

# My Way to **A Calm Home**

A 7-day reset for a  
calmer, connected  
family life



**PART 1 OF THE CONNECTED FAMILY BUNDLE**

by Michèle Hogeweg

# Your Way to a Calm Home

## Welcome

Your home doesn't need to feel loud, reactive, or overwhelming. It can feel calmer, clearer, and more steady – for both you and your child.

This eBook is for you if your days feel like you're constantly putting out fires. If you love your children deeply, but don't love how parenting feels right now. For the ones who are doing everything they can, and still end the day feeling drained.

A calm home gives your child something to settle into. When days stay reactive and unpredictable, children keep pushing, escalating, and needing more from you. When your home becomes more steady and predictable, children begin to relax and respond differently.

Inside this reset, you will learn how to:

- Respond instead of react – even in the middle of chaos
- Feel more connected to your children, instead of constantly triggered
- Reduce overwhelm and mental load
- Create rhythms that lower daily conflict
- Hold clear boundaries without spiraling
- Move from constant reacting to more emotional stability

**“This foundation shapes how daily family life feels”**

Hi, I'm Michèle Hogeweg – founder of MyWay4Family

I work with parents who feel overwhelmed by family life and want it to feel more manageable. With MyWay4Family, I focus on what works – clear structure, real-life experience, and small changes that make a difference.

## Here's how we'll move through this together:

### **Day 1 – Redefine Calm**

Understand what calm really means. Let go of perfection. Build clarity

### **Day 2 – Regulate Yourself First**

Learn how your nervous system works. Identify triggers. Practice one pause

### **Day 3 – Build Predictable Rhythms**

Create one predictable moment in your day. Reduce chaos through structure

### **Day 4 – Guide Big Emotions**

Lower resistance. Use advance notice and steady leadership language

### **Day 5 – Calm Boundaries & Containment**

Hold clear limits with confidence and follow through without spiraling

### **Day 6 – Repair, Joy & Relationships**

Strengthen trust after hard moments. Create intentional connection

### **Day 7 – From Survival to Presence**

Shift from surviving your days to experiencing them with steadiness and capacity

## How to use this guide

You can read this eBook as a 7-day reset, moving through one step per day.

Each day focuses on one shift that helps you move from reacting to responding, and from overwhelm to more clarity and steadiness.

You don't need to change everything at once. Focus on one shift at a time and repeat it throughout your day. Calm develops through repeated daily habits.



# Day 1 – Redefine Calm

## What calm actually means

Let's bust a myth: calm doesn't mean a quiet house, perfectly behaved children crafting while harp music plays in the background, or a spotless living room. A calm home is built on emotional safety, predictability, leadership, and connection. It's holding the boundary while your toddler screams about the toast being too square – and not losing it in the process.

A calm home might still be loud, messy, and full of emotion – but underneath the noise, there's a sense of safety and rhythm. A sense that the parent remains steady during difficult moments.

The 4 foundations of a calm home:

- **Emotional safety** – feelings are welcome, not suppressed, and everyone learns to regulate them (eventually)
- **Predictability** – routines and responses create security
- **Leadership** – a parent who can stay grounded when things get intense (even if only a little more grounded than the kids)
- **Connection** – children who listen because they feel heard

These four foundations create space for children to regulate their emotions, to cooperate, and to grow.

Your child benefits most from a parent who stays reasonably steady during hard moments. Not perfectly – just enough to stay present and lead through the situation. Calm is built through repetition. You won't always feel steady. But every pause, every deep breath, every moment you stay in the room – that's you leading.

In a calm environment, children learn that emotions are not scary and there is no need to avoid them or fall apart. Children regulate emotions faster when they feel understood.

This becomes the foundation for how your child learns to handle their emotions and build emotional resilience. It's what helps them listen, cooperate, and come back from hard moments – by watching you.

## Why your home feels chaotic

Most parents blame themselves when home feels chaotic. But often, it's not about being "too soft" or "not strict enough." Chaos usually comes from a lack of clarity, rhythm, or emotional capacity – things no one teaches you how to build. When these foundations are missing, home starts to feel chaotic – even if you're trying your hardest.

Common sources of household chaos:

- Transitions feel like battles (leaving the house, ending screen time, bedtime)
- You react differently to the same behavior depending on your mood
- The day lacks structure and rhythm
- Emotions escalate quickly and you don't know how to bring things back down
- You're exhausted from constantly negotiating and explaining

Children's behavior often reflects overload, inconsistency, or limited emotional skills. They act out because their nervous systems are confused – or because they don't yet know how to handle their emotions.

