "Stop being ridiculous." You can say, "I can see this is important to you."

Instead of, "It's not a big deal." You can teach respect without taking away dignity.

You can hold boundaries without making a child feel invisible. Because one day your child will leave home. And when they do, they'll carry an invisible voice inside their own mind.

That voice will speak to them every day. When they're deciding whether to ask for the promotion. When they're negotiating their salary. When they're starting a business. When they're standing up to a bully. When they're choosing a partner. When they're deciding whether to stay silent or speak their truth.

The question is... Whose voice will it be?

Will it be the voice that whispers, "Don't say anything. Nobody wants to hear what you think."

Or will it be the voice that reminds them, "Your ideas matter. Your feelings matter. Your voice deserves to be heard. Speak. Ask. Create. Share. The world is better because you're in it."

Every conversation you have with your child is helping write that inner voice.

Choose your words carefully.

One day...

They'll become theirs.

Chapter 6

Should a Child Earn Love?

How many of us spend our lives trying to prove we're enough?

We chase promotions, bigger bank balances, more followers, more success, hoping that one day we'll finally feel worthy. We work harder than we need to. We struggle to say no. We give our time away for free. We undercharge for our work. We bend over backwards trying to make everyone else happy, often at great cost to ourselves.

We seek praise from our boss, approval from our parents, validation from our partner, and acceptance from people we barely know. We measure our worth by our achievements, our possessions, our appearance, or how much we can do for everyone else.

Sometimes we even do it with our own children. We buy them gifts and secretly hope they'll react with enough excitement to make us feel appreciated. We make enormous sacrifices, and when they don't notice or don't seem grateful, we feel hurt, frustrated, or unseen.

Why?

Because somewhere deep inside, many of us are still trying to earn something we were never meant to earn in the first place.

Love.

Not just the love of other people.

Our own.

Most people don't realise it, but one of the most damaging thoughts a child can develop is this:

Love must be earned.

No child is born believing that.

Children are born expecting love. Not because they've done anything to deserve it. Not because they've behaved well enough. Not because they've achieved something remarkable. Simply because they exist.

Love is meant to feel safe. Constant. Certain.

But sometimes, without even realising it, we teach our children something very different.

We teach them that love has conditions.

Love comes when you're good. Love comes when you behave. Love comes when you get good grades. Love comes when you make Mum happy. Love comes when

you don't upset Dad. Love comes when you're quiet.
Love comes when you don't cause trouble.

A child doesn't hear those words exactly like that.

They experience them.

They experience it when affection disappears after a mistake. When connection is withdrawn as punishment. When they feel ignored after disappointing you. When sent to their room to be on their own as punishment. When they feel responsible for your happiness. When approval is abundant on their best days but distant on their worst.

A belief quietly begins to grow.

I have to earn love.

But here's what I believe is really happening.

The child isn't simply learning that Mum or Dad's love disappears. They're learning something far more dangerous. They're learning that love disappears when mistakes happen.

At first, it feels like your love has gone.

Then, slowly, something heartbreaking happens.

They begin to do exactly the same thing to themselves.

Every mistake becomes another reason to stop loving themselves. Every failure becomes another reason to criticize themselves. Every disappointment becomes another reason to reject themselves. Every setback becomes evidence that they aren't enough.

Without ever intending to, they become their own harshest parent.

I've worked with countless adults who have spent enormous amounts of time, energy and money searching for something they should never have lost.

Permission to love themselves.

Think about that for a moment.

How different would your life have been if, no matter what happened... no matter what mistake you made... no matter who rejected you... no matter what business failed... no matter what relationship ended... you never stopped loving yourself?

How different would your decisions have been?

Would you have stayed in relationships that hurt you?
Would you have settled for less than you deserved?
Would you have tolerated being treated poorly? Would you have been so desperate for other people's approval? How much unnecessary suffering could have been avoided if you had always known, deep down, that your worth was never in question?

Your child will make mistakes. They'll lie. They'll forget. They'll break things. They'll disappoint you. They'll disappoint themselves.

That's called being human.

Your job is not to stop them from making mistakes.

Your job is to make sure they never confuse making a mistake with becoming unworthy of love.

Correct the behaviour. Teach the lesson. Hold the boundary. Apply consequences when they're needed. But let your love remain unmistakable.

There's a world of difference between saying, *"That wasn't a good choice,"* and making a child wonder, *"Do you still love me?"*

One teaches responsibility. The other teaches self-rejection. One helps a child grow. The other creates an adult who spends decades trying to earn love from everyone except the one person who matters most.

Themselves.

Imagine your child growing into an adult who never questions whether they're worthy of love. Someone who never withdraws love from themselves after making a mistake. Someone who can fail, learn, apologise, grow, get back up, and still look in the mirror with kindness.

That is one of the greatest gifts you'll ever give them.

Because one day, the way you loved your child after they made a mistake will become the way they love themselves after they make one.

Chapter 7

Is Life Safe?

How many of us as adults carry deep anxiety that never seems to fully leave? How many of us battle constant mistrust, an underlying fear of betrayal, or a chronic, subtle feeling of being unsafe in our own skin—or in the world around us?

How many dreams have never been pursued because that inner fear quietly whispered, *"What if I fail?"*

How many books sit unwritten in drawers because the thought of judgment felt too terrifying? How many businesses were never started? How many conversations never had? How many opportunities missed—simply because taking the next step didn't feel safe?

So many of us remain in careers we no longer love, or relationships that stopped serving us years ago, because the unknown feels far more dangerous than the familiar. We suffer silently with anxiety, depression, or overwhelming stress while everyone around us believes we're doing just fine.

How many of us have spent our entire lives trying to survive rather than truly live?

Most people think these struggles are problems of confidence, courage, or motivation. I don't. I think they are the physical symptoms of something much deeper: a nervous system that learned, very early in life, one simple lesson:

Life isn't safe.

You're Raising a Nervous System

If there is one fundamental question your child's nervous system asks every single day, it is this: **"Is life safe?"**

Not just physically safe—but emotionally safe:

- *Am I safe to be myself?*
- *Am I safe to speak, cry, or laugh?*
- *Am I safe to make mistakes, tell the truth, or ask for help?*

Most parents believe they are raising a child. I see it a little differently: **You are raising a nervous system.**

In many ways, your child's nervous system becomes the operating system they will use for the rest of their lives. Every experience writes another line of code. Every cuddle, smile, and encouraging word. Every argument, criticism, and repair after a disagreement. Every moment they feel truly seen—and every moment they feel invisible.

Long before the thinking mind gets involved, and long before logic has a chance, the nervous system quietly reaches one of two conclusions:

Life is safe. — *The gate opens to curiosity, learning, creativity, deep relationships, abundance, and joy.*

Life isn't safe. — *The gate begins to close. Not because your child is weak or broken, but because their body is doing exactly what it was designed to do: protect them.*

What Makes a Child Feel Unsafe?

Parents often ask me, "What actually makes a child feel unsafe?"

It is rarely a single catastrophic event. More often, it is the quiet accumulation of small moments repeated over time:

- **Predictability dissolves:** When a child is regularly yelled at, or when they never know which mood Mum or Dad will bring home.
- **Love feels conditional:** When affection is withdrawn after a mistake, when connection vanishes, or when silence becomes a punishment.

- **Self-worth is chipped away:** When they are constantly criticized, compared to siblings, embarrassed, or made to feel like a burden.
- **Their reality is dismissed:** When their feelings are minimized with phrases like *"Stop crying," "I've had enough of you,"* or *"I'm going to lose my temper."*

Sometimes, what creates an unsafe nervous system isn't what happens—**it's what never happens.** It's the absence of being comforted, hugged, or reassured with the simple words: *"I'm here. You're safe. We'll get through this together."*

Children don't need a life without challenges. They just need to know they won't have to face those challenges alone.

The Body Remembers

In my work with countless adults who describe themselves as chronically anxious, I see the same story play out over and over. They overthink everything, struggle to relax, expect the worst, and constantly prepare for impact.

They aren't broken. Their nervous systems simply never stopped scanning for danger.

As children, they learned to hyper-analyze every facial expression, every shift in tone, every slammed door,

and every heavy footstep down the hallway. Their bodies became extraordinarily skilled at predicting threat. That adaptation helped them survive childhood, but it makes adulthood exhausting—because even when life becomes safe, their body still believes it isn't.

The body remembers, long after the conscious mind has forgotten.

Living in survival mode doesn't just shape how we think. It shapes how we love, how we parent, how we relate to money, how much risk we take, and our ability to rest.

- **A child who feels safe** becomes curious. They explore, create, laugh, trust, and bounce back from setbacks.
- **A child who feels unsafe** learns a survival rulebook: *Stay alert. Don't relax. Don't trust. Don't make mistakes. Don't be noticed.* Over time, constant tension begins to feel normal.

The Mirror of Safety

Real safety isn't just shielding your child from physical harm; it's giving them the emotional freedom to live fully. Every time you create safety around their mistakes, their big emotions, or their unique personality, your child learns to build that same safety inside themselves.

The way you repeatedly respond to your child becomes the way they will repeatedly respond to themselves.

One day, you won't be there to calm them, reassure them, or remind them they are okay. They will have to do that for themselves—or they won't, depending on the code written into their nervous system today.

Life will never be free of disappointment, failure, or heartbreak. You cannot protect your child from all of it, nor should you try. Your job isn't to remove every obstacle from their path; your job is to become the anchor they return to whenever life feels uncertain.

Children need parents whose presence teaches their nervous system that, despite life's challenges, the world is fundamentally safe enough to explore.

The question is this: **Will home be the place that reminds them who they really are—or the place where they begin to forget?**

Chapter 8

Can I Trust Myself?

How many of us find it almost impossible to make a decision without asking five different people for their opinion first?

How many of us second-guess our instincts, doubt our choices, or look to an authority figure, a partner, or an expert to tell us what is best for our own lives? How many of us stay in toxic environments because we've been conditioned to believe that someone else knows better than we do—that our inner compass is broken?

This is not a skill issue. Somewhere in childhood, many of us quietly stopped believing we could trust ourselves.

Just like the need for safety, self-trust isn't something we suddenly possess as adults. It is built—or dismantled—in childhood.

Every child is born with an extraordinary gift.

An inner guidance system.

They know when they're hungry.

They know when they're full.

They know when they're tired.

They know what excites them.

They know what frightens them.

They know what feels right.

And they know what doesn't.

Long before they can explain it...

They feel it.

Children are naturally connected to themselves. They don't spend their lives wondering what everyone else thinks. They don't need permission to laugh, to dance, to play, to imagine, to dream, or to be themselves.

But little by little, many children stop listening to that quiet inner knowing.

Not because it disappears.

But because they slowly learn that everyone else's voice matters more than their own.

Every time a child is told, "Don't screw it up".

Every time they're told, "What do you know."

Every time they hear, "You're fine."

"Stop crying."

"Don't be so sensitive."

"You're overreacting."

"Don't be silly."

"You don't really feel that."

"You're only a child."

"You'll understand when you're older."

"The adults make the decisions around here."

"Because I said so."

"What will people think?"

They aren't simply being corrected.

They're slowly being taught that someone else's version of reality matters more than their own.

That what they feel...What they notice...What they sense...What excites them...What frightens them...What interests them.....can't be trusted.

A subtle but dangerous belief begins to take root.

My feelings are wrong.

My instincts are unreliable.

Someone else knows me better than I know myself.

Children don't stop trusting themselves overnight.

It happens one small moment at a time.

One dismissed feeling. One ignored instinct. One decision made for them without explanation.

One message that what they know inside isn't as important as what someone else believes outside. Over time, they stop looking inward for answers and start looking outward instead.

They become disconnected from their own instincts, emotions and needs, relying on other people to tell them what they should think, feel and want.

This doesn't just affect the big decisions in life. It affects thousands of tiny ones.

The child who is taught not to trust that they're tired grows into the adult who ignores exhaustion until they burn out. The child who is told they're "too sensitive" grows into the adult who dismisses every gut feeling that something isn't right. The child who is taught to ignore their discomfort grows into the adult who struggles to set boundaries. The child who learns that everyone else knows better grows into the adult who keeps asking everyone else how to live.

