



BEING
SAFETY

“All people have the right to live and grow in healthy and safe homes and communities, free from the threat of violence, abuse and discrimination.

All people, families and communities are worthy of dignity, respect and safety.”



Women's Voices: Securing Our Rights; Securing our futures
Wiyi Yani U Thangani, 2020 p. 131

This resource is written for, with and by mothers who are (or have been) parenting while subjected to violence and abuse by a co-parenting father.



For clarity, we use gendered terms of 'she' (for mother) and 'he' (for father) to describe who is doing what to whom, not as identity terms.



This resource includes victims' experiences of, responses to, and resistance against violence and abuse.

Context and limitations:

We acknowledge that the definition of 'parent' is political, practical and personal and that parenting practices can have different meaning across cultures, contexts and generations.

This resource is not representative of:

- all parents or all parenting practices
- all lived experiences of children and parents
- all system responders and responses.

We acknowledge that not all fathers use violence and that not all mothers are non-

Purpose of this resource

This reflection resource is designed to:

- Acknowledge that all parenting is 'imperfect' and involves responsibility, guidance and nurture.
- Reveal there is no place for the perpetration of violence and abuse in 'imperfect parenting/caring'. Violence and abuse limits living, hurts relationships and connections.
- Highlight the responses, resistance and resourcefulness involved in parenting when subjected to violence and abuse.
- Ask responders to change the status quo, to notice his use of violence and abuse and to hold open more space for safety and living.

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IMPERFECT PARENTING

'Perfect parenting'

There is no such thing
as 'perfect parenting'.



Perpetrating abuse

There is no place for
the use of violence and
abuse in 'imperfect
parenting'

'Imperfect parenting'

Parenting children is an
imperfect endeavour.

Introduction

When fathers commit violence and abuse against mothers, they are committing abuse against child/ren.

When fathers perpetrate violence and abuse (in any form) this undermines safety for everyone in the family. Relationships are undermined and constrained for and between all family members who are trying to create safety.

Yet, mothers and children effortfully live in ways to protect and reconnect with each other - within the limited and moving 'spaces' they are confined to salvage or create.



About Parenting

A literature review by Virasiri, Yunibhand and Chaiyawat, revealed that parenting has three defining attributes as follows.

1. Process, activity and interaction regarding to rearing and educating a child.
2. Being undertaken by parent/parents or parental figures in everyday life events.
3. Aiming at promoting a child's growth, development and well-being.

Explicitly, parenting is a positive, purposive, nurturing activity and interaction process which is specifically aimed at promoting a child's welfare or ensuring the survival and development of children.

It is the activity of providing support, care, and love.

Reference:

Virasiri, Saovakon & Yunibhand, Jintana & Chaiyawat, Waraporn. (2011). Parenting: What are the critical attributes?. Journal of the Medical Association of Thailand = Chotmai het thangphaet. 94. 1109-16.

Parenting involves
responsibility,
guidance,
and **nurturing**



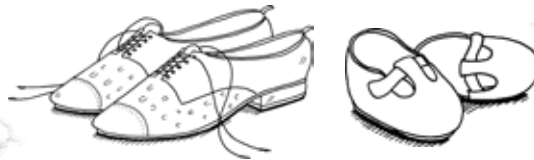
Reference:

Virasiri, Saovakon & Yunibhand, Jintana & Chaiyawat, Waraporn. (2011). Parenting: What are the critical attributes?. Journal of the Medical Association of Thailand = Chotmai het thangphaet. 94. 1109-16.

"It takes a village to
raise a child."



...Yet neoliberalism
undermines our mothering and
leaves us with a village of
invented 'experts' and 'judges'.



...and 'individualism' forces
us to mother alone.



My efforts to be responsible, guiding and nurturing are
measured against an impossible construction of what a
'parent' is supposed to be and be able to do.

I am left to mother alone. I am measured for my aloneness.