## The difference between control and leadership

When things feel out of control, it's easy to swing between extremes:

- Saying yes to everything to avoid conflict
- Or cracking down with rules and punishments just to get some peace

Neither approach works for long.

Real leadership is calm, consistent, and clear:

- You set the direction – but stay connected
- You allow all emotions – while still guiding behavior
- You lead the tone – without forcing compliance

This is how kids feel safe when they know someone who loves them is in charge. When you lead with clarity, children rely less on controlling the situation themselves

Clear boundaries are an important part of calm leadership. But if everything feels harder than it “should” – if you’re snapping faster, caving more easily, or constantly negotiating – that’s often not a boundary problem.

### **“It’s a capacity problem”**

When nervous systems are overloaded, even the best boundaries fall apart.

That’s why we focus on emotional safety, regulation, and rhythm first in this Connected Family Bundle – so limits can actually hold. My Way to Clear Boundaries (Part 3) helps you hold limits consistently without constant negotiation.



#### **Assignment 1.1**

Finish this sentence together with your family: “A calm home for us looks like...”



#### **Assignment 1.2**

4 foundations:

Emotional safety · Predictability · Leadership · Connection

Circle one foundation that feels most needed today – and write one action you’ll try at the next difficult moment.

# Day 2 – Regulate Yourself First

## You set the tone

You wake up tired, handle 25 emotions before breakfast, and by 9 AM, everyone's crying – including you. Emotional leadership isn't about being Zen. It's about staying reasonably steady under pressure.

The emotional atmosphere of your home starts with you. Not because you're responsible for everyone's feelings, but because your child's nervous system syncs with yours. When you're steady, they feel safer. When you're scattered, they feel it. So when you're overwhelmed, name your emotions and manage it – instead of letting it drive reactions in your home.

Signs of emotional leadership:

- Notice your own stress before it spills onto your children
- Pause before reacting when behavior triggers you
- Speak calmly even when you're frustrated
- Model that emotions are okay, and that we can handle them

Emotional leadership also means being honest about your own limits. Pretending everything is fine when it isn't, or constantly ignoring your own needs to keep everyone else happy, usually leads to more overwhelm and reactivity later.

When your child sees you handle your own emotions, they're learning that big feelings are safe. That people can disagree and still be kind. That boundaries don't mean disconnection. You're teaching them how to handle their feelings without being taken over by them.

The way you respond sets the direction. Not just in the moment – but for how your child learns to manage stress, relate to others, and come back from tough moments.

# Managing your own overwhelm

When you're exhausted, everyday parenting starts to feel heavier. A simple snack request can suddenly feel overwhelming because your mental and emotional capacity is depleted.

Low capacity shortens patience and makes reactions faster. Things that normally wouldn't bother you suddenly do. Noise feels louder. Conflict feels harder. Small frustrations build quickly.

Understanding your triggers helps you respond more intentionally. Sometimes it's not only the behavior itself, but also stress, sensory overload, frustration, exhaustion, or personal experiences connected to it.

## Common parental triggers:

- Whining or repetitive questions
- Defiance or being told "no"
- Loud noises or physical chaos
- Mess or things out of control
- Sibling fighting
- Being touched when you're overwhelmed
- Feeling disrespected or dismissed

## Signs you're running on empty:

- Everything your child does irritates you
- You feel resentful of their needs
- You fantasize about running away or hiding
- You can't remember the last time you felt calm
- You're constantly counting down to bedtime

When you model caring for yourself – even in small ways – your child learns that everyone has needs, and it's safe to meet them. They learn that grown-ups don't explode because they're mean. They explode when their needs are ignored for too long.

Small ways to refill your cup:

- Five minutes alone before the day starts
- Saying no to one thing this week
- Asking for help, even when it feels hard
- One activity that's just for you
- Permission to be "good enough" instead of perfect

You need short periods during the day where no one is asking something from you. The more consistently you recover, the less reactive you'll be.

## Staying grounded when things get intense

It's 5:47 pm. Someone's screaming about toast. Someone else just hit their sibling. You're sweating, overstimulated, and all you want is five quiet minutes. This is where steady leadership matters most.

Children will test boundaries. They will have meltdowns. They will push back. This is normal development – not a reflection of your parenting. Your job isn't to stop the intensity. It's to stay grounded inside of it. This is how you react less, even when everything feels like it's spiraling.