Eventually they stop asking,

"What feels right to me?"

And they begin asking,

"What does everyone else think I should do?"

Adults who no longer trusted themselves; asked everyone else's opinion before making a decision. They stayed in relationships they knew weren't right. They remained in jobs that made them miserable. They ignored the quiet voice inside them because they'd spent years believing they couldn't trust it. Many no longer believed their own bodies could heal. They believed only doctors had the answers. *"What would I know?"*.

Some kept searching for another expert.

Another course.

Another coach.

Another book.

Another person to tell them the answer.

Not because they lacked wisdom.

Because somewhere in childhood they learned that wisdom lived outside themselves.

Many handed their power to parents.

Then teachers. Then partners. Then bosses. Then doctors. Then governments. Then society.

Always believing someone else knew them better than they knew themselves.

But your child doesn't need you to become their inner voice.

They need you to protect the one they already have. That doesn't mean allowing them to do whatever they want. Children need guidance. They need wisdom. They need boundaries.

Your job is not to make every decision for them forever.

Your job is to help them become someone who can eventually make wise decisions for themselves. That means asking questions instead of always giving answers, helping them notice how something feels, encouraging curiosity, teaching them to pause before reacting, to sleep on a decision instead of rushing into it, to consider the consequences, and to listen to both their head and their heart. Then, whenever it's appropriate, show them that you trust the decision they've come to. Not because they'll always get it right—they won't, and neither do we—but because every decision, whether it works out or not, is an opportunity to learn, grow, and develop confidence in their own judgment.

Children don't learn to trust themselves because they always make the right decisions. They learn to trust themselves because the important adults in their lives trusted them enough to let them think, reflect, choose, make mistakes, and learn from them.

The greatest parents don't raise children who become dependent on them. They raise children who become deeply connected to themselves—children who can walk into the world and say, *I can listen. I can think. I can feel. I can learn. I can change my mind. I can ask for advice without giving away my power.*

There is a huge difference between seeking guidance and surrendering your authority.

Your child will meet many people throughout their life who will tell them who they should be, how they should look, what they should believe, who they should love, how they should earn money, and how they should live. Your greatest gift is not teaching them to reject everyone's advice. It's teaching them to listen, reflect, and then quietly ask themselves, *Does this feel true for me?*

If they can do that, they'll make mistakes. They'll change direction. They'll learn. They'll grow. But the one thing they'll never lose is themselves.

Because children don't become adults who lack confidence. They become adults who learned not to trust themselves. And a child who trusts themselves

doesn't need to spend the rest of their life searching for someone else to tell them who they are.

Chapter 9

Such A Shame...

"You should be ashamed of yourself." Most of us have heard those words, and some of us heard them often. The strange thing about shame is that it doesn't disappear when childhood ends; it simply changes address. As adults, we shame ourselves for the body staring back at us in the mirror, for the thoughts that unexpectedly enter our minds, for our sexuality, for our failures, and even for our successes.

We find reasons to feel ashamed for not earning enough or for earning too much, for being emotional or for not being emotional enough, and for not being where we thought we'd be by now. We carry shame for being divorced, for being single, for staying, or for leaving. Eventually, this critical voice becomes so familiar that we mistake it for our own.

But here's the question: Is it really your voice? Or is it simply the voice you heard often enough that it became your inner narrator? Children aren't born ashamed. They don't arrive believing they're stupid, ugly, weak, broken, selfish, lazy, or unlovable. Those beliefs are learned—one comment, one look, one comparison, and one humiliation at a time. Until eventually, the child no longer

needs a parent to shame them because they've learned to do it themselves.

There is an important difference between guilt and shame. Guilt says, "What you did wasn't okay," whereas shame says, "There is something wrong with you." Healthy guilt helps children develop a conscience, but shame attacks their identity. A child who spills milk doesn't need to believe they're careless, a child who lies doesn't need to believe they're a liar, and a child who makes a mistake doesn't need to believe they *are* a mistake. Correct the behaviour, but protect the child. Always.

Most parents don't intend to shame their children; it simply slips out in moments of frustration. It hides in common phrases like: "You should be ashamed of yourself," "What's wrong with you?" "Look at your brother, why can't you be more like him?" "You're embarrassing me," "Good boys don't cry," "Nice girls don't behave like that," or "I can't believe you did this." Sometimes, shame doesn't even need words. A disappointed sigh, an eye roll, a look of disgust, silence, or the withdrawal of affection sends the message just the same: "Something about me isn't acceptable." Children don't analyse these moments; they absorb them.

Have you ever caught yourself saying, "I'm such an idiot," "I'm hopeless," "No one could really love me if they knew the real me," "I'm a terrible parent," "I should

have achieved more by now," or "I'm disgusting"? Those aren't just passing thoughts—they're echoes. Shame is one of the few childhood experiences that follows us into adulthood disguised as our own inner voice. We think we're being honest with ourselves, but often, we're simply repeating what was programmed years ago.

Many parents believe shame will motivate change, and sometimes it does, but usually for the wrong reasons. The child behaves better because they're terrified, because they don't want to be rejected, because they're afraid of disappointing you, or because they're trying to earn back love. That's not emotional maturity; that's emotional survival. Children raised with shame often become adults who chase perfection, hide, people-please, or bully others before they can be bullied themselves. Others become so afraid of failure that they stop trying altogether. Shame changes behaviour, but it rarely heals the child.

Imagine your child breaks something valuable. You could say, "What is wrong with you? You always ruin everything." Or you could say, "I'm upset that it broke. Let's clean it up together, and next time we'll be more careful." Both responses teach, but only one protects your child's sense of worth. Your job isn't to convince your child they're good—they already believe they are. Your job is to make sure they don't stop believing it.

Throughout this book, we've talked about the Inner Child and the Outer Child. The Outer Child makes mistakes,

but the Inner Child decides what those mistakes mean. If every mistake is met with shame, the Inner Child quietly concludes, "There must be something wrong with me." But if mistakes are met with guidance, boundaries, and love, the Inner Child learns something entirely different: "I can make mistakes and still be worthy of love." That belief becomes confidence, resilience, and lasting self-worth.

The next time your child makes a mistake, pause for just a moment and ask yourself: "Am I correcting their behaviour, or am I accidentally teaching them who they are?" One lesson lasts for a day; the other can last a lifetime.

Chapter 10

Is Life Really So Urgent?

How many of us find it almost impossible to slow down? How many feel guilty when we're doing nothing? Even when we finally have a moment to ourselves, we instinctively reach for our phone, turn on the television, check our emails or find something else to occupy our minds. How many of us rush from one task to the next, always busy, always productive, always believing there's somewhere else we should be or something more important we should be doing?

How many of us make important decisions under pressure because we're afraid of missing out? We've all heard the salesperson say, "The offer ends today," or "There's only one left." How many of us have bought something, accepted a job, entered a relationship or made an investment simply because we felt we had to decide now? Looking back, we realise it wasn't our timing at all. It was someone else's.

Living life as a race isn't really living. It's simply moving faster. Some of our greatest regrets aren't the decisions we made slowly; they're the ones we made in a hurry. The words spoken in anger. The investment we didn't properly think through. The relationship we rushed into.

The opportunity we accepted because we were afraid it would disappear. Wisdom rarely arrives under pressure, yet many of us have been conditioned to believe that slowing down means falling behind.

Children aren't born in a hurry. Watch a toddler and you'll see someone completely absorbed in the present moment. They'll spend ten minutes watching an ant carry a leaf, become fascinated by a butterfly, stop to examine a stick, or throw rocks into a puddle simply because it's interesting. They aren't worried about tomorrow or thinking about what's next. They're fully engaged with what's happening right now.

Then, little by little, we begin teaching them something different.

"Hurry up." "Come on." "Quick!" "We don't have all day." "Make your mind up." "Stop mucking around." "We're late."

Most parents don't say these things because they're impatient. They say them because life is busy. There are schools to get to, appointments to keep, dinners to cook and bills to pay. But children don't hear the reasons behind our words. They hear the repetition. Over time they begin to absorb a subtle but powerful belief: life is something to rush through. Thinking carefully takes too long. Finishing is more important than experiencing. Slowing down is a problem to be fixed.

Eventually this becomes their normal way of living. They stop pausing long enough to notice what they're feeling. They react instead of reflecting. They become uncomfortable with silence and restless in stillness. Many adults become addicted to being busy because busyness feels normal, while rest feels unfamiliar. The irony is that the greatest insights rarely arrive when we're rushing. They come while walking on the beach, sitting quietly in the garden, driving home, lying in bed or standing in the shower.

They arrive when we've finally created enough space for our minds to settle. Intuition needs space. Creativity needs space. Clarity needs space. Some of the wisest decisions we'll ever make aren't made quickly; they're made after we've given ourselves permission to pause.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is permission to slow down.

When they're packing for a trip, encourage them to take their time instead of rushing and forgetting things. When they're drawing, let them enjoy the process rather than hurrying to finish.

When they're faced with a decision, don't rush them toward an answer. Ask, "How does that feel?" Encourage them to sleep on it. Let them discover that changing their mind isn't weakness; sometimes it's wisdom.

One day your child will meet people who create urgency to influence them. A salesperson will tell them the offer ends tonight. A friend will pressure them to decide immediately. A partner may demand an answer before they're ready. The world will constantly try to convince them that faster is better.

Your voice can become the one they remember: "Take your time. Think it through. There's no rush."

Children don't just need to learn how to make decisions. They need to learn that the best decisions are rarely made in a hurry. Urgency is often the language of fear, but wisdom speaks much more quietly. If we want our children to hear their own inner voice, we must first teach them that it's okay to slow down long enough to listen.

Chapter 11

Is It Safe to Be Me?

One of the saddest things I've witnessed over the past isn't that adults don't know who they are. It's that so many of them once did.

Every child enters this world with something uniquely their own. Their own personality, gifts, imagination, way of seeing the world, curiosity, pace, sense of humour, dreams, talents and inner wisdom. Some children are natural artists. Some are inventors. Some are musicians. Some are deeply intuitive. Some feel everything. Some ask questions nobody else is asking. Some see beauty where everyone else walks straight past. No two children are the same, and they were never meant to be.

So many children get raised by adults who were taught to lose themselves. Adults who were told to fit in, not stand out, to colour inside the lines, to stop asking so many questions, to stop daydreaming, to be realistic, to get a proper job, to stop being so sensitive, to stop believing in things they couldn't explain, and to keep their unusual thoughts to themselves.

They learned that belonging meant becoming more like everyone else. That being accepted was more important

than being authentic. That standing out invited criticism, while fitting in brought approval. So when their own child has an extraordinary imagination, sees the world differently, asks difficult questions, notices things others don't, or expresses ideas that don't fit neatly into society's expectations, they often respond in the only way they were taught. They don't usually do it out of cruelty.

They do it out of love, believing they're protecting their child from rejection. But in trying to protect them from standing out, they may also be teaching them that the safest way to be loved is to become less of who they really are.

Watch a young child. They don't spend their day wondering if they're cool enough, smart enough, popular enough or successful enough. They wear costumes to the supermarket. They dance for no reason. They make up imaginary worlds. They talk to animals or imaginary friends. They collect sticks and rocks like they're priceless treasures.

They laugh loudly. They cry honestly. They are wonderfully, unapologetically themselves.

Then something begins to happen. Someone laughs at them. Someone compares them to another child. Someone tells them they're weird, too sensitive, too loud or too quiet. Someone tells them to

stop imagining, to act normal, or that they'll never make a living doing what they love.

Some children discover gifts that don't fit neatly into what the adults around them understand.

They have a vivid imagination, a deep intuition, a different way of seeing the world, or a way of learning that doesn't match the classroom. Sometimes those gifts are celebrated. Sometimes they're dismissed.

Sometimes they're feared. Sometimes a child is told that part of them is wrong, strange or unacceptable. They may even be told that good people don't think that way or that people won't accept them if they're different.

Whatever the words, the child hears something much deeper:

If I want to be loved, I need to stop being me.

