



50 Ways to Be With

The words for the hard moments, for when you don't have your own.

You're not here to end the storm. You're here to make sure they're never in it alone.



You're not trying to end the storm.
You're making sure they're not alone
inside it.

Find the moment you're in, say the words in your own voice, or do the one thing for yourself. That's the whole practice.

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- **TO THEM** - the words you offer the child
 - **FOR YOU** - what you do in your own body





The big storms





THE BIG STORMS

When the meltdown takes the whole
floor

SAY

“I’m right here. You don’t have
to stop. I’m staying.”

You’re not ending the storm. You’re making sure they’re not
alone inside it. That’s the whole job.



THE BIG STORMS

When it's a tantrum over something tiny
(the wrong color cup)

SAY

“It really matters to you. I’m
not going to make it small.”

The size of the upset is real to them even when the cause looks tiny to you. You don't have to agree it's a big deal to treat them like it is.



THE BIG STORMS

When they arch away and can't be held

SAY

staying close, not forcing contact

“I’ll be right here when your body
wants me. I’m not leaving.”

Being with doesn't always mean holding. Sometimes it's
staying near while they have it their way.



THE BIG STORMS

When it's gone on too long and your
patience is going

FOR YOU

Name it silently. “I’m getting
frustrated, and I can still stay.” Both
are allowed to be true.

You don't have to feel patient to act steady. The feeling and the
choice are separate.



THE BIG STORMS

When they hit, kick, or bite in the storm

SAY

Block the body from its target, redirect the energy of the action, allow the feeling.

“I know you have big energy to get out, and it is safe to do that over here. I’m still right here and I want you to express it, but we’re going to keep everyone safe while you do that. Including you.”

Redirect the action to legitimate expression. Keep the connection. Reiterate that it's the safe choice for all. The boundary does not eliminate feelings, or connection - just material damage.



THE BIG STORMS

When it's the second (or third) meltdown of the day

FOR YOU

You haven't failed because it's happening again. Storms come in clusters. Lower the bar to “stay,” nothing more.

Repetition isn't regression. It's a nervous system practicing, with you as the constant.



THE BIG STORMS

When nothing you offer is the “right”
thing

SAY

“Nothing feels right yet. That’s
okay. I’ll wait with you until it does.”

Sometimes there is no fix to find. The waiting-with is the help.



THE BIG STORMS

When you can feel the storm building

SAY

early, low

“Something’s getting big in you. I’ve got us.”

Meeting the wave as it rises costs less than meeting it at the top. Catch it early when you can, and it’s not a failure when you can’t.



The baby, the preverbal





THE BABY, THE PREVERBAL

When the baby cries and nothing you do
fixes it

SAY

low and slow, mostly for your own body

“Nothing is wrong with me, and
nothing is wrong with you. We are
just in a hard one.”

A baby can't settle alone yet. You're not fixing the cry, you're
the steady person it gets to happen next to.



THE BABY, THE PREVERBAL

The 3am wake, again

FOR YOU

Drop the story about how long this will last. There is only this feed, this dark, this small body. One hour at a time.

The future is where the despair lives. The present is just a baby and you. Stay in the hour you're in.



THE BABY, THE PREVERBAL

The witching hour, the evening crying
with no clear reason

SAY

softly, mostly tone

“This is the hard part of the
day. We do it together.”

Some crying isn't a problem to solve, it's a release that just
needs a witness. Your steady voice is the witness.



THE BABY, THE PREVERBAL

When you've checked everything and
they still cry

SAY

“You don't have to tell
me what's wrong. I'll
stay anyway.”

A baby can't locate or explain the distress. You're not failing to find the cause. You're the safety while it passes.



THE BABY, THE PREVERBAL

When they only settle on you and your
arms are done

FOR YOU

“Wanting only me is not a problem I
created. It’s a stage, not a habit I have to
break tonight.”

Meeting need builds security, it doesn't spoil it. You can be
touched-out and still let yourself off the hook.