When emotions escalate:

1. **Breathe** – Slow, deep breaths help you pause before reacting
2. **Notice the trigger** – What happens in your body? Tight chest? Hot face?  
Naming it creates space between the feeling and the response
3. **Pause** – You don't have to respond immediately. Just say: "I need a moment"
4. **Name what's happening** – "You're really upset right now" or "This is hard for both of us."
5. **Hold the boundary if there is one** – "I can see you're angry, and we're still not hitting."
6. **Stay physically calm** – Uncross arms, soften face, and lower your voice

When you stay grounded, you're not just stopping a meltdown – you're teaching your child that hard feelings don't break relationships. That you can be firm and still love them. That safety isn't about control – it's about presence.

Your calm helps settle the moment. You won't nail it every time. But every pause you take is one less moment you regret – and one more step toward being the steady adult your child relies on.

**"Calm means anchored – even when the waves hit hard"**



### Assignment 2

Write your 3-step reset for when you're about to snap (example: pause → breathe → script). Choose one sentence you'll use when you need a moment and decide your safe reset spot.

# Day 3 – Build Predictable Rhythms

## Why children need predictable routines

Children thrive on predictability because it helps them know what to expect. When the day feels unclear or inconsistent, they stay more reactive and on edge.

If you have ADHD, anxiety, or struggle with executive function, routines can feel impossible – that’s okay. Start simple. Structure helps when your brain feels scattered.

Routines reduce the number of decisions you have to make – so you don’t have to make 400 tiny decisions before 10 AM.

Predictability reduces:

- Power struggles during transitions
- Anxiety about what’s coming next (for both you and your child)
- The constant need to ask “what are we doing?”
- Decision fatigue and mental load
- Meltdowns during sudden changes

Predictability increases:

- Cooperation
- Emotional regulation
- Independence
- Trust in you as the leader

Predictability tells your child: “You’re safe here. I know what’s coming. I’ve got you.” That’s what helps things go more smoothly – with less resistance and more connection. You don’t need a perfect schedule. Just a rhythm your family can lean into – so everyone stops bracing for what's coming next.

A color-coded schedule or perfect precision won't create calm on its own. What helps most is a rhythm that becomes muscle memory – familiar enough that daily routines start flowing with less resistance and stress.

Predictable rhythms build trust – in the day, in you, and in themselves.

Start with just one part of your day. The structure holds the space – so you can focus on connection, not correction. Without rhythm, you end up managing every moment.

#### Morning rhythm:

- Wake up
- Have breakfast
- Get dressed
- Brush teeth
- Put shoes on and leave

#### After-school rhythm:

- Have a snack
- Downtime (play, rest, quiet activity)
- Do homework or chores
- Have dinner

For deeper support with bedtime routines and evening transitions, *My Way to Gentle Nights* expands on creating calmer evenings and more predictable sleep.



## Transitions without battles

Transitions are hard for children because their brains struggle to shift gears quickly. Add in an activity they don't want to stop, and you've got a perfect storm. Transitions test everyone's patience – especially when you've repeated yourself five times and your child still isn't responding.

Make transitions smoother with these:

- **Give advance notice** – “In five minutes, it's time to clean up” or “After this episode, we're turning off the TV”
- **Use timers** – Visual or audible timers help children see time pass.
- **Narrate the next step** – “When we're done with breakfast, we'll brush our teeth and then get in the car”
- **Offer a choice within the boundary** – “It's time to leave the park. Do you want to walk to the car or hop like a bunny?”
- **Acknowledge the feeling** – “I know you want to keep playing. It's hard to stop when you're having fun”

## Consistency (without rigidity)

Consistency sounds great – until you're tired, touched out, and repeating yourself for the tenth time. Children relax more easily when rules stay predictable instead of changing with your mood. Knowing what to expect creates more calm and less resistance throughout the day.

For deeper support with consistency and follow-through, the Clear Boundaries guide expands on this step.



### Assignment 3

Create a routine with your family for morning, after school, and bedtime.

Write it down and keep it visible.

# Day 4 – Guide Big Emotions

## Start with your own regulation

Before you can help your child regulate, you need to learn to regulate yourself.

Emotional regulation is the ability to feel emotions without immediately reacting to them. As a neurodiverse parent, learning that skill myself was the hardest part. But once I became more aware of my own reactions, my son slowly started responding differently too.

For example, it's late afternoon, someone's melting down over something tiny, and you think, "I'm about to lose it." Regulation is that small moment where you notice it – and choose one breath before you speak.