Because every child longs to belong, many do exactly that. They hide parts of themselves. They silence their curiosity. They ignore their intuition. They stop asking unusual questions. They stop creating. They stop dreaming. Not because those parts disappear, but because they no longer feel safe.

Over the years, I've met many adults trying to reconnect with gifts they once had naturally—creativity, playfulness, intuition, sensitivity, wonder and imagination. Those gifts were never truly lost. They were simply buried beneath years of trying to become acceptable.

Every child wants to be loved. Every child wants to do the right thing. Every child wants to belong. If they believe they must choose between belonging and being themselves, most children will sacrifice themselves. They'll become who everyone else wants them to be. They'll choose approval over authenticity, acceptance over truth, and belonging over becoming. That may help them survive childhood, but it often leaves an adult wondering, *Who am I?* Your child doesn't need you to tell them who they are. They need you to protect the person they already are.

Expose them to music, sport, art, nature, books, science, adventure, different cultures and different ideas—not so you can choose their path, but so they can discover it. Pay attention to what naturally lights them up. Notice what they return to without being asked. Notice what makes time disappear for them. Notice what fills them with wonder. Joy leaves clues.

So does curiosity.

Ask yourself: Can my child safely disagree with me? Can they safely have different opinions? Can they safely choose a different career? Can they safely wear what expresses who they are? Can they safely love different things? Can they safely learn differently? Can they safely question ideas? Can they safely change their mind? Can they safely say, *"That doesn't feel right for*

me?" Can they safely become someone I never imagined?

Because your child isn't here to fulfil your unfinished dreams. They're not here to repair your disappointments. They're not here to make you look successful. They're not your project, and they're not your second chance.

They're a unique expression of life.

They're also your teacher.

They'll show you where you've stopped being yourself. They'll show you where you've abandoned your own joy. They'll show you where you've silenced your own truth. If you're willing to learn from them, they'll make you a better parent. More than that, they'll help you become more fully yourself.

One day your child will stand at countless crossroads. They'll have to decide whether to fit in or be themselves, whether to keep everyone happy or honour what's true for them, whether to choose what everyone expects or follow what genuinely lights them up.

Those decisions won't begin in adulthood. They're being shaped right now.

Every time you celebrate your child's uniqueness, protect their individuality, encourage their curiosity and

remind them they don't have to become someone else to be loved, you're giving them one of life's greatest gifts:

The freedom to become exactly who they came here to be.

Because perhaps the greatest lesson a child can ever learn is this:

It is safe to be me.

A Reminder...

If you've made it this far, some of what you've read has probably landed somewhere deeper than the page. That's not an accident, and it's not just about your child. Many parents tell me the same thing: they picked up this book to understand their kids, and somewhere around the middle, they realised they were reading about themselves too. Their own inner child. Their own old stories. Their own moments that were never quite healed.

If that's happening for you right now, I want you to know two things.

First — that's not a detour from this book's purpose. It's the purpose. The parents who

heal the child within themselves are almost always the ones who find the rest of this book easiest to live, not just read.

Second — you don't have to do that part alone, and you don't have to do it right now. When you're ready, I offer private sessions supporting exactly this kind of work. There's no pressure, and nothing here requires it. But the door's open whenever you are.

<https://cal.com/danielrechner/45min>

Now, let's keep going.

Chapter 12

Joy Is the Compass

If you were to rate your life today, what percentage of it would be made up of genuine joy?

Not success. Not achievement. Not money. Joy.

How much of your life is spent doing things that make you feel truly alive? How much is spent simply paying the bills, meeting expectations or trying to become the person you thought you needed to be?

The interesting thing is that most of us weren't born this way.

As children, joy was our compass. We followed what fascinated us. We played, explored, imagined and created without wondering whether it was practical or impressive. We didn't ask what would make us successful. We simply followed what made us come alive.

When I think back to my own childhood, yes, there were difficult moments. But I also remember an overwhelming sense of joy. If I had to put a number on it, I'd say that in those earliest years, perhaps eighty percent of my life was filled with it.

Until it wasn't.

Somewhere along the way, many of us stopped asking, **"What brings me joy?"** and started asking, **"What should I do?"**

The question every parent should ask is this:

Do I want that to happen to my child?

Pay attention to what brings your child joy. Not because joy is a reward, but because joy is information.

Children are born following joy. They don't wake up wondering how to become successful. They don't worry about climbing the corporate ladder or ask which hobby will impress other people. They simply follow what lights them up. They build cubby houses, climb trees, collect shells, draw, dance, sing, ask impossible questions, invent games, spend an hour watching ants build a nest, play with sticks, talk to animals and lose themselves in imagination. They're not wasting time. They're discovering themselves.

Every moment of genuine joy leaves clues. Clues about how they learn, how they think, what fascinates them, what energises them and what makes them feel truly alive.

Then, slowly, many children stop following joy. Not because it disappears, but because they learn that approval is more important. They hear messages like,

"That's not practical," "You can't make money doing that," "Go and do something useful," "You'll never get a real job doing that," "Stop daydreaming," or "You'll grow out of it." Little by little, joy is replaced by expectation, curiosity is replaced by performance and wonder is replaced by achievement. A child who once naturally followed what lit them up begins asking a different question: *What do I need to do to make everyone else happy?*

I've worked with adults who became doctors because their parents wanted them to, lawyers because the family expected it, or business owners because success looked impressive. Others spent decades climbing ladders they never wanted to climb. Many achieved exactly what they were told would make them happy, only to discover they felt empty. Not because success is wrong, but because success without joy is a lonely place.

One of the questions I often ask adults is, "Don't ask what you're good at first. Ask what brings you alive." I believe the same is true for children. Watch what they naturally return to. Watch what they choose when nobody is telling them what to do. Notice what makes time disappear for them. Listen to what they can't stop talking about. Those aren't distractions. They're signposts.

Some parents worry that if children follow joy they'll become irresponsible. I don't believe that. Joy isn't the opposite of responsibility. Joy gives responsibility

meaning. When people love what they do, they usually work harder, learn faster and contribute more—not because they have to, but because they want to.

That doesn't mean children should never do difficult things. Life will always require discipline, commitment, practice and perseverance. But those qualities become far easier to develop when they're connected to something the child genuinely loves. A child who loves music doesn't need to be forced to practise forever. A child fascinated by nature doesn't have to be convinced to explore. Passion fuels persistence in a way pressure never can.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is permission to be bored. Boredom isn't something to fear. It's often the doorway to creativity. When we constantly fill every quiet moment with screens, entertainment and stimulation, we rob children of the opportunity to discover what naturally emerges from within. Some of the most creative ideas are born in moments when there is nothing to do except wonder.

Some of my favourite childhood memories weren't expensive. Walking along the beach, building cubbies, fishing, playing with a dog, exploring the bush, lying on the grass watching clouds drift past and making something out of nothing. Nature has always been one of the world's greatest teachers. It slows us down, reminds us that life isn't a race and teaches patience, wonder and presence. Children instinctively know this.

Left alone, they'll often choose puddles over shopping centres, sticks over expensive toys, trees over television and freedom over perfection. The more we protect that connection, the more we protect the child.

Perhaps one of the greatest mistakes adults make is believing that money should come before joy. I don't believe that's how life works. When we chase money while abandoning what makes us come alive, we may earn a living, but we risk forgetting how to live. When we honour what lights us up, we bring more energy, more creativity, more contribution and often, as a result, more opportunity.

Joy isn't a distraction from your child's purpose. Joy is often the doorway to it.

Your role isn't to decide what that purpose is. Your role is to notice the clues, encourage them, expose your child to many different experiences and let them explore. Let them try. Let them fail. Let them change their mind. Let them discover. Let them surprise you.

What many people don't realise is that joy is rarely random. It's often pointing us towards the life we were designed to live. The things that naturally light your child up, that absorb their attention, that make them lose track of time, aren't just hobbies or passing interests. They're clues to who they are.

A life of purpose isn't simply about choosing a career. It's about becoming fully yourself. It's about discovering your unique gifts, expressing them in a way that serves yourself and others, waking up each day feeling that your life has meaning. When our essence, our work, our gifts and our values begin to align, life often flows with greater energy, fulfilment and opportunity. We don't just succeed—we feel alive.

One day your child will ask themselves, *What should I do with my life?* My hope is that before they ask, *What pays the most?* or *What will impress everyone else?* they first ask, *What makes me come alive?*

Because the world doesn't need another person who simply earns a living.

It needs more people aligning to what brings more joy.

Chapter 13

What Does Love Look Like?

How many of us get angry and annoyed at our partners? How many of us have stayed in relationships long after we knew they were no longer healthy? How many ignored red flags but pushed through anyway because we hoped things would change? How many have found ourselves in relationships that looked remarkably similar to the ones we grew up watching? How many have repeated the very patterns we promised ourselves we'd never repeat?

How many of us have spent years trying to earn someone's love, approval or affection? How many became people-pleasers, rescuers or caretakers because that's the role we learned as children? How many have avoided relationships altogether because love never felt emotionally safe?

And how many have been fortunate enough to experience healthy, respectful and loving relationships because that's exactly what was modelled to them growing up?

Most of us believe we choose our relationships consciously.

The truth is, we've been learning what love looks like since the day we were born.

Every single day, children are watching. They're watching how Mum speaks to Dad and how Dad speaks to Mum. They're watching how conflict is handled, how affection is shown, how respect is given, how apologies happen, whether people truly listen to one another, whether kindness is present and whether home feels emotionally safe.

Children don't learn what love is from what we tell them.

They learn it from what we show them.

If love looks like kindness, respect, patience, affection, laughter, listening and repairing after conflict, that becomes normal. If love looks like criticism, walking on eggshells, silence, manipulation, control, humiliation, emotional distance, fear or violence, that can become normal too.

Children don't consciously decide, *One day I'll choose a relationship like my parents had.*

Their nervous system simply learns:

This is what love feels like.

And what feels familiar often feels safe.

Even when it isn't.

Children aren't just learning from the relationship between their parents. They're also learning from the relationship they have with each parent.

A daughter's relationship with her father often becomes one of her earliest experiences of how she expects to be treated by men. If she grows up feeling loved, protected, respected and emotionally safe, those qualities become familiar. She learns that love can be gentle, dependable and kind. But if her relationship with her father is marked by criticism, rejection, emotional distance, unpredictability or fear, I've often seen women spend years drawn towards relationships that recreate those same emotional experiences. Not because they consciously want them, but because that is what their nervous system learned love feels like.

I've noticed something similar with sons. A boy who feels accepted, encouraged and emotionally connected to his mother often grows into a man who doesn't believe he has to earn love. He expects relationships to be supportive, respectful and safe. But when affection feels conditional, when approval depends on achievement or emotional connection is inconsistent, I've worked with many men who spent years trying to prove themselves. They became successful enough, important enough or powerful enough, still hoping that one day they would finally feel worthy of love.

I've also met adults who never felt deeply connected to one of their parents and spent years searching for that missing connection elsewhere. Some looked for it in

romantic relationships. Some looked for it through achievement. Some searched for it in mentors, friendships or communities. Again and again, I saw the same longing beneath the surface—a child still hoping to receive the love they never fully experienced.

I've also worked with adults who repeatedly entered controlling, manipulative or abusive relationships because those dynamics felt strangely familiar. Others avoided intimacy altogether because closeness never felt safe. Again and again, we found ourselves returning to one simple question:

What did love look like in your home?

Not because childhood determines your future forever.

But because it often creates your first blueprint.
The beautiful thing is that blueprints are not destiny.

They can be rewritten.
Patterns can change.
Awareness changes everything.

Every healthy disagreement your child witnesses teaches them that conflict doesn't have to destroy love. Every sincere apology teaches them that relationships can be repaired. Every hug after an argument teaches them that connection can return. Every act of kindness teaches them what respect looks like. Every moment of affection teaches them that love can feel safe.

And don't forget, your child is also watching how you love yourself.

Do you speak to yourself with kindness or criticism? Do you allow yourself to be respected? Do you honour your own needs? Do you stay in relationships that diminish you? Do you forgive yourself when you make a mistake, or do you punish yourself long after it's over?

Your child is learning from all of it.

As parents, one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves is this:

What kind of relationship am I modelling for my child?