THE BABY, THE PREVERBAL

The cry that has no off switch

FOR YOU

Hand on your own belly. Long out-breath. You cannot stop this cry, and you can refuse to let it convince you that you're failing.

When there's nothing to fix, your only job is to not abandon them or yourself. Both count.



THE BABY, THE PREVERBAL

The sudden startle, the fear in a tiny
body

SAY

gathering them in

“That was big and fast. I’ve got you
now. You’re back with me.”

For an infant, you are the whole nervous system they borrow.
You bringing yourself close is what steadies them.



THE BABY, THE PREVERBAL

When sleep won't come

SAY

slow, repetitive, boring on purpose

“Nothing to do. Nowhere to
be. I'm here. I'm here.”

Boring is the goal. A flat, repetitive presence tells the body it's safe to come down.



The hard words, the pushback





THE HARD WORDS, THE PUSHBACK

When it's "I hate you"

SAY

“You’re allowed to hate it. I’m not going anywhere.”

The words are the size of the feeling, not the truth of the bond.
Meet the size, keep the bond.



THE HARD WORDS, THE PUSHBACK

The flat “no” to everything

SAY

“You really want to be the one who decides. I get it. Some things you choose, some I do.”

The no is a bid for agency, not a war on you. Honor the wish underneath even when the answer stays no.



THE HARD WORDS, THE PUSHBACK

“You’re the worst mom” / “I want
Daddy”

SAY

“You wish I was different right now, and I know how important Daddy is. I want him here too. I’m all you’ve got right now, but let’s make sure Daddy knows how much we love him.”

Then reach for the phone, or go and get him from the other room.

It’s not a failure to not be the sought-after parent all the time.



THE HARD WORDS, THE PUSHBACK

The deliberate spill, the line crossed on purpose

SAY

steady, not cold

“You’re checking what I’ll do. You’re totally safe to do that, and I will continue to hold this boundary, because it’s what’s safe for you. If that makes you mad, that’s okay too.”

Testing is research, not malice. They need the wall to be solid and the wall to still love them.



THE HARD WORDS, THE PUSHBACK

The whine that grates on you

FOR YOU

The sound is built to reach you. Let it reach the part that helps, not the part that snaps.

Whining is a low-fuel signal. Meet the need under the tone before you correct the tone.



THE HARD WORDS, THE PUSHBACK

“I can’t!” when they’re more than capable

SAY

“I know that you feel that way, and you may even be right. But I wonder if you’re like Mommy sometimes, and have more in you than you know. Shall we try doing it together?”

Collapse is often a full cup, or a fear-based one. Your job is to support them to move into safety without invalidating the fear and frustration that’s there.



Out in the world





OUT IN THE WORLD

When everyone's watching

SAY

to your child, not the room

“I’ve got you. They can look.
I’m with you.”

The audience is not the emergency. Your kid feeling met is the only thing actually happening.



OUT IN THE WORLD

The meltdown in the grocery store

The milk can wait, the moment can't. Your embarrassment isn't worth losing your connection. If anyone's watching and judging, the way to impress them is by handling your child's emotions, not critiquing them.

SAY

sit on the floor, at their eye level

“I don't like grocery shopping very much either, buddy.” Or: “I sometimes really want things in the store I can't have too.”

Be with them, not against them, while you hold the boundary and let their big feelings move through.



OUT IN THE WORLD

The relative who says “you’re letting them win”

SAY

to yourself, then carry on

“Being with my child is not losing. I don’t have to win against a toddler.”

The old script calls connection weakness. It isn’t. Stay the course in front of the critics.



OUT IN THE WORLD

When you're embarrassed and want it to stop fast

FOR YOU

Name it. "I'm embarrassed, and that's mine to hold, not theirs to fix." Then turn back to them and reassure them that their behavior, or their dilemma, is valid and real, and that you're with them, attending to it.

Your embarrassment is real and it is not your child's emergency to manage.



When you're the one at the edge





WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE AT THE EDGE

When you're at the end of your own rope

FOR YOU

One hand flat on your chest. Make the out-breath longer than the in. You're allowed to be steady on the outside before you feel it on the inside.