What helps:

- Noticing when you're getting activated
- Pausing to breathe instead of reacting
- Naming your emotion ("I'm feeling really frustrated right now")
- Choosing a response instead of reacting
- Returning to calm after being upset

What doesn't:

- Never feeling angry, sad, or overwhelmed
- Pretending everything is fine when it's not
- Bottling up emotions until you explode later

Simple regulation tools (when you feel the spark):

- Deep breathing – inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4
- Grounding – name 5 things you see, 4 you hear, 3 you can touch
- Self-talk – "I can handle this. This feeling will pass"

**"That pause creates space for a different response"**

After (when you need to discharge the stress):

- Movement – shake out your body, go outside or dance
- Cool water – splash your face or hold something cool

The calmer you are, the more you can support your children.

## All feelings are allowed

This is the foundation. Anger, sadness, frustration, jealousy, fear – feelings are information. Emotions themselves are not the problem; unsafe behavior is.

- Your child can be angry – hitting is not okay.
- They can be disappointed – throwing things is not okay.

Use a simple reminder: "You can feel however you feel. I'm here to help you and keep everyone safe."

Have a few lines ready:

- "It's okay to be mad. I won't let you hit."
- "You can cry. I'm right here."
- "You're allowed to be upset. The answer is still no."
- "Feelings are welcome. Unsafe behavior isn't."

## How to stay present during big emotions

When your child is upset, your instinct might be to fix it, distract them, or minimize it. But what they need is simple: You stay calm and present while they feel it.

What staying present looks like:

- Stay close and stay calm – or nearby if they don't want touch. Your presence helps them regulate
- Name the emotion – "You're really frustrated right now."
- Don't try to fix it – let them feel it first
- Offer comfort if they want it – some children want hugs, some need space
- Wait for the storm to pass – regulation comes after the emotion passes

A simple order to remember. Connect first. Teach later. Problem-solve last. If you feel yourself getting activated, narrate your calm: "I'm here. I'm taking one breath so I can help."

#### What not to do

- Don't tell them how to feel ("don't be sad")
- Don't punish the emotion ("stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about")
- Don't take it personally when they lash out
- Don't try to logic them out of the feeling while they're escalated

A highly overwhelmed child needs calm support before problem-solving.

## When your child's emotions trigger yours

Sometimes your child's meltdown about the "wrong color cup" sends you into your own spiral. Maybe you feel angry, overwhelmed, or like you're failing. This is normal – and one of the biggest barriers to feeling connected.

This disconnect – feeling triggered instead of connected – is painful. You want to be present, but you're flooded, reactive, and desperate for it to stop.

Their big emotion is triggering something in you, maybe your own childhood, a fear of being a bad parent, old patterns, or just exhaustion. If you have anxiety or depression, these moments can feel overwhelming. If you have ADHD, the sudden intensity might derail your focus and regulation.

In that moment:

- Notice it: "I'm getting activated right now."
- Separate their emotion from yours: "This is their struggle to learn from."
- Take a breath or step away briefly if safe

Remind yourself: "They're not doing this to me. They're going through something."

You can't regulate your child if you're dysregulated. It's okay to pause briefly. The more you work on your calm, the more connected you'll feel – even in hard moments. And if you snapped? You're human. Repair and reset is how you come back. "I got too loud. That wasn't okay." or "I'm sorry. I love you. Let's try again."

What you can do:

- Identify your specific triggers (like whining, defiance, loud noises, mess)
- Notice patterns in when you're most reactive (tired, hungry, overstimulated)
- Work on your own regulation through reflection, self-care and self-study, or support.
- Practice self-compassion when it doesn't go perfectly

## Teaching emotional vocabulary

When children don't have language for what's happening inside, their body does the talking for them. Whining, yelling, pushing – or melting down over something that looks small to us. They don't yet know how to explain what's happening. The more language they have, the more they can communicate their needs.

Keep it simple – name the feeling and make it visible. That alone can take a lot of moments from "escalating" to "manageable." Naming emotions helps children identify what they're experiencing. In everyday moments, label what you see.

"That's frustrating."

"You look disappointed."

"Oof. That felt unfair."

When emotions are huge, make the language even smaller. One calm sentence is enough: "This is anger." "This is sadness." "That startled you – you feel scared." This helps your child feel seen. For many children, words still disappear when they're overwhelmed – so visualizing helps, it doesn't require talking. You're giving the feeling shape instead of letting it swirl like a storm inside.

A few easy ways to visualize (pick what fits your child):

- A simple feelings chart with faces (emojis) they can point to
- 'Weather' feelings: sunshine, cloudy, rain, thunderstorm
- Body map: 'Where do you feel it – belly, chest, throat?'



The goal is to make emotions easier to recognize and describe. You're helping them build a map to reduce panic and create structure. Give them a sentence to borrow. When kids don't have words, they reach for behavior.