If they grew up believing this was normal, would I be happy for them to choose a relationship just like it one day?

It's also worth asking another question:

What kind of relationship do I have with my child?

Because that relationship becomes one of the first blueprints they'll carry into adulthood. It teaches them what respect feels like, what emotional safety feels like, what healthy boundaries feel like and what they should expect from the people they allow into their lives.

If the answer isn't what you hoped, don't let that fill you with guilt.

Let it fill you with hope.

Children don't need perfect parents.

They need parents who are willing to grow.

It's okay if your relationship with your partner isn't working. In fact, how you respond may become one of the greatest lessons your child ever learns. Seeking help, improving your communication, apologising, repairing what's broken or, when necessary, ending an unhealthy relationship with honesty and respect can all teach your child something profoundly healthy.

You're teaching them that love isn't about enduring unhappiness.

You're teaching them that people deserve respect.

That problems can be worked on.

That asking for help is a strength.

And that sometimes the healthiest thing two people can do is let each other go with kindness rather than remain together in resentment, conflict or emotional distance.

One day your child will choose friends, business partners, a husband, a wife or a life partner. They won't simply be choosing a person.

They'll also be choosing what feels familiar.

My hope is that what feels familiar is kindness, respect, safety, honesty, affection, laughter, trust and two people who never ask each other to become someone else in order to be loved.

Because perhaps the greatest lesson your child can ever learn about love is this:

Real love never asks you to abandon yourself.

Real love gives you the safety to become more fully who you already are.

Chapter 14

Your Child Is Not Responsible for Your Happiness

Do you feel guilty saying no? Do you apologise for things that aren't your fault? Do you avoid conflict because you can't bear the thought of someone being upset with you? Do you find yourself trying to keep the peace between family members, friends or work colleagues? Do you worry about how your words or actions affect everyone else, often at the expense of your own wellbeing? Do you put everyone else's needs before your own? Do you feel responsible for other people's happiness?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, there's a good chance you weren't born that way.

You learned it.

Most children don't consciously decide to become people-pleasers, rescuers or peacemakers. Those behaviours often begin with something incredibly innocent: a child's deep desire for the people they love to be okay.

Children are born wanting to be loved. They want to belong. They want to feel safe. And one of the ways

they measure safety is by looking at the emotional state of the adults around them.

If Mum and Dad are okay, the world feels okay.

If Mum and Dad aren't okay, the world suddenly feels uncertain.

The important thing to understand is that children don't think like adults. They don't stand back and objectively analyse situations. They personalise them.

When Mum is crying, they wonder if they caused it.

When Dad is angry, they wonder what they did wrong.

When their parents argue, many quietly ask themselves, *Is this my fault? Could I have stopped it? Maybe if I'd behaved better. Maybe if I tried harder. Maybe if I didn't make mistakes. Maybe if I got better grades. Maybe if I kept everyone happy... then Mum and Dad would finally be happy.*

Without anyone intending it, a child quietly accepts a job that was never theirs.

Keeping everyone else okay.

Some children become the peacemaker, always trying to calm everyone down. Some become the good child who never causes trouble. Some become the achiever, believing success will finally make their parents proud. Some become the comedian, hoping laughter will make everything feel normal again. Some become the

rescuer, always trying to fix everyone else's problems.
Some become invisible, believing that if they don't need anything, life will be easier for everyone else.

Different strategies.

The same hope.

If I can just make everyone else happy... maybe everything will be okay.

Those children become adults.

Adults who struggle to say no.

Adults who apologise far too often.

Adults who stay in unhealthy relationships because they don't want to disappoint anyone.

Adults who constantly put everyone else's needs ahead of their own.

Adults who feel responsible for fixing everyone else's emotions.

From the outside, these people are often described as kind, thoughtful, generous and selfless.

And many of them are.

But underneath those beautiful qualities, there is often something much deeper.

Fear.

Fear that if someone is unhappy, it must somehow be their responsibility.

Fear that conflict means rejection.

Fear that disappointing someone means losing love.
Children should never have to carry that burden.
One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is the
freedom to know that your happiness is not their
responsibility.

That doesn't mean pretending you're always happy.
Quite the opposite.

Children benefit from seeing healthy emotions. They
need to know that sadness, frustration, disappointment
and grief are all normal parts of being human.

The difference is this.

We don't ask children to carry those emotions for us.
If your child sees you upset, don't leave them to fill in the
blanks.

Children naturally create a story to explain what they
see. And because they're children, that story often
begins with, *I must have done something wrong*.

Instead, tell them the truth.

"Mummy is feeling sad today, but it's not because of
anything you did."

"Daddy had a difficult day at work. He's going to be
okay."

"Mum and Dad had a disagreement. We're working
through it together."

"I love that you care about me, but it's not your job to
make me happy."

Children don't need every adult detail.
But they do need reassurance.

They need to know they are safe.

They need to know they are loved.
And they need to know they are not responsible.
Never assume they'll work that out on their own.
Children resonate with truth.

When we explain what's happening in language they can understand, we prevent them from creating painful stories that simply aren't true.

Another simple habit can change your child's life.

Whenever your child is struggling to make a decision, pause before telling them what you think they should do.

Ask them a different question.

"If you weren't trying to make Mum happy, what would you choose?"

Or...

"If you weren't trying to please Dad, what decision would you make?"

Then reassure them.

"You're not responsible for making me happy."

"You're not allowed to choose this because you think I'll like it more."

"I want you to choose what feels right for you."

At first, they may not know how to answer.

Many children become so focused on earning approval that they stop listening to themselves.

Your job is to help them reconnect with their own inner voice.

You're teaching them something far more valuable than obedience.

You're teaching them self-trust.

Children who learn to ask, *"What feels right for me?"* are far less likely to spend their adult lives asking, *"What do I need to do to make everyone else happy?"*

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is permission to disappoint you occasionally in order to remain true to themselves.

Because children who are allowed to think for themselves become adults who don't need everyone else's approval to make good decisions.

This becomes especially important during life's biggest changes.

When a new baby arrives, an older child can easily believe they've been replaced or that somehow they weren't enough.

Tell them the truth.

"We're not having another baby because you're not enough. We're giving you someone to love, someone to play with and someone to share life with. You'll always be enough, and nothing could ever change how much we love you."

When my daughter was born, we gave my son a brand-new watch and told him it was a present from his little sister. It was a small gesture, but it helped create a positive emotional connection from the very beginning. Instead of feeling replaced, he felt welcomed into something bigger.

The same principle applies when parents separate.

One of the first questions many children silently ask is,
Did I cause this?

Even if they never say those words out loud, they often carry them for years.

Don't assume they know the answer.

Tell them.

Again and again.

"This isn't your fault."

"This has nothing to do with you."

"You don't have to fix this."

"You don't have to choose between us."

"You don't have to make Mummy happy."

"You don't have to make Daddy happy."

"We're the adults, and we'll work through the adult problems."

"We both love you exactly as much as we always have."

Children don't just hear our words.

They absorb the stories we leave unspoken.

If we don't tell them the truth, they'll often invent one of their own.

And children almost always blame themselves before they blame the adults.

One of the healthiest things your child can witness is a parent taking responsibility for their own emotional life.

Apologising when they've made a mistake.

Asking another adult for support.

Working through challenges without placing them on little shoulders.

Showing that adults can have difficult days and still remain responsible for themselves.

Your child is watching.

They're learning what healthy responsibility looks like.

Imagine your child growing into an adult who knows:

I can love people deeply without carrying their life.

I can care without rescuing.

I can help without losing myself.

I can say no without feeling guilty.

I can let other people learn their own lessons.

That is emotional maturity.

And it begins in childhood.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child isn't teaching them to make you happy.

It's teaching them that your happiness belongs to you, and theirs belongs to them.

Because when children stop trying to save everyone else, they finally become free to discover who they really are.

And when they discover who they really are, they give the world the greatest gift they have to offer.

Their authentic selves.

Chapter 15

Boundaries Are Love

For most of my life, I didn't know what a boundary was. I certainly wasn't taught one as a child. In fact, I didn't really understand the word until I was in my forties.

Looking back now, I can see that many of the biggest challenges in my life weren't simply bad luck. They were the result of having almost no boundaries.

Financial losses. Relationships that harmed instead of supported me. People taking advantage of my kindness. Business partnerships I should have walked away from much earlier. Saying yes when every part of me wanted to say no. Trying to rescue people who didn't want to be rescued. Believing that being a loving person meant always being available. Always saying yes.

Always putting everyone else first.

I was wrong.

One of the greatest acts of love is knowing when to say no.

Most people think boundaries push people away. Healthy boundaries do the opposite. They protect relationships. They protect respect. They protect trust. And perhaps most importantly, they protect you.

Children aren't born knowing how to create healthy boundaries. They learn them from us.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is not unlimited freedom. It's healthy boundaries.

Boundaries create safety. Children relax when they know where the edges are. They don't have to wonder where the line is. They don't have to test it constantly. The world becomes more predictable. Their nervous system settles. A child without boundaries often feels less safe, not more.

But here's something equally important.

Your child doesn't just need boundaries from you. They need permission to have boundaries with you.

Teach them to say: "No thank you." "I don't like that."
"Please stop." "I need some space." "I'm not ready."
"I've changed my mind." "That doesn't feel right."

Without being laughed at, shamed, punished or made to feel guilty?

Because if they can't practise boundaries at home, how will they create them out in the world?

How will they say no to the friend who pressures them?
The boyfriend who doesn't respect them? The girlfriend who manipulates them? The boss who expects too

much? The business partner who crosses the line? The stranger who doesn't honour their space?

I'll never forget a time we were staying in a hotel when my son was just two years old, sleeping in a portacot beside our bed. In the middle of the night, I woke to the sound of him murmuring in his sleep. Curious, I lay there quietly, listening.

At first, it was just soft little noises. Then I heard him say, "No..." A few moments later, in a distressed little voice, he cried, **"No, Daddy... No more tickle torture, Daddy."**

At two o'clock in the morning, it was more horrifying than humorous.

I realised that what I had thought was harmless fun hadn't felt that way to him at all. I'd often tickle him until he was laughing uncontrollably, assuming that because he was laughing, he was enjoying it. But laughter isn't always a sign of joy. Sometimes it's simply an involuntary response.

In that moment, I realised I had crossed one of the most important boundaries a child has—their right to decide what happens to their own body. Children are constantly learning whether their "no" matters. If we ignore it because we're "only playing," we unintentionally teach them that someone bigger, stronger, or older gets to decide when enough is enough.

Every time you respect your child's healthy boundary, you teach them that their body matters. Their feelings matter. Their intuition matters. Their safety matters.

You also teach them something equally important. That other people's boundaries matter too.

Healthy boundaries aren't about controlling people. They're about respecting people. Sometimes love says yes. Sometimes love says no. Both can be acts of love.

One of the biggest mistakes many of us make is believing that saying no is selfish. It isn't.

Sometimes saying yes when you really mean no is the most dishonest thing you can do. Children who never learn to say no often become adults who feel responsible for everyone. They over-give. They overwork. They overcommit. They over-explain. They apologise for having needs. They feel guilty resting. They feel guilty charging what they're worth. They feel guilty disappointing people.

Eventually they stop asking, "What do I need?" And start asking, "What does everyone else want from me?" That isn't love.

That's self-abandonment.

Real love doesn't require you to lose yourself. Real love allows two whole people to meet. Not one person disappearing so the other can be happy.

One day your child will need boundaries with friends. With partners. With family. With employers. With money. With technology. With social media. With people who demand too much. With people who don't respect them. And even with the voice inside their own head. Your job isn't to build those boundaries for them forever. Your job is to show them what healthy boundaries look like. To teach them that saying no doesn't make them a bad person. It makes them an honest one. That protecting their peace isn't selfish. It's wise. That loving other people should never require them to stop loving themselves.

Because the strongest relationships are never built on obligation. They're built on mutual respect.

And every healthy boundary quietly says the same thing:

I respect you.
And I respect myself too.

Chapter 16

Labels Become Beliefs

If I asked you to describe yourself, what words would you use? Not the person you're trying to become, nor the person you wish you were—the person you genuinely believe you are.

