

ATLAS ACADEMY · CAREGIVER BRIEFING

Feelings Unplugged · Parent Guide

OPEN ACCESS · SCHOLAR STUDIO

A compassionate companion for caregivers supporting adolescents through identity work, survival contexts, and mental health journeys. Built as open curriculum so every family can access evidence-based tools without a paywall.

Optional family illustration / stock photo

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Why This Guide Exists

HEARTBEAT

Adolescents are navigating the steepest brain rewiring of their lives while the world expects them to perform adulthood. Your presence—not perfection—builds the safety they need to feel, iterate, and thrive.

OPEN ACCESS PLEDGE

Atlas Academy keeps caregiver frameworks free to download, teach, and translate. Pay-what-you-can contributions fund youth co-researchers, language access, and family stipends. Share how you adapt it: atlas@feelingsunplugged.space.

Reference: SAMHSA Trauma-Informed Framework (2014); Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2011).

Core Principles

Hold Psychological Safety

Validate feelings before problem-solving.

Separate behavior from worth (“You’re not bad; we’re going to solve this together”).

Ask permission before offering advice.

Mirror, Don’t Manage

Reflect: “I hear how heavy this feels.”

Offer choice: “Listen, brainstorm, or sit together?”

Use rituals (tea, walks, playlists) instead of lectures.

Co-Regulate First

Slow breathing,
grounding questions,
sensory anchors.

Model self-reset: “I need
two minutes to breathe
so I can hear you fully.”

Build calm kits together.

Repair Often

Apologize with specificity
 (“I snapped; you
 deserved calm”).

Ask what would help
 heal the rupture.

Schedule follow-ups
 (“Let’s check back
 tomorrow”).

Conversation Scripts

DAILY CHECK-INS

Arrival: “What’s one high and one hard moment today?”

When emotions spike: “Do you want company, a hug, water, or space?”

Repairing: “I reacted from fear. Can we redo this when you’re ready?”

Planning: “What support would make next week feel doable?”

BOUNDARY LANGUAGE

“I care and need ten minutes to regulate so I can listen well.”

“Let’s pick this up after dinner so I’m not half-listening.”

“I love you. I can’t be your only support. Let’s add one more trusted adult.”

Identity-Affirming Support · Part I

BIPOC Youth

Validate racial stress and code-switching as labor.

Protect time with affirming communities.

Share your own experiences navigating bias and survival.

LGBTQIA+ Youth

Mirror pronouns/names exactly as offered.

Create a safety map (affirming vs. draining spaces).

Connect to queer mental health supports and peer networks.

Identity-Affirming Support · Part II

Neurodivergent Youth

Normalize stims, sensory needs, shutdowns.

Co-create scripts for requesting accommodations.

Celebrate focused interests as brilliance, not distraction.

Immigrant + First-Gen Families

Honor bicultural navigation as real work.

Translate expectations; clarify what's negotiable.

Share migration stories so resilience feels inherited, not demanded.

Insert cultural affirmation imagery / quote

Crisis Response Workflow

IMMEDIATE STEPS

- Stay near; reduce stimuli where possible.
- Remove immediate harm (unsafe objects, unlocked car keys).
- Call appropriate crisis support (local responder or 988).
- Use calm, concrete language: “We’re getting help; I’m with you.”

AFTER STABILIZATION

- Document triggers, supports requested, next steps.
- Inform trusted adults, share resources, plan follow-up.
- Schedule a repair conversation and update safety plans.

Caregiver Nervous-System Practices

Micro Rituals

Two minutes outdoors between transitions.

Somatic release: shake, stretch, paced breathing.

Voice memo to trusted adult; ask for mirrors, not fixes.

Boundaries to Model

Office hours for emotional check-ins.

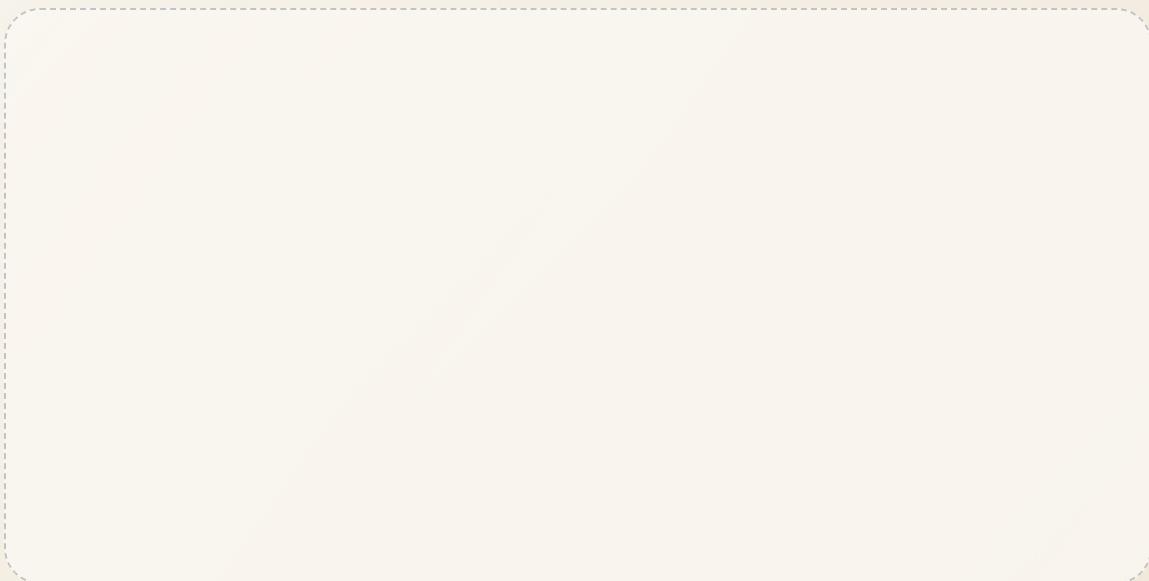
Shared tech-free rest windows.

Limit after-hours response; involve professionals when needed.

Caring for yourself models regulation pathways and prevents compassion fatigue.

Field Notes & Futures

Use this space to capture adaptations, resources, or scripts your family creates. Email highlights to atlas@feelingsunplugged.space so we can fold them into future releases.

A large, irregularly shaped dashed-line rectangle occupies the center of the page, designed to look like a hand-drawn sketch. It is intended for users to write their own notes or draw pictures related to the "Field Notes & Futures" section.

Resources & Citations

Core References

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-Determination Theory.

SAMHSA (2014). Trauma-Informed Care Framework.

Martín-Baró, I. (1994). Liberation Psychology.

Porges, S. W. (2011). Polyvagal Theory.

Suggested Resources

Parenting for Liberation · parentingforliberation.org

Gender Spectrum · genderspectrum.org

Atlas Academy · feelingsunplugged.space/atlas

Caregiver Hotlines & local supports

Credits & License

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