Give them a few phrases they can use before it escalates:

- "I'm mad."
- "That felt unfair."
- "I need space."
- "I'm upset."

At first, they might still melt down. That doesn't mean it isn't working. It means they're learning. Over time, you'll notice the shift: a child pointing instead of screaming, or saying "I'm frustrated" instead of throwing the toy. That's not just "better behavior." That's a nervous system learning how to communicate. And that's the goal: Not to make feelings smaller – just safer.



#### Assignment 4.1

Name one emotion you see ("That's frustration / sadness / anger"). Stay present for 30 seconds without fixing it & keep the boundary (if needed).



#### Assignment 4.2

Visualize emotions with your child.

Help them put it into words – and create the visualization together.

# Day 5 – Calm Boundaries & Containment

## Why children don't listen (and what to do about it)

"My child never listens" is one of the most common frustrations parents have – and it makes sense. By the time you've said "put your shoes on" twelve times, you feel like throwing the shoes yourself.

Common reasons children don't listen:

- They're developmentally not able to yet (young children have limited impulse control)
- They're dysregulated (hungry, tired, overstimulated)
- You've said it so many times they've tuned you out
- They don't feel connected to you in that moment
- The instruction was unclear or too complex
- They're testing to see if you mean it

Understanding why helps you respond better. It also helps you drop the shame. This doesn't mean you're failing – it means your child is human, and you're building a skill.

## The Foundation: Connection supports Cooperation

When you need to address behavior, connect first. A connected child is a cooperative child. When kids feel seen, they're more likely to work with you. When they feel controlled or criticized, they resist. Connection doesn't have to be a long heart-to-heart. Sometimes 10 seconds can change everything.

**"Without connection, instructions sound like noise."**

Connect before correcting:

- Get down to their eye level
- Make eye contact
- Use a calm, warm tone
- Offer touch if they want it (or stay close and steady)
- Show genuine interest in what they're doing

Then make your request. The same child who ignored you from across the room will respond when you're close, connected, and calm.

Correction without connection feels like punishment. Connection makes correction land differently. Simple script examples: "Hey love. I see you. Shoes on now." Or: "I'm right here. Two minutes, then we're leaving." Same boundary – but it lands differently because your child experiences you as supportive instead of against them.

## Following through (the missing piece)

Children test boundaries to see if you mean what you say. If you don't follow through, they learn that "no" doesn't mean no, and instructions are optional. The way you communicate matters. Vague, long-winded, or repeated instructions teach children they don't need to listen the first time. Clear doesn't have to mean cold. The goal is warm leadership – connected, short, and certain.

**"Connection improves cooperation, but consistency maintains boundaries."**

## The power of "Yes, and..."

When children constantly hear "no," resistance and frustration often increase. Sometimes a small shift in wording helps children feel heard without removing the structure.

"Yes, and..." is a simple strategy that acknowledges the child while still keeping the limit clear.

"Can I play longer?" – "Yes, after we finish getting ready for bed."

What matters most is that the boundary stays consistent afterward. Strategies like “Yes, and...” only work when children experience clear follow-through as well.

We’ll explore both “Yes, and...” and follow-through more deeply in My Way to Clear Boundaries.

## The calm corner (not a punishment)

A calm corner is a space where anyone in the family can go to regulate. It’s not a time-out. It’s not punishment. It’s a tool. You can give it a name that fits your family. Think of it as a “quiet calming space”, not a “go away space.” We don’t send kids there as a consequence – we invite them, and sometimes we go with them.

The calm corner can have:

- Soft cushions or blankets
- Calming sensory items (stress ball, fidget toy)
- Books
- Stuffed animals
- Breathing exercise cards

Make it more effective by letting your child help build it – choosing a blanket, picking a stuffed animal, and naming it together.

How to introduce it:

“Sometimes we all need a place to calm our bodies down. You can come here when you feel big feelings, and I might come here too when I need a break.”

Model it yourself. Let them see you taking calming breaths or sitting quietly. This helps normalize self-regulation.





### Assignment 5.1

Create your Calm Corner together. Choose a spot and name it (Chill Corner / Reset Space / Calm Nest). Pick 3-5 items like a soft blanket/cushion, stuffed animal, book, fidget or stress ball, breathing cards, something cool to hold.



### Assignment 5.2

Name two moments that usually go off-track (e.g., leaving the house, screen time, bedtime). For each one, write your calm response plan:

- What I'll say (one sentence)
- What I'll do (follow-through)

# Day 6 – Repair, Joy and Relationships

## Repair after rupture

You will lose your patience. You might yell. You will probably say something you regret. This is part of being human. What matters is the repair. Repair teaches your child that mistakes happen, that people can take accountability, and that relationships can heal.