Would you describe yourself as someone who is not very bright, a slow learner, without a creative bone in your body, bad with money, irresponsible, reckless, impulsive, lazy, anxious, too sensitive, shy, awkward, not good enough, not attractive, hopeless with relationships, or someone who always stuffs things up? Or perhaps your labels sound more positive: smart, reliable, responsible, driven, generous, frugal, confident, or successful.

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself where those labels came from? Did you decide them, or did somebody else decide them first? Because here's something most people never realise: very few of the labels we carry as adults began as our own. Many of them were handed to us by parents, teachers, family members, or other children long before we were old enough to question them.

Words are never just words, especially to a child. Children don't simply hear what we call them—they begin to believe it, and over time, they become it. Children hear things like: *"You're shy," "You're difficult," "You're lazy," "You're naughty," "You're sensitive," "You're the smart one," "You're hopeless with money," "You're just like your father," "You're always causing trouble," "You're annoying," "You're such a good girl,"* or *"You're the responsible one."* Every label is a seed. Water it often enough, and eventually your child begins to mistake it for who they are.

One of the greatest misunderstandings in life is that our identity is fixed. It isn't. Most of what we call our identity is simply a collection of labels we've inherited. Some of those labels may describe an experience, but none of them describe the extraordinary being underneath. Yet once we identify with a label, we begin living as though it's true. I've coached adults who were still living inside labels they were given when they were three years old. A teacher once called them slow, so they spent forty years believing they weren't intelligent.

A parent told them they were hopeless with money, so they unconsciously kept proving it. Someone said they were too emotional, so they spent decades hiding their feelings. Another was constantly told they were a nuisance, so they grew into an adult who apologised for taking up space and secretly wished they were no longer on this planet. Another was repeatedly told they

were naughty, so they stopped believing they could ever be trusted, and therefore neither could anybody else.

The label became the identity. The identity became their emotions and mental health. The identity shaped the decisions, and the decisions shaped the life. This is one of the ways our inner world creates our outer world. If I believe, *"I'm not good enough,"* I'll often act as though I'm not. If I believe, *"I'm bad with money,"* I'll make decisions that reinforce that belief. If I believe, *"I'm difficult to love,"* I may unknowingly push love away or settle for less than I deserve. If I believe, *"I'm hopeless,"* I may never even try. The world begins reflecting back the identity we're carrying. That's why labels matter so much.

Children don't need identities that shrink them; they need identities that expand them. That doesn't mean telling your child they're better than everyone else. It means helping them see possibilities rather than limitations.

Instead of labelling who they are, describe what you see in the moment: *"I noticed how kind you were," "I loved how curious you were," "I could see how brave that was," "You worked really hard," "That was thoughtful,"* or *"You kept going even when it was difficult."* This is different from placing your child inside a fixed identity, because your child is more than any single label. Today they may be courageous; tomorrow they may feel afraid. Today they may be creative; tomorrow they may be

quiet. Today they may struggle; tomorrow they may surprise themselves. They don't have to perform an identity to deserve love.

Perhaps the greatest words you can ever say to your child are the simplest: *"You are an extraordinary human being," "You carry gifts that nobody else carries," "You don't have to become someone else," "You don't have to fit into a box," "You don't have to spend your life trying to live up to somebody else's definition of success," "You are loved exactly as you are," and "You are far more than any word could ever describe."*

In many ways, the healthiest identity a child can have is one that stays open—infinite, not finite. Not *"This is all I'll ever be,"* but *"I can grow," "I can learn," "I can change," "I can surprise myself,"* and *"I don't have to stay trapped inside someone else's story about me."*

As parents, we have a choice. We can hand our children labels that limit them, or we can hand them a vision that liberates them. See them as bigger than today's behaviour, bigger than today's mistake, and bigger than today's success. See them as a limitless human being with gifts that are still unfolding. Because children have an extraordinary ability: eventually, they become the way they're consistently seen. So see them through the biggest lens you possibly can. Not because they have to earn it, but because that's who they have always been. And perhaps the greatest gift of all is helping your child realise they never needed a label in the first place—just

this quiet knowing: *Who am I when I remove every label I've ever been given?* That is the place from which the extraordinary grows. That is the place from which a great life comes. That is the place from which authenticity grows.

And that is how you want to witness your child: not as a collection of labels, but as an extraordinary being whose greatest qualities are still waiting to emerge. Qualities that may never have been witnessed on this planet before, because they were never confined by labels, expectations, or comparison.

Chapter 17

Comparison Is the Thief of Our Authentic Self

Perhaps you compare yourself to the people around you: the friend who seems more successful, the neighbour with the bigger house, or the business owner who appears to have it all figured out. Elon Musk, the billionaire, the celebrity, the influencer with millions of followers, the parent who seems to have perfect children, or the couple whose relationship looks effortless. Or perhaps the comparison is even more painful—perhaps you compare yourself to the person you used to be: the body you used to have, the business you once built, the money you once had, the confidence you once felt, the relationship you once enjoyed, or the dreams you thought would have happened by now.

Comparison doesn't just steal our joy; it quietly steals our identity. Because every time we compare ourselves, we're unconsciously saying: *Who I am isn't enough.*

Most people think comparison begins on social media, but it doesn't. It usually begins much earlier—it begins at home. Children hear things like: *"Why can't you be more like your sister?"*, *"Your brother never behaved like this,"*, *"Look how well she's doing,"*, *"He's so much better at sport,"* or *"Why can't you apply yourself like your cousin?"* Parents rarely say these things to hurt their children; most say them because they genuinely hope comparison will motivate. It rarely does. Instead, comparison quietly plants one devastating belief: *Who I am isn't enough.*

A child who is constantly compared doesn't learn how to become themselves—they learn how to become somebody else. And that's where the real tragedy begins, because comparison never ends. The child who compares themselves to their sibling eventually compares themselves to their classmates, the smartest student, the best athlete, the most popular child, the most attractive teenager, or the wealthiest family. Then they become adults, and now they're comparing themselves to the successful business owner, the billionaire, the celebrity, the influencer, the perfect family online, or the person with the bigger house, the nicer car, the better body, or the more exciting life. The

comparison simply changes targets, while the suffering stays the same.

Social media has simply poured fuel on a fire that already existed. Children grow up believing they're supposed to have millions of followers, be famous, own extraordinary homes, build billion-dollar companies, or become household names. And if they don't, they begin rejecting themselves—not because they've failed, but because they're comparing their ordinary Tuesday with somebody else's carefully edited highlight reel. Comparison teaches children to spend their lives looking sideways: always checking where everyone else is, always measuring, always chasing, and always feeling behind.

But here's what comparison can never tell your child: who they came here to be. There has never been another person exactly like your child, and there never will be. They have their own gifts, their own timing, their own path, and their own contribution.

Your job is not to convince your child they should become more like someone else; your job is to help them become more fully themselves. That is a very different conversation. Instead of asking, *"Why can't you be like your brother?"* ask, *"What makes you come alive?"* Instead of saying, *"Look how successful they are,"* ask, *"What kind of life would feel meaningful to you?"* Instead of encouraging imitation, encourage discovery.

I've noticed something fascinating: every person we admire for doing something extraordinary has one thing in common. They didn't become extraordinary by becoming somebody else—they became extraordinary by becoming more of themselves. They trusted their ideas, their instincts, their gifts, and their curiosity. They backed themselves when the world doubted them. They didn't spend their lives trying to become the next version of someone else; they became the first version of themselves. That's where every meaningful contribution begins.

Role models can be wonderful. They can inspire us, teach us, and expand what we believe is possible. But there's a difference between inspiration and imitation. Learn from great people—don't disappear into them. The greatest role model your child will ever have is the person they become when they learn to trust themselves.

Imagine if children grew up admiring themselves the way they admire celebrities. Imagine if they spoke to themselves with the same encouragement they give their sporting heroes. Imagine if they believed in themselves with the same certainty they believe in people they've never even met. How different would their lives be?

One day your child will meet people who are richer, smarter, faster, or more talented than them in certain

areas. That was never the competition. The only meaningful question is this: *Am I becoming more of who I truly am?* Because the world doesn't need another copy of someone successful—it needs the original that only your child can become.

Teach your child to celebrate other people's success without questioning their own worth, and to understand that another person's gifts never diminish theirs. Know that admiration is healthy, but recognise that comparison is not. Remind them, again and again, that they were never sent here to live someone else's life—they were sent here to discover, express, and share their own.

Perhaps the greatest role model your child will ever have is the person they see in the mirror. Not because they believe they're better than anyone else, but because they know they were never meant to become anyone else. They were always meant to become more fully themselves.

Chapter 18

Mistakes Are Safe

One of the greatest tragedies I've witnessed is not that people make mistakes, but that they're terrified of making them. So many adults stay in jobs they don't love, never start the business, never ask the question, never fall in love again, never write the book, never speak on the stage, and never take the chance. Not because they lack talent, but because they're frightened of getting it wrong.

Where did that fear begin? Usually much earlier than they realise—as children.

Many of us were taught that mistakes weren't safe. Mistakes meant being yelled at, criticised, embarrassed, punished, made to feel stupid, or made to feel like a disappointment. Sometimes love, attention, or affection disappeared.

Sometimes all we heard was: *"What were you thinking?"*, *"How many times have I told you?"*, or *"You should know better."* Our little nervous system didn't hear, *"You made a mistake."* It heard: *"If I make mistakes... I lose love."* That's a terrifying lesson for a child, because children need love as much as they need food.

Over time, something even more painful can happen. The child doesn't just begin believing that mistakes cost

them love; they begin wondering whether *they* are the mistake. Every criticism, rejection, disappointed look, and harsh word quietly asks a question they were never meant to ask: "*What's wrong with me?*" If that question goes unanswered for long enough, it slowly becomes an identity. Instead of believing, "*I made a mistake,*" they begin believing, "*I am a mistake.*"

Once that happens, life changes—not because they're incapable, but because they're constantly trying to avoid anything that might confirm what they've secretly come to believe about themselves. They stop taking risks, asking questions, putting themselves out there, and trying new things. Not because they're afraid of failing, but because they're afraid failure will finally prove that the story they've carried all these years is true. That is one of the greatest burdens a child can carry.

But here's the truth: your child is doing almost everything for the very first time. The first time they hold a glass, tie their shoes, ride a bike, pour a drink, cook, make a friend, experience heartbreak, earn money, apologise, drive a car, or become a parent—they're learning every single day. So why would we expect perfection from someone experiencing life for the first time? Of course they'll spill things, break things, forget, make poor decisions, and get things wrong. That's not failure—that's learning.

In many ways, mistakes aren't even real; they're simply information. Every experience is teaching your child

something: what worked, what didn't, and what they'd do differently next time. That's how wisdom is built.

Imagine trying to teach a baby to walk. The baby stands, falls, stands again, and falls again hundreds of times. No loving parent says, *"That's it. Walking obviously isn't for you."* We smile, we encourage, and we celebrate the attempt, because we understand something important: falling isn't failing, it's part of learning to walk. Life works the same way. The entrepreneur who succeeds has made countless mistakes. The musician, the athlete, the scientist, the inventor, and the artist—every person your child will one day admire has failed more times than most people realise. They simply didn't stop.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is permission to make mistakes without questioning who they are. Correct the action if needed, teach the lesson, and repair any harm, but protect their identity. Never allow a mistake to become, *"I am a mistake."* Those are two completely different things.

Instead of asking, *"Why did you do that?"* try asking, *"What did you learn?"* Instead of saying, *"Be more careful,"* ask, *"What might you do differently next time?"* Instead of punishing curiosity, protect it—because curiosity is where learning begins. A child who isn't afraid of making mistakes becomes an adult who isn't afraid of growing. They try, explore, ask questions, take healthy risks, recover, adapt, and become resilient.

One day your child will make mistakes you can't prevent. They'll trust the wrong person, spend money unwisely, choose the wrong job, say something they regret, or take a path that doesn't work out. That isn't the problem. The problem is if they believe those moments define them. Teach your child that mistakes don't determine their worth. Mistakes don't make them less lovable, less intelligent, or a failure—mistakes make them human. And every mistake carries a gift, if we're willing to look for it.

