Tool No. 3: Self-Regulation Cheat Sheet for Parents

You can't teach a child to regulate their emotions while you're drowning in yours. This cheat sheet is here for those moments — when you're about to snap, shut down, overreact, or spiral. It's not a "just stay calm" list. It's a lifeline. A tiny shift that helps you take one breath and lead from the front.

Step 1: Regulate Your Body: If your nervous system is lit up, you're not thinking clearly. Start here:

- Shake your hands loose for 15 seconds
- Drink a sip of water (slowly, like you're teaching your body it's safe)
- Clench and release your fists, your jaw, your shoulders
- Place a hand on your heart or belly — feel it rise and fall
- Take three long exhales (longer out than in)

Step 2: Talk Yourself Down: Say it out loud or in your head. These are regulating thoughts — not gaslighting ones.

- "I don't need to match their energy to lead."
- "This is hard — not dangerous."
- "My job isn't to control. It's to guide."
- "I can pause. I can come back."
- "We are both allowed to feel this — and we will get through it."
- "I'm the grown-up. I go first."

Step 3: Choose a Next Step: When you feel safe enough, lead with steadiness.

- Walk away for 30 seconds if needed
- Lower your voice instead of raising it
- Use silence to reset the room
- Use a boundary phrase from Tool #2

Come back later and repair if you lost it — repair is powerful parenting

— Melissa | Parenting Dirty