### How to repair:

- Acknowledge what happened – “I yelled at you earlier and that wasn’t okay.”
- Take responsibility – “That was my choice, not your fault.”
- Explain if helpful – “I was feeling really overwhelmed.”
- Apologize sincerely – “I’m sorry.”
- Reconnect – “I love you. Can we try again?”

### Don’t:

- Make excuses (“You made me yell”)
- Expect them to apologize back or meet you halfway
- Over-explain or make it about you
- Demand they accept your apology immediately

Repair is one of the most important skills you can model. Practice it regularly, not just after big ruptures. Apologize when you’re short, distracted, or misunderstand. Show them that repair is normal, not shameful.

**“How you respond after mistakes matters more than avoiding mistakes”**

## Cultivating joy and fun

In the midst of managing behavior, routines, and emotions, it’s easy to forget to laugh, to be silly, to have fun. Positive interaction is an important part of family connection. It’s what your children will remember and what keeps the connection strong.

And here's the permission slip: joy doesn't require a perfect day. It just requires one small moment where you're together.

Ways to bring more joy into daily life:

- Spontaneous play – drop what you're doing and play with them for 10 minutes
- Silly rituals – tickle time, dance parties, funny voices during dinner
- Say yes to mess – finger painting, jumping in puddles, building forts
- Laugh at yourself – model that mistakes can be funny, not shameful
- Follow their lead – let them show you what lights them up
- Create traditions – Friday movie night, Sunday pancakes, bedtime stories
- Be present – put your phone away and actually see them

Joy doesn't have to be big: making faces while brushing teeth, a secret handshake, singing in the car, wrestling on the floor, reading the same book in funny voices.

When you're stressed, depleted, or in survival mode, joy feels impossible. But small moments of lightness and play can interrupt stress patterns. They remind you why you're doing this and who your child is beyond their behavior.

**“Joy doesn't come after everything is calm – it helps create the calm.”**



## Working with your partner (or co-parent)

If you're parenting with a partner or co-parent, misalignment can create chaos, resentment, and conflict. When parents aren't on the same page, children learn to seek different answers from each parent, and you end up feeling like you're parenting alone even when you're not.

Common co-parenting challenges:

- One parent is 'strict', the other is 'soft'
- You disagree on discipline or consequences
- One parent undermines the other in front of the kids
- You're both exhausted and blame each other for the chaos
- One parent does most of the emotional labor
- You have different parenting styles from how you were raised

A quick reframe that helps: "strict" and "soft" are often just two nervous systems trying to survive the same situation in different ways. One clamps down to feel control. One gives in to keep the peace. Neither is a character flaw – it's a pattern you can shift together.

## Why alignment matters

When your "yes" and "no" don't depend on which parent they ask, children relax – and the power struggles shrink.

Alignment matters because:

- Children feel safer with consistent responses
- You stop fighting the same battles over and over
- You feel supported instead of alone
- You can tag-team hard moments instead of resenting each other
- Your relationship improves when you're working together
- Kids stop "playing you off each other" when the answer stays the same

## Getting on the same page

You don't have to agree on everything. But you do need to agree on the big things. Values, boundaries, how you'll handle challenging behavior, and how you'll support each other. If starting the conversation feels tense, keep it simple and specific. Instead of trying to solve everything at once, focus on one situation you both want to handle more consistently. You could say: 'Can we pick one thing we both want to respond to the same way?'

Steps to align with your partner

1. **Talk when you're both calm, not in the heat of the moment.** Don't try to solve a discipline disagreement while your child is melting down. Wait until both of you are calmer and able to think clearly.
2. **Start with your shared values.** What do you both want for your children? What kind of home do you want to create? Common ground exists, even if your approaches differ.
3. **Identify your non-negotiables.** What boundaries or values are you absolutely not willing to compromise on? What are your partner's?
4. **Compromise where you can.** You might not parent exactly the same way, and that's okay. Kids can adapt to different styles as long as the core boundaries are consistent.
5. **Agree on core boundaries and consequences ahead of time.** What are the house rules? What happens when they're broken? Who handles what?
6. **Support each other in front of the kids.** Even if you disagree with how your partner handled something, back them up in the moment. Discuss it privately later.
7. **Create a signal for when you need backup.** A code word, a look, a text – something that says "I'm overwhelmed, I need you to step in."

One small thing that makes this sustainable: do a two-minute weekly reset. "What worked this week?" "What didn't?" "What's one boundary we want to hold the same way?"