HIS USE OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

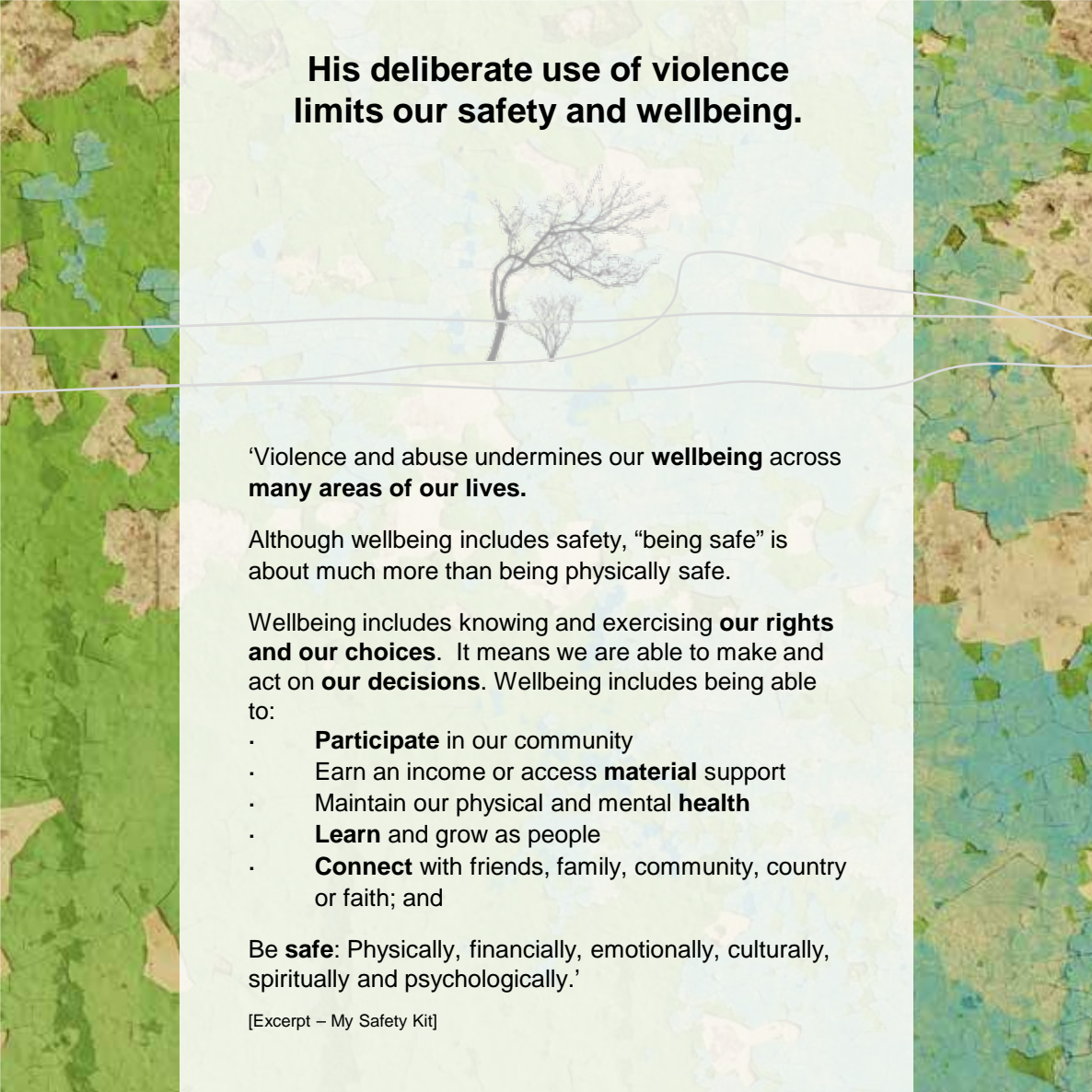
There is **no place** for domestic, family and sexualised violence and abuse in 'imperfect parenting'.

Yet within many families around the world violence and abuse is perpetrated by people with parenting/caring responsibilities and excused as 'just part of being an imperfect parent'.

The difference between perpetrating abuse and 'imperfect parenting' matters.

Systems abuse and systems generated abuse can further harm and limit living, safety and connection.

The following chapters reveal how the perpetration of violence and abuse by a father, limits living and hurts relationships.



His deliberate use of violence limits our safety and wellbeing.

‘Violence and abuse undermines our **wellbeing** across **many areas of our lives**.

