Parent Pause Before Reacting

A trauma-informed educational wellness worksheet for reflection, choice, self-care, and support.

Use this at your own pace. Skip, adapt, pause, or stop. You are allowed to choose what fits your body, culture, privacy, energy, safety, access needs, and real-life limits today.

This is a reflection tool, not a test. One honest sentence, one checked box, or one small next step can be enough.

A printable reflection and practice resource Created by Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC. This worksheet is a free educational wellness resource from My Reflective Collective.

- Use what supports you. Skip, pause, adapt, or connect with a licensed therapist, healthcare provider, advocate, or trusted support if reflection brings something up.

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Why this can be useful Create a brief pause between activation and response while keeping safety and connection in view.

From my perspective, tools like this can help because they slow the moment down enough for you to notice what is happening inside and around you before pressure, shame, or survival mode takes over the whole page.

- Use this privately, skip any prompt, change the wording, write very little, or stop completely. This is educational wellness support for reflection and coping-skill practice - not diagnosis, therapy, medical care, or crisis support.

Right now

What feels most noticeable right now - in your body, thoughts, emotions, _____

_____ _____

_____ environment, or energy? _____

_____

_____ _____

_____

Capacity check

- Circle or write what fits: very limited / limited / mixed / steady / unsure.

  _____

  _____ What does that capacity make realistic today?

  _____

  _____

Support note If you are in immediate danger call 911. In the United States, call or text 988 if you are in emotional crisis, unable to stay safe, or need urgent support.

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immediate danger or medical emergency. Call or text 988 in the U.S. or Canada for suicide or mental health crisis support. Copyright Michelle

Notice the pattern without judging it _____ _____ _____ _____ **You do not have to fix everything you notice. This part is about gathering information with honesty and compassion so you can respond in a way that actually fits your current capacity.**

What tends to come before? _____ _____ _____ _____ **People, places, tasks, sensations, memories, uncertainty, conflict, time of day, or changes that often show up first.**

What happens next? _____ _____ _____ _____ **What do you notice in your body, attention, emotions, urges, words, actions,** _____ _____ _____ **or ability to begin and stop?** _____ _____ _____ _____

What helps - even a little?

- List supports that reduce harm, add choice, improve access, or make the next few minutes more workable.

What makes it harder?

Name pressure, shame, sensory load, isolation, unclear expectations, lack of rest, or other barriers without blaming yourself.

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Build a choice-centered support plan Support does not have to be dramatic to count. Sometimes the most helpful next step is the one that lowers pressure, adds clarity, or helps your nervous system feel a little less alone in the moment.

A 30-second option

What is one very small orienting, sensory, communication, movement, or environmental choice available to you?

A 5-minute option

What could reduce friction or add support for five minutes without requiring you to solve the whole problem?

A support-person option Who could listen, help with a task, offer company, clarify expectations, or connect you with qualified care?

A professional-support option

- Write the clinician, prescriber, school, workplace, community, or crisis resource that fits your situation. Note how and when you would contact them.

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- Choose what you want to carry forward There is no perfect way to end a page like this. If one honest sentence, one smaller next step, or one clearer boundary is all you leave with, that is still meaningful work.

One believable sentence

- Write a statement that is supportive and honest enough to believe today. It does not need to be positive or perfect.

One boundary or accommodation What limit, pause, sensory change, reminder, reduced demand, or communication support would help?

One next step

- Choose one step. Make it smaller until it feels possible. Decide when, where, and what can help you begin.

Return note

When you revisit this page, what do you want your future self to remember about your effort, needs, and worth?

Root where you are. Rise when you can. Restore as needed.

- Keep this worksheet, print another copy, email it to yourself, or share only what you choose with a qualified support person. danger or medical emergency. Call or text 988 in the U.S. or Canada for suicide or mental health crisis

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More free My Reflective Collective tools Printable links below. The worksheet wording itself is unchanged.

Scan the QR code or use the first link to open this worksheet online.

The online reader can support read-aloud tools and browser translation.

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Educational wellness notice This worksheet and website offer educational wellness and self-reflection tools only.

They are not therapy, diagnosis, medical care, legal advice, crisis care, or individualized safety planning.

Pause or stop any activity that feels wrong, unsafe, inaccessible, or too much.

For immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support.

Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC | My Reflective Collective

Safety, Privacy & Educational Use

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If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency: Call 911 in the United States or use your local emergency number. For U.S. suicide or mental-health crisis support, call or text 988. For relationship-safety support, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233, text START to 88788, or visit TheHotline.org from a safer device when possible.

Privacy and safer searching If someone may monitor your device, accounts, internet connection, location, downloads, or browser activity, consider using a safer device and a trusted network. Private browsing may reduce locally saved history but does not make activity invisible. Clearing history can also be noticed. A website Quick Exit button changes the page; it cannot erase browser, download, router, account, employer, school, carrier, or device records. Choose only steps that feel safer in your situation.

Do not store identifying or safety-sensitive answers where another person may find them.

Educational scope and professional limits This resource provides general psychoeducation, reflection, and wellness support. It is not therapy, counseling, diagnosis, assessment, treatment, medical advice, legal advice, crisis response, forensic evaluation, or an individualized safety plan.

It does not replace care from a licensed clinician, healthcare professional, attorney, trained advocate, emergency service, or other qualified professional. Laws, court procedures, services, and risks vary by location and circumstance.

Choice, pacing, and inclusion You may skip, change, discuss, dictate, draw, pause, or stop any activity. No exercise can determine what you experienced, diagnose a condition, prove a legal claim, guarantee safety, or tell you whether to stay, leave, report, reconcile, forgive, or pursue court action. Adapt language and activities for culture, identity, disability, neurotype, age, literacy, sensory needs, and personal preference. Automatic translation can make mistakes; confirm legal, medical, emergency, and safety-critical wording with a qualified person.

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