## When your partner won't get on board

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, your partner refuses to change, dismisses your concerns, or continues to undermine you. This is difficult.

What you can do:

- Control what you can control – your own responses, your boundaries
- Seek couples therapy or parenting coaching
- Accept that you can't force someone to change
- Protect your children from conflict
- Take care of yourself so you don't burn out

And one important note: if what you're dealing with includes intimidation, fear, or feeling unsafe, this isn't "just" a co-parenting mismatch. You deserve support that prioritizes safety.

If your partner is actively harmful, dismissive of abuse, or refuses to participate in parenting at all, professional support can help you navigate next steps with clarity and protection.

## Solo parenting

If you're parenting solo – by choice, circumstance, divorce, or because you're carrying most of the parenting load alone – everything in this eBook still applies.

And let's call it what it is: solo parenting can be hard and heavy. The kind of hard where you're making dinner, answering a work message, finding the missing shoe, and coaching a meltdown... all while trying to remember to breathe like a calm adult. So if this is you, I want you to hear this clearly.

**"You're doing the work of two people – with one nervous system."**

You're managing both practical responsibilities and emotional support. You're the snack manager, the bedtime wizard, the boundary holder, the comforter, the calendar... and you're trying to build a life that feels good for you too.

Take care of yourself too. Not perfectly. Not all at once. Just where you can. Some days that means a real break. Some days it's just a quiet moment, a breath, a cup of coffee while it's still warm. I know how heavy this can feel. And I also know this: You're carrying a lot – and you're still showing up.

What helps when you're doing this mostly on your own:

- Build your village (even if it's small) – friends, family, a neighbor, a babysitter, a WhatsApp group... support counts
- Lower expectations on the hard days – “good enough” is a parenting strategy
- Celebrate what you did do (because you did a lot)
- Ask for help without guilt – you're not supposed to do everything alone
- Remember: one consistent, loving adult is enough to build a calm home

You need steadiness, love, and a few systems that support you – because calm doesn't come from perfection. It comes from leadership – and you've already got that.



### **Assignment 6**

Choose 3 fun connection ideas as a family.

Keep them simple, short, and realistic.

Then pick one to do today.

(Ideas can be small: dance party, funny stories at dinner, pillow fort, puddle jump, “yes” to one mess, secret handshake, bedtime story in silly voices.)

# Day 7 – From Survival to Presence

## Recognizing survival mode

Survival mode is when you're just getting through the day. When you're counting down to bedtime from the moment you wake up. When parenting feels like an endurance test instead of something you enjoy. It can look like doing all the things... while feeling like you're not fully in your own life. Like you're parenting with 3% battery and no charger in sight.

Signs of survival mode:

- You feel numb or disconnected
- You're anxious about what will go wrong next
- You can't remember the last time you laughed with your kids
- You're moving through the motions but not present
- Everything feels heavy, like you're pushing through fog
- You fantasize about escape more than you feel joy

These are signs of prolonged stress and exhaustion. Survival mode has a real impact on how you function day to day. It's what happens when you've been running on empty for too long. It's a symptom of burnout, accumulated stress, lack of support... and yes, sometimes anxiety or depression that needs real care and support.

## What presence feels like

You can be present even when parenting feels hard.

Being present means:

- You notice small moments of connection, like a look or a shared laugh
- You feel like yourself again, not just the manager of everyone's needs
- You have the capacity to respond instead of react
- Patience is accessible more often than not
- You can genuinely enjoy your children – even on the hard days

Presence becomes easier when your nervous system is no longer focused on getting through the day. It comes back in small moments – and those grow as your load gets lighter.

## How structure creates space for presence

When your days feel unpredictable and every moment requires another decision, mental overload builds quickly. There's little space left for patience, connection, or presence because all your energy goes into managing the chaos. Decision fatigue often affects emotional capacity before you even notice it.

Structure creates presence by

- Reducing decision fatigue so you have energy for connection
- Making the day feel manageable instead of overwhelming
- Creating pockets of time where you can breathe
- Allowing you to anticipate challenges instead of constantly reacting
- Building confidence in your ability to handle what comes

The routines you build should create more stability, not more pressure. Start with one predictable anchor point – a morning flow, a transition habit, or a bedtime rhythm your family can return to consistently.

## Reclaiming yourself

Somewhere in the intensity of parenting, many people lose themselves. You become so focused on your children's needs that you forget you have needs too. You stop doing things you enjoy. You stop knowing what you want anymore. Reclaiming yourself is necessary.

