



The Safe Home Starter Guide

A Reflective Tool for Creating Emotionally Safe, Inclusive, and Empowering Living Spaces

By Maria Amelia Pereira, Author of *Maps in the Wild*

This guide is for you if you're:

- Hosting homestay guests, refugees, or newcomers
- Opening your home short- or long-term
- A first-time landlord or house-share host
- Supporting someone through transition, displacement, or healing
- Or simply committed to creating a space that offers more than just shelter

This isn't about getting it all right. It's about building awareness, practicing empathy, and creating a home rooted in respect, healing, and belonging. **Write your answers down, don't just think them. This is part of the process.**



Section 1: Know Your Why

Start with intention. Before you open your door, open your heart.

- Why do I want to open my home to someone?
 - What kind of experience do I want them to have here?
 - What am I hoping to learn, give, or receive in return?
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Section 2: Self-Awareness Check

A safe home starts with an honest look within.

- What assumptions do I carry about people from different cultures or backgrounds?
- How do I typically handle discomfort, disagreement, or change in my home?
- In what ways might I unintentionally hold power over a guest?
- Have I ever made someone feel "less than" for not sharing my customs or worldview?
- What does respect mean to me and could it look different to someone else?

Section 3: Emotional & Physical Environment

Safety isn't just about locks and alarms. It's about energy, tone, and trust.

- Is my home accessible and comfortable for someone with different needs or habits?
 - Do I allow people space to be themselves, or expect them to fit my mold?
 - Have I clearly explained which house rules are about safety and which are just preference?
 - Are there objects, language, or behaviors in my home that could feel excluding or unsafe?
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Section 4: Cultural Curiosity

Beyond tolerance, lean into *learning*.

- Do I know anything about my guest's cultural background or lived experience?
 - Am I open to learning from them, not just teaching them to "adapt"?
 - Have I asked about foods, routines, or rituals that help them feel more at home?
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Section 5: Boundaries & Communication

Clear is kind. Honest is healing.

- What do I need to feel safe and respected in my space?
- Have I communicated that clearly and compassionately?
- When discomfort arises, do I respond with avoidance, control, or curiosity?
- Do I check in regularly or only when something goes wrong?

Section 6: Practical Thoughtfulness

Healing doesn't require perfection. Just presence.

- What small details could make my guest feel more welcomed or less confused?
 - What's one thoughtful gesture I can offer this week to build trust?
 - When something feels "off," do I reflect or rush to blame?
 - What local (free or low-cost) supports exist in my community that I could share?
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Section 7: Legacy & Impact

You're not just offering shelter. You're shaping stories.

- What do I want a guest to say about their time here?
 - If my own child moved into a stranger's home, what would I hope they experience?
 - Am I creating a home rooted in fear or in freedom, growth, and mutual care?
 - How is this experience helping me grow?
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 **Final Reflection:** Take a quiet moment to write

- One belief I want to unlearn:
- One habit I want to build:
- One thing I want to do differently this month:
- One thing I'm proud of as a host:

A Note from Amelia:

As someone who has lived through displacement, trauma, and the need for a safe home, I know that safety is more than shelter, it's a feeling. This guide was created to help you go deeper than hospitality. It's an invitation to reflect, unlearn, and co-create spaces that heal. You're not just offering a place to stay. You're offering dignity, curiosity, and a chance for someone to feel good again perhaps for the first time in a long time.