PRINTABLE

REFLECTION EXERCISE

What you needed as a child

- and what you can offer now as a parent

Parenthood can become an unexpected mirror.

Sometimes you watch your own child go through something and suddenly realise how young you were yourself. Sometimes you hear yourself say something you wish you had heard back then. And sometimes becoming a parent gives you new understanding of the adults who raised you.

This exercise is not about searching for what went wrong in your childhood. It is an invitation to look gently, from your adult perspective, at the child you once were - and at what that perspective may show you about the parent you are today.

Be gentle with yourself.

You do not need to search for painful memories. Choose what feels safe enough to reflect on. If the exercise brings up more than you want to hold right now, put it aside and return to it another time.

THEN

NOW

PASSING ON

REFLECTION EXERCISE

1. Look at the child you once were

Think of yourself at roughly the age your child is now - or choose an age that naturally comes to mind. There is no need to force a memory.

What mattered to this child? What brought them joy?

Where did this child feel uncertain, afraid or alone?

What was this child perhaps trying very hard to do well?

What did this child need from the adults around them?

If you met this child today, what might you understand differently from the adults around them at the time?

REFLECTION EXERCISE

2. From then to now

Now look at yourself as a parent. Not to judge whether you are doing it ‘right’, but to become curious about what you carry forward, what you keep, and what you consciously try to do differently.

What do you consciously try to give your child because you valued it yourself - or because you missed it?

Are there moments when your child’s behaviour or emotions bring up an unexpectedly strong reaction in you?

What from your own upbringing would you like to keep and pass on?

What do you hope your child learns about themselves through the way you relate to them?

REFLECTION EXERCISE

3. A letter to your younger self

Write a few lines to the child you once were. Not as a therapist who needs to fix something. Not as an adult who should have all the answers. Write as the parent you are today.

What do you understand now? What would you reassure that child about? What did they perhaps not need to carry alone? What would you want them to know about themselves?

And take this with you...

Is there something you want to say to your own child today - precisely because you have just written it to yourself?

You do not need to reach a conclusion from this exercise. Sometimes being able to look at something with more gentleness is enough for today.