You got buried under the mental load. You don't have to choose between being a good parent and being yourself. You can be both. In fact, you're a better parent when you feel like yourself.

Small ways to reconnect with who you are (choose one – not all, not perfectly):

- One hobby or interest that's just yours
- Time with friends where you're not talking about your kids
- Movement or exercise that feels good in your body
- Creative expression, just for five minutes
- Moments where you're not performing or producing anything

Your needs matter, even while caring for everyone else.

## Enjoying parenting again

If you're reading this thinking: "I can't remember the last time I enjoyed parenting," overwhelm can make parenting feel emotionally flat and exhausting. Many parents feel guilty admitting they don't love every moment. You can love your children and still find parenting hard. You can be a good parent and still not enjoy the tantrums, the endless needs, the relentlessness of it all.

Enjoyment returns when:

- You're not overwhelmed
- You have support and rest
- You feel competent and capable
- You're connected to yourself
- The hard moments don't consume everything
- You have space to notice the good

And sometimes enjoyment returns in the most unglamorous ways: catching yourself humming while making dinner... laughing at a weird toddler sentence... realizing bedtime wasn't a war tonight. You won't enjoy every moment. But you can shift from dreading most of it to finding genuine moments of joy, connection, and even peace.

That's what this eBook Bundle is for. Just enough calm, structure, and presence that you can breathe again and feel like yourself. That you can be here for this life you're living.

## Letting go of perfection

A calm home is not a perfect home. There will be hard days, yelling, messes, meltdowns, and moments where you want to quit. And yes – sometimes the “calm home” is everyone eating bread for dinner while you stare into space for 5 minutes. Calm comes from recovering more steadily after difficult moments.

Important reminders:

- You don't have to enjoy every moment
- Your children don't have to be happy all the time
- Some days, survival is success
- Good enough is good enough

Release the image of the peaceful, Pinterest-perfect home. That's not real life.

## What to do when nothing is working

Some days, despite your best efforts, nothing works. You are both overwhelmed, and the whole house feels like it's unraveling. This is your “today.” And on days like this, the goal is not growth. The goal is getting through without making it worse.

When you're in crisis mode:

- Safety first – If anyone is in danger, separate and secure
- Meet basic needs – Is anyone hungry, tired, overstimulated, or sick?
- Lower expectations – Screen time, skipping the bath – it's okay
- Do the next right thing – You don't have to fix everything. Just get through the next hour
- Ask for help – Text a friend, call your partner, reach out to someone who gets it

# Building your support system

Parenting in isolation is unsustainable and unfair. So try not to do this alone. Your “village” doesn’t have to be big or perfect. Sometimes it’s one solid person, one group chat, or one professional who actually helps.

Who’s in your village?

- Partner or co-parent
- Family members
- Friends who understand
- Online parenting communities
- Therapist or coach
- Babysitter or childcare

Ask for help before exhaustion becomes unmanageable.

What support looks like:

- Someone to text when you’re overwhelmed
- A person who can watch your kids for an hour
- A friend who doesn’t judge your messy house
- Professional help when you need it



## Assignment 7

- Write down 3 wins from this week (tiny counts).
- Decide what support will help you continue using what you learned (person, reminder, routine chart, community).

# Keep returning

## Your Calm Home, Your Way

Calm is something you return to – after a hard moment, a rushed day, or an evening that didn't go as planned.

There will still be noise, emotions, and days that feel heavier than you expected. That's part of family life. What changes is how you come back to calm – through safety, rhythm, and steady leadership.

Before you move on, reflect on the following:

- What does calm feel like in your body?
- When does your home already feel more settled?
- What small shift makes the biggest difference?
- What support would help you keep this going?

You're building awareness. Small shifts, repeated, change the direction of your home. And if you lose it – start again. Come back to what works. That's how calm is built.

If you notice that calm is hardest to hold when your child pushes back, you're not alone. For a clearer, step-by-step approach to boundaries, see *My Way to Clear Boundaries*.

If evenings tend to undo the calm you built during the day, *My Way to Gentle Nights* helps you bring more structure and predictability to that part of your routine.

These approaches are designed to support each other across different family situations.

**“This is your way to a calm home”**

# Continue the journey & connect

## **The Connected Family Bundle**

**Calm Home** - A calmer and more connected home

**Gentle Nights** - Peaceful evenings and smoother sleep

**Clear Boundaries** - Clear limits without constant battles

## **Stay Connected**

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Created with care by Michèle Hogeweg

## **MyWay4Family**

Helping families create calmer and more connected daily lives.

# Colophon

Title: My Way to a Calm Home

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