Capacity isn't feeling calm. It's not letting their storm topple you. Present as far as you can, checked-out as far as you need.



WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE AT THE EDGE

When you've already snapped once
today

FOR YOU

One rupture doesn't define the day.
You are allowed to begin again from
right now.

Good mothering isn't the absence of losing it. It's the return,
again and again.



WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE AT THE EDGE

When you feel nothing, just flat and far
away

FOR YOU

Numb is a kind of capacity too. Do the
next plain thing. Warmth can come back
later, and presence is allowed to be quiet.

Checked-out as far as you need, present as far as you can.
Flat and staying still counts as staying.



WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE AT THE EDGE

When their cry makes your skin crawl
and the rage rises

FOR YOU

That surge is old, and it is not a
verdict on you. Feel it move, keep
your hands gentle.

The body's alarm at a cry is wiring, not wickedness. You can
have the feeling and not feed it.



WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE AT THE EDGE

When you have nothing left and they
still need you

SAY

honest, low

“I’m tired and I’m here. We’ll
go slow.”

You don't have to be full to be present. Empty and staying is its own kind of enough.



WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE AT THE EDGE

When you compare yourself to the
“calm” mom online

FOR YOU

You're seeing her highlight, not her 3am.
Steadiness isn't serenity, and you have
more of it than you think.

Capacity isn't looking calm. It's staying in contact when it's
hard. You're already doing that.



WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE AT THE EDGE

When you need to step away before you
lose it

SAY

“I’m going to take three breaths by the
door. I’m not leaving you, I’m getting
steady. Right back.”

A narrated pause is not abandonment. It teaches them that
taking space is allowed and that you return.



WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE AT THE EDGE

When the guilt arrives after a hard day

FOR YOU

Guilt means you care, not that you failed. Let it point you to repair, not to punishment.

A caring mother and a hard day live in the same house all the time. Both are normal.



Rupture and repair





RUPTURE AND REPAIR

After you lost it

SAY

“I got loud, and that was mine, not yours. I’m sorry. I’m still right here.”

The rupture isn't the failure. Skipping the repair is. Repair is where the safety actually gets built.



RUPTURE AND REPAIR

The repair when they're too lit up to
hear it yet

SAY

brief, no pressure

“When you're ready, I'm here.
No rush.”

Then wait nearby.

Repair lands after the storm, not during. Offer the door and let them walk through it in their time.



RUPTURE AND REPAIR

When you don't know what to say, only
that you want back in

SAY

“I don't have the right words. I just
want to be close again.”

Repair isn't a script you perform, it's a direction you turn.
Turning toward them is the whole message.



RUPTURE AND REPAIR

When they reject the repair (“go away”)

SAY

“Okay. I’ll be close by when
you want me.”

Stay in the room.

“Go away” often means “prove you’ll stay.” Staying, without crowding, is the proof.



RUPTURE AND REPAIR

When the rupture was big and you're
scared you damaged them

FOR YOU

One hard moment inside a sea of ordinary
care does not undo the bond. Repair is the
medicine, and you have it.

Security is built from rupture and repair, not from never
rupturing. The repair is the part that heals.



The quiet hard moments





THE QUIET HARD MOMENTS

The drop-off, the separation cling

SAY

“It’s hard to say goodbye. I always come back. I’ll be here at pickup.”

Name the hard, promise the return, keep the goodbye short and warm. Predictability is the comfort.



THE QUIET HARD MOMENTS

The night fear, “something’s in my room”

SAY

“Your body feels scared. I believe you. I’ll stay until it feels smaller.”

You don’t have to prove the monster isn’t real. You have to make the fear less lonely.



THE QUIET HARD MOMENTS

The big feeling that comes out sideways
(silly, wild, hyper)

SAY

“Lots of big energy in you right
now. I’ll help you find the ground.”

*Then actually do it: stomp with them, sit and beat the floor with
your hands, move it through together.*

Not all overwhelm looks like crying. Wildness is a nervous
system spilling. Meet it like any other storm.