Although wellbeing includes safety, “being safe” is about much more than being physically safe.

Wellbeing includes knowing and exercising **our rights and our choices**. It means we are able to make and act on **our decisions**. Wellbeing includes being able to:

- **Participate** in our community
- Earn an income or access **material** support
- Maintain our physical and mental **health**
- **Learn** and grow as people
- **Connect** with friends, family, community, country or faith; and

Be **safe**: Physically, financially, emotionally, culturally, spiritually and psychologically.’

[Excerpt – My Safety Kit]

His deliberate use of violence in many forms hurts and harms us.

Sexual violence

Physical violence

Reproductive coercion or abuse

Emotional & psychological abuse

Economic Abuse

Stalking and intimidation

Technology facilitated abuse

Spiritual or religious abuse

Systems abuse

“

He separates us from each other.

He creates distress.

He isolates us.

He coerces us to secrecy.

He creates webs to contain us.

He sets up traps and tricks us.

**He uses our care for each other against us
to hurt each other.**

He hides his deliberate actions.

He denies his responsibilities.

He manipulates what others see.

He moves the lines.

He closes in.

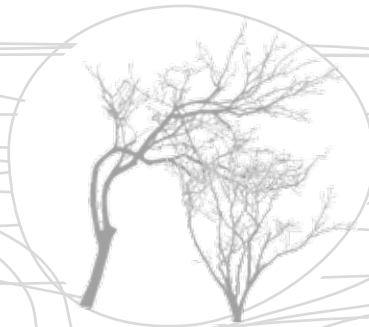


We are hurt.



”

And we are constrained.





OUR RELATIONSHIPS


“Parenting is a dynamic bi-directional process from parent to child as well as from child to parent.



**A continuous series
of interactions.”**

Reference:

Bodman & Peterson emphasize that parenting is a dynamic bi-directional process from parent to child as well as from child to parent (33)



His deliberate use of violence and abuse

hurts our relationships.

his use of violence

isolating

dominating

intimidating

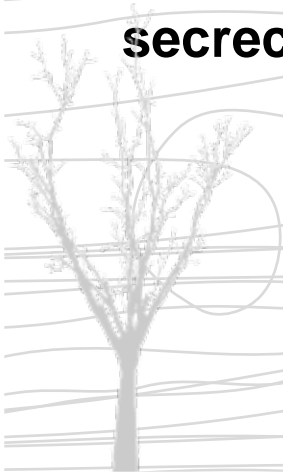
Shaping our beliefs and
perceptions of each other

obscured from seeing all his strategies

secrecy

dividing and deceiving us
disconnecting us

keeping us far apart





“ Our deep frustration.

Our despair.

Our greatest sorrow.



”

“

**His use of violence,
designed to divide us,
hurts our relationships
and we never stop finding
ways to respond.**

**We
grieve.**

**We protect and connect
moment by moment.**

**Imperfect safety.
Unfinished compassion. ”**


No relationship is fixed or unchanging.
Our relationship to the world, others and each other changes.



**“ Our relationship cannot
be defined.**

It is more than ‘protection’.
And more than what can be seen or studied.
It’s ours. Our connection.
Imperfect. Unfinished. Living, Responding...

”



Systems abuse and
system generated abuse
limits our living.



He uses the threat of involving systems because he knows the scrutiny and measures will be on me.

"I am forced to manage and 'fear' systems a long time before I am in actual contact with them, or even if it never comes to that"

"I have to be poised and I know I will be scrutinised."

"I have to budget for the threat of an unknown cost."

"I have to build evidence for the threat of a judgement made about my day to day living"

These threats of involving systems cost him nothing. They cost me everything. Limiting how I live. Changing how I look ahead.

Systems generated harm...

Blaming me for not stopping the violence.

Sexist and racist algorithms

Colluding with his blaming tactics.

You stop working with me when I don't fit your service criteria.

Making safety plans with me but not with him.

Shaming me in meetings makes it unsafe for me to attend.

Overlooking my children's dignity when you ask me questions in front of them.

Not reading the full case file, and just making judgements about me and my mothering.

Making case plans that do not address his violence and set us up to fail.

Mis-representing the facts.

Attributing his use of violence to his mental health or mine.