As a parent, one of the greatest gifts you can give your child is not the belief that they'll never make mistakes; it's the knowing that no mistake could ever reduce their worth. Let them know they were wanted, that they are deeply loved, that they have a purpose, that they matter, that they are needed in this world, that they carry gifts no one else can bring, and that they are extraordinary—not because of what they achieve, but because of who they are.

Children who know their worth don't stop making mistakes; they simply stop believing that mistakes define them. Mistakes become stepping stones instead of stumbling blocks, lessons instead of life sentences, and feedback instead of failure. Because they know something far more important: they are not a mistake. They are a remarkable human being learning, growing, and becoming more of who they were always meant to be.

Perhaps the greatest lesson your child can ever learn is this: *I can make mistakes. I can learn. I can begin again. And I am still worthy of love.* Because a child who knows that mistakes are safe will have the courage to create a life that others are too afraid to even attempt.

Chapter 19

Presence Over Presents

There was a day that completely changed the way I thought about parenting. I took my son to SeaWorld in San Diego. In my mind, I was giving him something extraordinary. We were going to see the orcas—the giant whales, one of the biggest attractions in the world. I remember thinking, *"He's going to love this."* Instead, he cried, he screamed, and he wanted to leave.

I couldn't understand it. We walked out of the stadium, and just outside was a tiny playground: a rope climbing net, a slide, and a couple of swings. Nothing spectacular, nothing expensive, and nothing anyone would travel across the world to see. And then something amazing happened. He lit up. He laughed, he climbed, he played, and he smiled from ear to ear. He was happier on that little playground than he'd been watching one of the world's most famous marine shows.

That day taught me something I'll never forget: children don't see the world the way adults do. Adults are often trying to impress, while children are trying to connect.

There's a quiet belief many parents carry that great parenting means giving children bigger experiences: more toys, more holidays, more activities, more entertainment—more, more, more. But children rarely

remember life that way. They remember how they felt. They remember whether Mum sat on the floor and played with them, whether Dad watched them climb the monkey bars, whether someone listened to their stories, whether someone looked them in the eyes, whether someone laughed with them, and whether they felt important.

Some of my happiest childhood memories didn't cost a cent: building cubby houses, walking on the beach, fishing, playing with a dog, climbing trees, riding bikes until the streetlights came on, looking for crabs in rock pools, or lying on the grass watching clouds drift by. Nobody was trying to impress me; we were simply together.

Somewhere along the way, many of us started believing that love and parenting is measured by what we buy: *"If I buy them the latest toy, I'm a good parent," "If I can afford the biggest holiday, I'm a good parent," or "If I give them everything I never had, I'm a good parent."* But children don't keep score that way. Presence always outweighs presents. A child will often choose twenty minutes of undivided attention over the most expensive toy in the shop, because what they're really asking is, *"Am I important enough for you to be fully here with me?"*

Presence isn't just being in the same room. It's putting the phone down, looking into their eyes, listening without interrupting, getting on the floor, building the Lego, reading the story, throwing the ball, walking the dog

together, watching the sunset, cooking dinner together, and being completely there. Children can feel the difference between your body being present and your mind being somewhere else. They know when you're distracted, when you're rushing, and when you're half listening—and they know when they have all of you. Those moments become their memories, not because they were extraordinary, but because they were shared. There's something else worth thinking about. Many of us unknowingly teach our children that whenever they're upset, hurt, lonely, or disappointed, the solution is something outside of themselves: a treat, a toy, an ice cream, a new game, a shopping trip, or a present. Without meaning to, we begin linking emotional pain with external rewards. Over time, that lesson can become a lifelong pattern. As adults, the toy becomes a new car, the treat becomes food, the shopping trip becomes retail therapy, and the distraction becomes alcohol, drugs, gambling, social media, or another relationship. The object changes, but the habit remains. We keep searching outside ourselves for something that can only ever be found within.

That doesn't mean children shouldn't receive gifts. Birthdays should be celebrated, Christmas should be magical, and surprises can be beautiful expressions of love. The danger is when gifts become the answer to emotions.

Sometimes the greatest gift you can give your child isn't something you buy. It's helping them sit with disappointment, work through sadness, process

frustration, move through grief, and discover that difficult feelings don't need to be escaped—they need to be experienced. Every time your child learns they can move through an emotion without needing something outside themselves to rescue them, they build something far more valuable than resilience: they build self-trust.

One day your child won't remember most of the presents you bought. Many of the toys will break, the gadgets will be replaced, and the clothes will be forgotten. But they'll remember how you made them feel—whether they mattered, whether they were worth your time, whether they felt seen, and whether they felt chosen.

Your child doesn't need a perfect childhood, constant entertainment, or everything. They need you: your attention, your laughter, your curiosity, and your presence. Because presence says something no present ever can: *"Right now, there is nowhere else I'd rather be than here with you."* And for a child, there are few gifts more valuable than that.

Chapter 20

Is Money Safe?

One of the most common reasons people came to see me was money. Or at least that's what they thought. They believed they had a money problem—a scarcity problem, a spending problem, a debt problem, a business problem, or a receiving problem. But as we talked, the conversation rarely stayed with money for very long. It almost always led us somewhere much earlier: back to childhood.

Because children aren't born afraid of money. They're not born believing they're bad with money, feeling guilty about receiving, believing rich people are greedy, or believing they don't deserve nice things. They learn it.

Children are always watching. They're watching how Mum and Dad talk about money, how they argue about money, how they spend it, and how they save it. They notice how they react when a bill arrives, how they speak about wealthy people, and how they speak about themselves. Every one of those moments is teaching your child what money means.

Some children hear phrases like: *"We can't afford it," "Money doesn't grow on trees," "Rich people are greedy," "People with money are selfish," "If you*

become wealthy, everyone will want something from you,” “The government just takes it all anyway,” “Nice things aren’t for people like us,” “Don’t ask for things,” or “Be grateful for what you’ve got.”

Others learn something even deeper: *“You can’t have nice things,” “You’ll only break it,” “You’ll ruin it,” “You can’t be trusted,” “You’re hopeless with money,” “That’s why I don’t give you money,” “Look what you’ve done now,” or “You’ve wasted your pocket money.”*

Every one of those moments teaches far more than how to handle money—it teaches identity. A child who is repeatedly told they can’t be trusted with money often becomes an adult who can’t trust themselves with money. A child who is shamed for spending money often grows into an adult who feels guilty every time they spend money on themselves. Some struggle to buy things they genuinely need. Some feel uncomfortable charging what they’re worth. Some constantly underprice themselves, give everything away, unconsciously lose money, or sabotage opportunities. Not because they don’t want abundance, but because deep inside they still believe: *“I’m not responsible,” “I’m not valuable,” “I’m not worthy,” or “Good things aren’t for people like me.”* Money simply reflects the identity they’re carrying.

I’ve also met adults who were terrified of having money. Not because they didn’t want freedom, but because they had watched money create arguments, stress, distance,

and loneliness—parents working all the time, parents never being home, parents sacrificing their health, or parents sacrificing their marriage. The child quietly concludes, *“If I become successful... I’ll lose what really matters.”* So they unknowingly keep success at arm’s length.

Then there is the opposite pattern. Some children grow up believing money is everything. They watch adults admire successful people more than kind people, work become more important than family, and achievement become more important than presence. The message isn’t *“Money is useful”*; it’s *“Money makes you important,” “Money earns love,”* or *“Money proves you’re somebody.”*

Those children often become adults who spend their lives chasing success—another promotion, another investment, another business, another million—believing that when they finally arrive, they’ll finally feel enough. But “enough” never comes, because the problem was never money; it was worth.

I’ve watched people sacrifice their health for wealth, their marriage for money, their children’s childhood for another deal, and their peace for another dollar, believing they were doing it for their family. When all their children really wanted was them: presence, connection, time, and love.

Money is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.

Teach your child that money is simply a tool—a way of exchanging value, creating opportunity, helping people, and supporting those they love. Teach them to earn, save, spend wisely, give generously, and receive gratefully. Let them make mistakes with money while they're young; let them spend all their pocket money on something they'll regret. That's not failure—that's education. Far better to learn those lessons with ten dollars than ten thousand. Don't shame them; guide them. Ask them, "*What did you learn?*" not, "*What's wrong with you?*" The lesson isn't that money is dangerous; the lesson is that wisdom grows through experience.

Above all else, teach your child this: their worth has absolutely nothing to do with their net worth. They were valuable before they earned their first dollar, and they'll still be valuable if they lose every dollar they ever make. Money can buy comfort, experiences, opportunities, and fund generosity, but it cannot buy self-worth, love, joy, or presence.

Don't teach your child to fear money, and don't teach them to worship it. Teach them to put it in its rightful place—a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. Remind them, again and again, that the richest people aren't those with the biggest bank accounts; they're the people who never had to sacrifice themselves, their health, their family, or their joy in order to feel valuable.

Because the greatest wealth your child will ever possess is knowing they were already enough long before money ever entered the equation.

Chapter 21

Stillness Is a Superpower

When was the last time you sat in silence? No phone, no television, no music, no podcast, no email, no scrolling, no notifications—just you. For many adults, that feels surprisingly uncomfortable. The moment life becomes quiet, we instinctively reach for something: our phone, the television, food, work, social media, a conversation—anything to fill the space.

Somewhere along the way, many of us forgot how to simply be. We've become so accustomed to constant stimulation that stillness feels unfamiliar, even uncomfortable.

Yet some of our greatest ideas, our deepest insights, our most creative moments, and our greatest healing often arrive when everything finally becomes quiet. Perhaps that's why so many adults spend thousands of dollars later in life attending meditation retreats, silent retreats, and wellness retreats—they're trying to rediscover something they once knew naturally as children: stillness.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child isn't another activity, another toy, another screen, or even another lesson. It's stillness.

Somewhere along the way, we've become frightened of quiet. The moment a child says, *"I'm bored,"* we rush to entertain them. We hand them a screen, turn on the television, give them another activity, another game, or another distraction—as though boredom is something dangerous. I don't believe it is. I think boredom is often the doorway to imagination.

When children aren't constantly entertained, something beautiful begins to happen. They invent, they create, they explore, they notice, and they wonder. They build cubby houses, collect shells, climb trees, make boats from sticks, dig holes for no reason, and lie on the grass watching clouds drift across the sky. Adults often see these moments as doing nothing; children experience them as everything.

Nature has always been one of our greatest teachers. A beach doesn't rush, a tree doesn't compare itself to another tree, and a river doesn't force itself to flow faster. The natural world reminds children of something they've always known: life isn't a race.

Take your child for walks with no destination. Sit beside a river, watch a sunset together, listen to birds, let them pat a dog without hurrying them along, and let them notice the tiny things adults have forgotten to see. Some of the wisest conversations happen when there is no agenda, no schedule, no rush—just presence.

Stillness also gives children something else: space to hear themselves. The louder the world becomes, the harder it is to hear our own thoughts, our own feelings, and our own intuition. Many adults spend decades trying to reconnect with a quiet inner voice they once heard naturally as children.

Protect that voice. Not every empty moment needs filling, not every silence needs breaking, and not every question needs an immediate answer. Sometimes the greatest gift you can give your child is the freedom to simply be—to be curious, to be quiet, to be present, and to be alive.

In a world that constantly tells children to look outside themselves for entertainment, approval, and answers, stillness gently reminds them that some of life's greatest treasures are discovered within. Because a quiet child isn't an empty child—a quiet child is often listening to something the rest of the world has forgotten how to hear.

Chapter 22

Your Child Has an Inner Guidance System

How many times have you doubted yourself... and wished you hadn't? How many times have you had a quiet feeling about someone the moment you met them—a subtle sense that something wasn't quite right, or perhaps the opposite, an instant feeling that someone could be trusted? How many times have you ignored that feeling, only to realise later that it had been right all along? How many times have you had the slightest hesitation before making a decision—a feeling not to invest, not to sign the contract, not to take the job, not to get into the relationship, or not to take a particular road—yet you talked yourself out of it?

