

When she is hurting and you freeze

Afraid you will say the wrong thing and make it worse? Start here.

1

Stop and steady yourself

Put both feet on the floor. Exhale slowly. Notice the urge to defend, explain, fix, or disappear. A pause gives you room to choose your response.

2

Listen for the loss

Let her finish. Ask, "What feels most painful about this right now?" Listen to understand her experience rather than guessing what she feels.

3

Own what you hear

Name the specific impact and your part in it. Try: "I hear that my choices changed how safe you feel with me. I caused that, and I am sorry." Leave out the "but."

4

Stay - or return when you say you will

If you are overwhelmed, say: "I want to keep listening. I need 15 minutes to regulate. I will return at [time]." Then come back on time.

REMEMBER

Your task is to be present and accountable, not to find perfect words or secure immediate forgiveness. Respect her choice to pause or end the conversation.

Explore the workbooks and keep practicing