Supervising my contact visits with the children as if I was the one who did the harm.

Confusing violent resistance as violence.

Taking my children away after I tried for so long to keep them safe, and yet his use of violence is evidence used against me.

Making me choose between trying to survive his violence and the risk of my kids being taken away abused in care where I will have no control at all.

Not offering him a service because he is 'dangerous' but making me do tons of parenting courses.

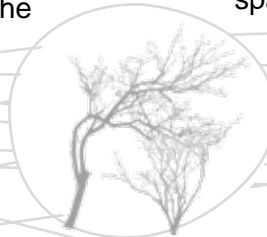
Calling me 'non-compliant' when I don't want to work with services that don't understand what we are living through.

Please understand...

More scrutiny/monitoring on me (and my children)....

...further constrains the

spaces we live within.



Responders expect us to show 'fear' in a certain way – 'not too much' and 'not too little' and at the 'right time'.

We face impossible opposing expectations.

Responders assume that when we are not expressing 'fear' this means an absence of danger.

These expectations and assumptions overlook and underestimate our reasons to fear...

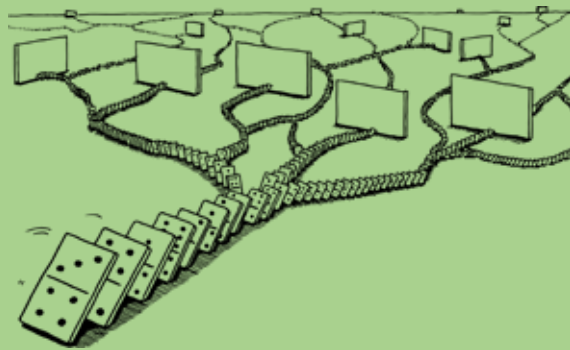




OUR REASONS TO FEAR

Many victims-survivors of domestic, family and sexualised violence report specific **reasons** to fear based on their **expert knowledge and understanding of the perpetrator's threats, behaviours and the kinds of social responses anticipated from others.**

(Harper, 2022)



Some examples from published literature are included in the following pages.

Many victims-survivors have reasons to fear perpetrators' ongoing and escalating use of violence against them, their children, other family members including violence against animals and damage to property in both the short and longer term.

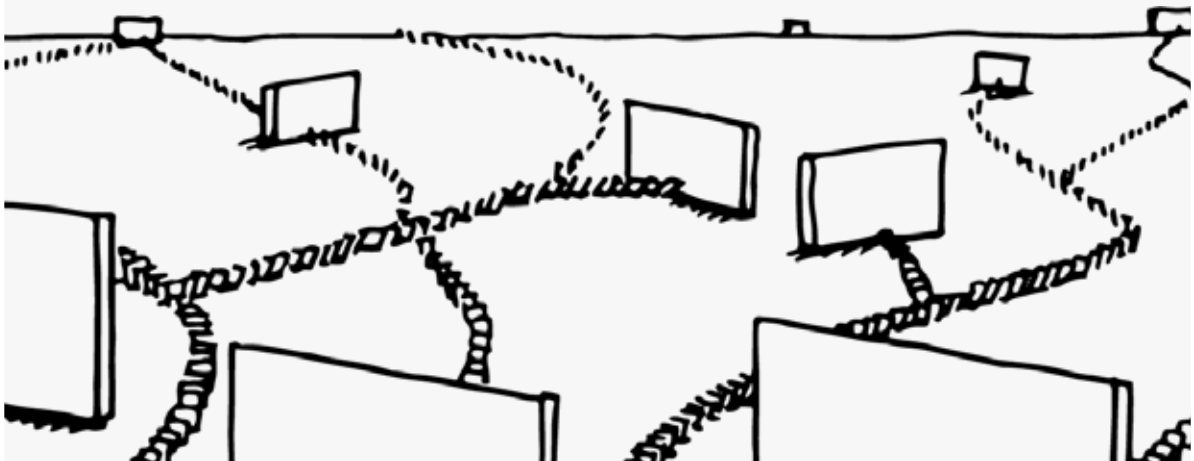
Laing & Humphries, 2013; Shaqiri & Osmani, 2020

Victim-survivors often fear that the perpetrator will assault, humiliate, degrade, entrap, injure or kill them or a loved one.