And how many times have you listened to that quiet inner knowing and watched things unfold in remarkable ways? Perhaps it led you to the perfect parking space, the right business opportunity, a life-changing friendship, or the person you would one day fall in love with. Or perhaps it helped you avoid something that would have caused unnecessary pain.

Most of us have had experiences like these. We may explain them differently.

Some call it intuition, instinct, wisdom, or a gut feeling. Some call it the voice of God, the universe, or coincidence. The name matters far less than the experience.

My own belief is that we are part of something infinitely greater than ourselves: a living universe, an extraordinary intelligence of which we are a part. And when we become quiet enough, we sometimes sense a knowing that cannot always be explained. Whether you see that as intuition, instinct, consciousness, divine guidance, or simply the remarkable intelligence of the human mind, the invitation is the same: learn to listen.

One of the greatest tragedies isn't that children don't know who they are; it's that they slowly stop trusting what they know. From the time they're very young, many children begin hearing the same messages: *"You don't know," "You're too young to understand," "Stop asking questions," "Because I said so," "Listen to the adults," "Listen to the experts,"* or *"You're wrong."*

Slowly, they stop looking within themselves and begin believing that all knowledge exists somewhere outside of them—in books, at school, from teachers, from experts, or from other people.

Now, don't misunderstand me. Books are wonderful, teachers are extraordinary, mentors can change lives, and education matters. But there is another kind of knowing that no classroom can teach: an inner knowing,

a quiet wisdom, an intelligence that already exists within us.

Look at nature. A spider never went to university to learn how to spin a web. A bee never attended high school to learn how to make honey. A bird never studied engineering before building a nest. A whale doesn't need lessons to navigate thousands of kilometres across the ocean. A seed somehow knows when to grow, and a tree somehow knows how to build roots strong enough to support itself for hundreds of years. Nature knows. It carries an extraordinary intelligence. And we are not separate from nature—we *are* nature. So why do we assume that every other living thing carries an innate intelligence except us?

I believe learning happens in two directions: we learn from the world, and we discover what is already within us. Every child carries gifts that cannot simply be downloaded from a textbook: creativity, compassion, curiosity, imagination, insight, intuition, and original thinking. These qualities emerge from within.

In my experience, every child has moments when they simply know. They know when something doesn't feel right, when someone feels safe, what excites them, what fills them with wonder, and what drains them. Before the world tells them what they should think, they already know how they feel.

Then something happens. Life becomes noisy. The opinions of others become louder, comparison becomes louder, fear becomes louder, and the mind becomes louder—making that quiet inner voice harder to hear. I don't believe that voice disappears; I think it simply gets buried. Buried beneath beliefs, fear, the need for approval, and the pressure to become someone else.

When those layers begin to fall away, many people rediscover something remarkable: a quiet confidence, a sense of clarity, and a deeper knowing. Call it intuition, instinct, your conscience, your soul, your spirit, your true self, or the intelligence of nature expressing itself through you. Again, the name matters far less than the experience.

Your child doesn't need you to give them that inner wisdom—they already have it. Your role is to help protect it. Ask questions instead of giving every answer, invite curiosity instead of demanding certainty, and encourage reflection instead of rushing every decision. Teach them facts, skills, and wisdom, but also teach them to pause, to listen, and to notice what feels true. Because some of the greatest decisions they'll ever make won't come from memorising information; they'll come from knowing themselves.

One of the saddest things I've seen is adults believing they're ordinary—believing they're not intelligent, not creative, or not capable. Not because it was ever true,

but because somewhere along the way they accepted someone else's description of themselves.

I believe every child carries extraordinary potential. Not because every child will become famous, wealthy, or change the entire world, but because every child carries a unique combination of gifts, insights, and ways of seeing that have never existed before and will never exist again. Your child's genius may not look like someone else's. It may appear as kindness, music, engineering, leadership, teaching, listening, healing, building, creating, or solving problems no one else can see.

The world doesn't need your child to become a copy of someone successful; it needs them to trust the intelligence that already lives within them. Because when a child learns from the world without losing their connection to themselves, they carry two forms of wisdom: the knowledge they acquire, and the knowing they never lost. That is a combination capable of creating an extraordinary life.

Chapter 23

Your Child Has Always Been Enough

How many times have you ignored what was best for you? Stayed in a relationship that was hurting you, worked yourself into exhaustion, ignored your health, stayed silent when you wanted to speak, accepted less than you deserved, sabotaged an opportunity, or settled for a life that didn't truly make you come alive? How many times have you looked after everyone else while quietly abandoning yourself?

Why do we do that? Why do intelligent, caring, beautiful human beings so often make decisions that hurt themselves? Perhaps the answer is simpler than we realise: it's difficult to care for someone you don't truly believe is worthy of care. The way we treat ourselves is rarely random; it reflects what we believe we deserve. If I don't believe I'm worthy of love, I'll often settle for relationships that don't love me. If I don't believe I'm worthy of health, I'll neglect my body. If I don't believe I'm worthy of abundance, I'll accept less than I'm capable of creating. If I don't believe I matter, I'll spend my life putting everyone else's needs before my own.

Many parents worry about the choices their children might one day make. Will they take drugs? Will they abuse alcohol? Will they stay in unhealthy relationships? Will they allow themselves to be mistreated? Will they respect their body? Will they respect their mind? These choices are influenced by many things, but one of the greatest protective factors is how a child feels about themselves. Children who deeply value themselves are more likely to protect themselves—not because they're forced to, but because they believe they're worth protecting.

The greatest relationship your child will ever have isn't with a future partner, it isn't with you, and it isn't with their friends; it's the relationship they have with themselves. And that relationship begins long before they understand the words "self-love." It begins in the way they are seen, spoken to, comforted, celebrated, forgiven, and accepted.

Somewhere along the way, many of us learned something heartbreaking: that loving ourselves was somehow wrong. *"Don't get a big head," "Don't show off," "Don't think you're better than everyone else," or "Be humble."*

Without anyone intending to, many children quietly conclude that loving myself is selfish, being proud of myself is dangerous, and if I shine too brightly, people won't like me. So they shrink. Not because they aren't extraordinary, but because it feels safer.

But there is a world of difference between arrogance and self-love. Arrogance says, *"I'm better than you."* Self-love says, *"I don't need to be better than anyone."* Arrogance depends on comparison; self-love doesn't compare. Arrogance needs superiority; self-love simply knows its own worth. Perhaps we've misunderstood self-love. Perhaps self-love isn't becoming more—perhaps it's remembering what has always been true.

When I say your child has always been enough, I don't mean they'll never make mistakes, cry, get angry, struggle, fail, or lose their way. That's not what "enough" means. Enough means their worth has never depended on any of those things.

Look at nature. A seed is enough—not because it's already a tree, but because it's a seed. A sapling is enough—not because it's fully grown, but because it's exactly where it needs to be. Rain isn't failing because the sun isn't shining. Winter isn't broken because it isn't summer. A puppy isn't a mistake because it chews your shoes; it's learning, growing, and being exactly what puppies do.

Nature never apologises for where it is. Only humans seem to believe we should already be somewhere else.

Perhaps every chapter in this book points to the same truth: children aren't born wondering if they're enough. They learn to wonder. No baby has ever looked into a

mirror and decided they weren't worthy of love. That idea is learned, which means it can also be unlearned. A child can need guidance and still be whole. A child can make mistakes and still be worthy. A child can struggle and still be enough. The role of a parent isn't to manufacture a child's worth—it's to protect their awareness that it was always there.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is permission to celebrate themselves—to say, *"I'm proud of myself,"* not because they're better than anyone else, but because they're becoming more of themselves. Teach them to notice their courage, kindness, curiosity, persistence, generosity, and creativity. Not so they become arrogant, but so they become grounded.

Children who know their worth don't need to prove it, don't need constant approval, and don't need to become somebody else; they simply become more fully themselves.

Perhaps purpose isn't something your child has to go out and find. Perhaps purpose unfolds naturally as they stop trying to become someone else, as they trust their inner wisdom, as they follow what brings them alive, as they stop comparing, and as they stop trying to earn what has always been theirs. They don't become more valuable—they simply express more of the value that was always there.

I sometimes wonder if the way we treat the world reflects the way we treat ourselves. When we feel disconnected from ourselves, we often become disconnected from nature, from each other, and from life itself. But when we learn to love ourselves, something begins to soften. We care more deeply, live more gently, and become better custodians of our relationships, our communities, and the world around us. Love expands. It doesn't stop with us—it flows through us. Perhaps the deepest wound a human being can carry is the belief, *"I'm not worthy of love."*

Because from that belief, almost every form of suffering can grow. And perhaps the greatest gift we can give a child is something very different: not the belief that they must earn love, but the knowing that they have always been surrounded by it, held by it, supported by it, and part of it.

Just as every tree is supported by the forest, every wave is supported by the ocean, and every living thing is supported by the extraordinary intelligence of life itself, your child has never been separate from love. They have always belonged.

Come back to this moment. Not the past, not the future—now. Because in this moment, your child is exactly where they need to be, and so are you.

Not finished, not flawless, but fully alive—learning, growing, loving. And perhaps that has been enough all along.

Chapter 24

The Child Who Felt Powerless

Do you feel powerful?

Not powerful over other people, but powerful over your own life. Do you feel able to speak your truth without fear, to set boundaries without guilt, to ask for what you need, and to say "no" without worrying how someone will react? Can you make decisions with confidence, or do you often feel as though life is happening to you rather than being created by you? Do you stay in relationships long after you've known they're unhealthy?

Do you hand your power to a difficult boss because you're afraid of losing your job, or comfort yourself with food even when your body is asking you not to? Do you keep drinking, scrolling, gambling, or reaching for another distraction, even though a part of you wants to stop? Do you find yourself saying "yes" when every part of you wants to say "no"?

Do you feel trapped by money, by habits, by addictions, by other people's opinions, or by your own thoughts?

Powerlessness wears many disguises. Sometimes it looks like fear, anxiety, procrastination, people-pleasing, or perfectionism. Other times it manifests as anger, control, addiction, or complete resignation. While the behaviours look entirely different, the feeling underneath is often exactly the same: *"I don't believe I have the power to change this."* For many of us, that feeling didn't begin in adulthood. It began much earlier.

No child is born believing they are powerless. Babies cry because they trust someone will come. Toddlers explore because they believe the world belongs to them. Young children speak honestly because they haven't yet learned to censor themselves. Then, little by little, many children begin receiving a different message: "Because I said so," "Don't answer back," "Stop crying," "You'll do what you're told," "I don't care what you think," or "You're too young to understand."

Perhaps they are yelled at, humiliated, ignored, or controlled. Their feelings are dismissed, their opinions laughed at, their boundaries crossed, and their choices constantly made for them. Eventually, many children stop trying to be heard. This isn't because they suddenly become respectful, but because they've learned that speaking up doesn't change anything. They begin to feel powerless.

Human beings are designed to have agency—to feel that our choices matter, that our voice matters, and that we have some influence over the direction of our lives.

When that feeling is lost in childhood, we often spend decades trying to reclaim it.

Every coping strategy is, in some way, an attempt to feel powerful again. Some people become controlling, some become bullies, and some manipulate. Others become perfectionists, workaholics, or chase money because wealth feels like security. Some chase status because admiration feels like significance, while others pursue physical strength because they never want to feel vulnerable again. Some stay angry because anger feels stronger than hurt, some rebel against every authority, some surrender to every authority, and some withdraw completely.

Many become addicted to food, alcohol, drugs, shopping, social media, pornography, or gambling. They don't do this because they are weak, but because, for a brief moment, those things create the illusion of control. Even self-harm can become an attempt to reclaim power, operating under the mindset: *"If I can't control my life, at least I can control this."* The behaviours are vastly different, but the wound is often the same.

This is where it becomes confusing. Some of the most controlling people are actually the most powerless inside. They dominate conversations, intimidate, criticise, demand, and manipulate. They do this not because they are genuinely powerful, but because underneath it all, they are terrified of feeling powerless again. The bully doesn't feel powerful; they fear feeling

small. The controlling partner fears losing control, the perfectionist fears failure, the people-pleaser fears rejection, and the workaholic fears not being enough. These are simply different masks worn by the same frightened child.