THE QUIET HARD MOMENTS

The child who goes quiet and shuts down instead of blowing up

SAY

gentle, low demand

“You got very quiet. I’m here, no questions. I’ll just stay close.”

Going quiet like that is distress too, not calm. Don’t fill the silence. Be a warm, undemanding presence in it.



THE QUIET HARD MOMENTS

The transition meltdown (leaving the park, screen off)

SAY

ahead of time, then through it

“I know how hard it feels to stop doing something good. I’ll help you carry the sad out the door.”

The grief at endings is real. Allow the feeling even as you hold the limit.



THE QUIET HARD MOMENTS

The fear you can't fix (a death, a scary thing in the world)

SAY

“I don't have an answer that makes it not scary. I can be right here with you in it.”

Some things can't be made okay. Presence is what you offer when reassurance would be a lie.



Two at once (multiples)





TWO AT ONCE (MULTIPLES)

When both melt down at the same time

FOR YOU

You can't be everywhere. Get steady in your own body first, then lend the same calm voice to both. One steady adult, two kids leaning on it.

You don't have to split in half. One steady adult can hold more than one storm.



TWO AT ONCE (MULTIPLES)

When you can only get to one of them

SAY

to the waiting one

“I see you too. I’m coming.
You’re not forgotten.”

And remember the communication is happening through all of you: eye contact when you can’t hug, a big grin over their sibling’s head to let them know they’re part of the picture too. All of it matters.

Being witnessed while they wait is itself a form of being held. Even when your hands are full, you can show them how much they’re in your heart.



TWO AT ONCE (MULTIPLES)

When one child escalates the other

FOR YOU

Separate the bodies, not the love. A little space is help, not punishment.

Two nervous systems can feed each other's storm. Giving them room to settle is care, not division.



TWO AT ONCE (MULTIPLES)

The guilt that neither got “enough” of
you

FOR YOU

Divided attention is not deficient
attention. They’re learning that love
stretches without thinning.

Children of multiples learn a real thing early: they are deeply
loved and they are not the only one. That’s a gift, not a wound.



TWO AT ONCE (MULTIPLES)

When the “easy” one gets the least of you

SAY

finding a private minute

“You don’t have to be easy to be loved. I see you, even when you’re quiet.”

The steady one needs to be met too, precisely because they don't demand it. Seek them out.



For the storms you can't divide

When you are the only pair of hands, when settling by separation isn't possible, when de-escalation by division isn't logistically feasible, this is the time you get to acknowledge the storm and sit in it with them. And let that be it. As it peaks, know the trough is coming. And be there. It's not easy, and of course it's not ideal. But when you cannot control or take hold of a situation, this is the perfect time to acknowledge what you need: to rest in the chaos and let the storm take care of itself.





You will not get these right every time.
That was never the deal. You will lose the
words, snap, go flat, and come back. The
coming back is the practice. Being with is
not a performance you pass. It is a
direction you keep turning, on the good
days and the wrecked ones, and the
turning is what they feel.





Want the words tuned to your child?

This deck is for every parent. The next ones are tuned to who your child actually is - their Human Design type and the way their feelings work - so the words land even closer. That's the rest of Mothercraft.





A NOTE ON WHAT THIS IS

These cards are tools for being with hard moments, not a cure and not a substitute for medical or mental-health care. They offer relief and a way to stay close, never a fix or a guarantee. If something feels bigger than these moments, reach for real support.

ON OUR USE OF AI

At Mothercraft, we utilize AI to ensure quantity and ease of our output whilst we focus on the more important things: raising our children. What this looks like in practice, for the most part, is that AI is given the role of structuring and running first drafts of our ideas. From there, every word is reviewed - and often highly edited and expanded upon - by a real human with the lived experience of mothering. This is the best compromise we've found for ensuring genuine output, whilst empowering us to be where we personally most want to: with our babies.

Modern neuroscience, ancient wisdom: one craft.