Many people confuse power with control, but they aren't the same. Control is about trying to change other people, while power is about being able to choose your own response. Control says, "You need to change for me to feel okay," whereas power says, "I can choose how I respond, regardless of what you do." Real power isn't louder, it isn't more aggressive, and it doesn't need to dominate.

Real power is quiet. It is the ability to speak honestly, to set boundaries, to walk away from what harms you, to admit when you're wrong, to apologise, and to forgive. It is the strength to say yes, to say no, and to remain true to yourself even when others disagree. Real power never needs to make someone else feel smaller.

Children don't become powerful because they always get their own way—that is entitlement. Children become powerful because they know their voice, feelings, questions, ideas, and boundaries matter. That doesn't mean they make every decision. Parents still lead, provide boundaries, and say no. However, wise parents also explain, listen, give age-appropriate choices, encourage independence, and allow children to solve problems. They let children experience the

consequences of their decisions in safe and loving ways. Little by little, the child learns something extraordinary: *"I have influence over my own life."* That belief becomes confidence, resilience, courage, and personal responsibility.

Every chapter in this book has pointed to the same truth: children don't just remember what we said, they remember how we made them feel. If we repeatedly make them feel afraid, they'll carry fear. If we repeatedly make them feel ashamed, they'll carry shame. If we repeatedly make them feel powerless, they'll spend much of their adult life searching for power in all the wrong places. But if we help them discover that they have a voice, that their feelings matter, that they can make mistakes and recover, that they can solve problems, and that they are loved even when they're imperfect, then we give them something that no one can ever take away—the quiet confidence that they can meet life as it comes. Not because life will always be easy, but because they trust themselves.

One day your child will leave home. You won't be there to solve every problem or protect them from every disappointment. The voice they hear most often will no longer be yours; it will be their own. So ask yourself one final question: when they face the inevitable challenges of life, will that voice remind them that they're helpless, or will it quietly whisper, *"You've got this"*?

In the end, that may be the greatest gift a parent can ever give. It is not a perfect childhood, a perfect education, or a perfect life, but a child who grows into an adult who knows, without needing to prove it to anyone else: *"I have a voice. I have value. I have choices. I have the power to shape my life."* And perhaps that's what parenting has always been about—not raising children who obey us, but raising adults who no longer need us.

Conclusion

The Ripple Effect

If you've made it this far, thank you—not for reading a book, but for being willing to see your child, and yourself, through different eyes.

By now, I hope you've realised something: this book was never really about becoming a better parent. It was about becoming a more conscious one. Because conscious parents don't raise perfect children; they raise children who know they never had to be perfect to be loved.

Think about what we've explored together. Imagine a child who knows: *I am enough. My voice matters. I don't have to earn love. Life is safe. I can trust myself. It is safe to be me. Mistakes are safe. Healthy love exists. I can have boundaries. I don't need to compare myself with anyone else. Money doesn't define my worth. Joy is worth following. Stillness is valuable. Nature is my teacher. There is wisdom within me. I have always been whole.*

Imagine that child becoming an adult. Imagine them choosing a partner. Imagine them becoming a mother, a father, a teacher, a leader, a business owner, or a

friend. Imagine the conversations they'll have, the relationships they'll build, and the children they'll raise. This is the ripple effect.

Every belief you protect today becomes a gift your child passes on tomorrow. Every wound you choose to heal becomes a wound your child never has to carry. Every time you choose presence instead of distraction, connection instead of control, curiosity instead of criticism, and love instead of fear, you're changing more than one life—you're changing a family, and families change generations.

Perhaps we've spent too long trying to fix the world from the top down, trying to create change through bigger systems, bigger institutions, and bigger solutions. Maybe real change begins somewhere much quieter: one parent, one child, one conversation, one apology, one hug, and one moment where a child feels completely seen. That moment may echo for generations.

As you've probably realised by now, parenting was never just about raising children—it's also about meeting the child within ourselves. The child who wanted to be loved, who wanted to belong, and who wanted to know they were enough.

Perhaps that's why, before writing this book, I kept coming back to one title: *Inner Child. Outer Child.* Because every interaction we have with our children is

often an interaction between two children: the child standing in front of us, and the child still living quietly inside us. Sometimes our child's behaviour touches our greatest joy; sometimes it touches our deepest wound. Sometimes it reminds us of the parts of ourselves we were taught to hide. That's why parenting can feel so beautiful and so challenging—not because our children are difficult, but because they lovingly reveal the places within us that are still asking to be healed.

But here's the beautiful part: your child isn't just reflecting your wounds, they're also reflecting your magnificence. Look at them. Really look at them. Look at their curiosity, their laughter, their innocence, their creativity, their wonder, and their capacity to love. They came from you. No ifs, no buts, no conditions. You don't look at your child and wonder whether they're worthy of love, you don't think they have to earn it, and you don't believe they need to become someone else before they deserve it. You simply love them.

What if the same has always been true for you? What if your child has been showing you something all along—that despite your mistakes, your doubts, your fears, your regrets, and the stories you've carried, you are every bit as lovable as they are? Every bit as worthy, every bit as extraordinary, every bit as whole, and every bit as deserving of love. Perhaps your child has never just needed your love; perhaps they've also come into your life to remind you how to love yourself again.

Never underestimate the power of the way you look at your child; one day, they will look at themselves through those same eyes. Never underestimate the way you speak to your child; one day, that voice will become their inner voice. Never underestimate the way you love your child; one day, that becomes the way they love themselves and the way they love others.

That is how the world changes. Not because we raised children who were richer, more successful, or more impressive, but because we raised children who never forgot who they were—children who didn't spend half their lives trying to become enough, because they always knew they were.

Perhaps every chapter in this book points to one simple truth: children aren't born wondering whether they're enough—they learn to wonder. Our job isn't to make them enough; our job is to make sure they never forget that they already are.

So before you close this book, I'd like to ask you for one thing. When you look at your child today, see beyond today's behaviour, beyond today's emotions, and beyond today's mistakes. See the extraordinary human being they already are. See the gifts they haven't discovered yet, the courage they haven't expressed yet, the wisdom they haven't fully trusted yet, and the love they already are.

And while you're doing that, take one more look. This time, see yourself through those same eyes. See the child you once were—the child who wanted to be loved, who wanted to belong, who wanted to know they mattered, and who was doing the very best they could with the understanding they had. Forgive them. Love them. Believe in them.

Because the greatest way not to *f*ck up your child is to stop believing that you were ever f*cked up yourself*. You may have been hurt, you may have been frightened, and you may have learned beliefs that were never true, but beneath all of that, you have always been worthy. You have always mattered, you have always been important, you have always been loved, and you have always been enough. And so has your child.

The world doesn't need more perfect parents; it needs parents who remember this. Children don't need to become extraordinary—they already are. Our job is simply to make sure they never forget.

And perhaps, as you close this book, you'll remember something too: that beneath every wound, every fear, every mistake, every label, every comparison, and every doubt, you were never broken. You never stopped being worthy, you never stopped being loved, and you never stopped being enough. And perhaps your child came into your life not only so you could teach them how to

live, but so they could remind you who you've always been.

If this book has touched your heart, please share it. Share it with your partner, share it with **your children**, share it with your parents, share it with grandparents, share it with teachers, and share it with friends who are raising children. Share it with anyone who has ever been a child—which, of course, is all of us.

Because every time one person remembers that they have always been enough, another generation grows up believing it too. That's how the ripple effect begins: one book, one conversation, one family, and it doesn't take long before these words reach the world.

Daniel.

A Parent's Never Say List.

Children become the voice they hear most often.. So before speaking, ask yourself one simple question: **"Is this something I would want my child saying to themselves thirty years from now?"** If the answer is no...Don't say it. And if you have been using these phrases, it's ok, don't worry it's not too late to change. You've been doing your best.

Avoid phrases like:

- You should be ashamed of yourself.
- What's wrong with you?
- You're a disappointment.
- I'm disappointed in you.
- You're embarrassing me.
- Why can't you be more like your brother?
- Why can't you be more like your sister?
- Why can't you be more like everyone else?
- You're useless.
- You're hopeless.
- You're stupid.
- You're lazy.
- You're selfish.
- You're clumsy.
- You're pathetic.
- You're weak.
- You're too sensitive.
- Stop being such a baby.

- Grow up.
- Nobody likes you.
- You'll never amount to anything.
- You'll never change.
- You always...
- You never...
- You ruin everything.
- You always get everything wrong.
- You can't do anything right.
- You're impossible.
- You're impossible to love.
- You're so annoying.
- I wish you'd never been born.
- Life was easier before you came along.
- You're the reason we're unhappy.
- You're the reason our relationship is falling apart.
- You cost too much money.
- You're tearing this family apart.
- You're the problem in this family.
- You're just like your father. *(used as an insult)*
- You're just like your mother. *(used as an insult)*
- You're a mistake.
- I wish you were different.
- I don't even know who you are anymore.
- I don't like you right now.
- I can't stand you.
- I don't care.
- Stop crying.
- I'll give you something to cry about.
- Toughen up.
- Boys don't cry.

- Nice girls don't do that.
- Be a man.
- That's a stupid idea.
- Don't be ridiculous.
- You're overreacting.
- You're too emotional.
- Your feelings don't matter.
- Because I said so. (*when used to shut down rather than teach*)
- Just wait until your father gets home.
- You should know better.
- You'll never learn.
- You're irresponsible.
- You're terrible with money.
- You're just bad at maths.
- You're not creative.
- You're not smart enough.
- That's why nobody wants to play with you.
- You're making me angry.
- Look what you made me do.
- This is all your fault.
- If you loved me, you wouldn't...
- After everything I've done for you...
- You owe me.
- I sacrificed everything for you.
- You should be grateful.
- You're lucky I even...
- Don't answer back.
- Children should be seen and not heard.
- Your opinion doesn't matter.
- No one asked you.

- Be quiet.
- Shut up.

Next Steps:

If you've read this far, thank you. Truly. Reading a book like this takes courage — not because it's difficult, but because it asks you to look honestly at your own childhood while you're busy raising someone else's.

You don't need to remember every chapter. You don't need to apply every idea perfectly, starting tomorrow. If even one part of this book changed how you see your child, or how you see the child you once were, then it's done its job.

So — forgive yourself, again, one more time. You were never meant to be a perfect parent. You were only ever meant to be a present one, willing to grow. And by finishing this book, you already are.

Wherever you go from here, there are two ways I can continue supporting you.

1. Personal Help Is Available...

One-On-One Intuitive Sessions with Daniel

Reading and understanding something isn't always enough to change it — many of our deepest beliefs live

below conscious awareness, which is why the same patterns can keep repeating even when we know better.

I offer private intuitive sessions to help you uncover and clear the limiting beliefs, emotional wounds, and old patterns still shaping your life — whether that's in parenting, relationships, finances, or simply understanding yourself more deeply. I'd be honoured to support you.

If you'd like to work with me personally, you can find more information or book a session at:

www.talktotheuniverse.com



2. EnlightenMe™ Clear Subconscious Limiting Beliefs

For those who want to go deeper on their own, I created EnlightenMe™ — a tool designed to support deep meditation, belief-clearing, and access to the guidance already within you.

Like this book, its purpose isn't to change who you are. It's to help you remember who you've always been.

Discover more at:

<https://www.talktotheuniverse.com/enlightenme>

Stay in touch

If this book meant something to you, I'd love to keep you in the loop. Subscribe at www.talktotheuniverse.com to hear about my next book, upcoming sessions, and new tools as they're released.

My hope is that this book — and everything I create after it — helps you build a life filled with greater peace, purpose, love and freedom.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your journey.

Love,

Daniel Rechnitzer

PS: There will be countless moments as a parent when you'll wonder, *How do I handle this? What's the right thing to do?* No book could ever cover every situation or every nuance.

So whenever you're unsure, come back to one simple question:

How would I have wanted to be treated if I were the child in this moment?

Think back to your own childhood. What would have made you feel seen, safe, heard, understood, and loved?

More often than not, the answer isn't found in punishment or perfection. It's found in responding lovingly, with patience, compassion, and respect.

When in doubt, choose the response your younger self would have needed.
Choose Love.