Harper, 2022; Dziegielewski, Campbell & Turnage, 2005

Victims-survivors also report fearing possible assaults and abuse from perpetrators' friends and family members especially in the immediate aftermath of leaving a perpetrator and/or after formally reporting abuse.

Evans & Feder, 2016; Felson et al., 2005



Victims-survivors describe anticipating harmful responses from others, such as the fear of not being believed and of no action being taken against the perpetrator.

Voce &Boxall, 2018; Shackel, 2009

Victims-survivors also fear being blamed for the violence which may cause or exacerbate existing adversities such as the fear of experiencing housing injustices and homelessness.

Roschelle, 2008; Willse, 2016

Victims-survivors fear of experiencing economic insecurity and significant financial loss.

Zufferey, Chung, Franzway, Wendt & Moulding, 2016

Victim-survivors fear losing work and career progression, the social stigma associated with being identified as a victim-survivor and the possible harm to their reputation and other negative social consequences.

Harper, 2022; Voce &Boxall, 2018

Victims-survivors fear of receiving inadequate child support.



Swanberg & Logan, 2005

Victims-survivors fear of removal of children.



Patrick, Cook & McKenzie, 2008

Victims-survivors from socially, politically, and economically disenfranchised communities, often fear disclosing violence and abuse due to the potential for racist, classist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, ageist responses against them, their families and communities.

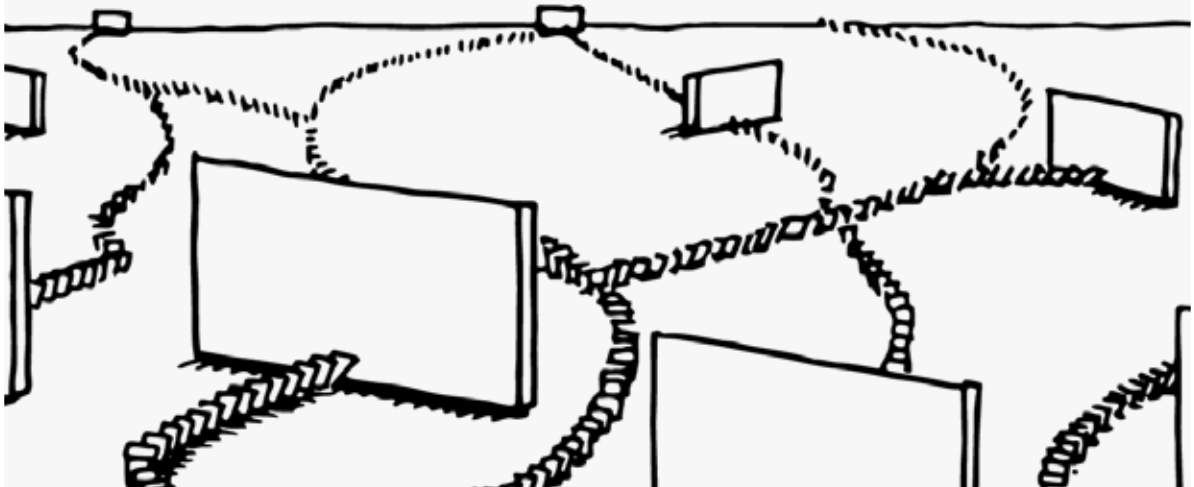
Laing & Humphries, 2013

For example, Black Indigenous People of Colour who are victim-survivors often fear the use of racist Police harassment against their communities and reinforcement of racial stereotypes.

Storer, Rodriguez, & Franklin, 2021;
Ghafournia & Easteal, 2021.

Victims-survivors fear of being misidentified as the perpetrator.

Lewinson, Thomas & White, 2014



Victims-survivors fear of not being taken seriously by Police.

Wydall, & Zerk, 2021

Victims-survivors fear of being criminalised and incarcerated.

Birdsey & Snowball, 2013

Victims-survivors fear of losing custody of children or who are ordered to live with or maintain contact with a perpetrator due to Court Orders.

Francia, L., Millear, P. & Sharman, R, 2020; Roberts, D., Chamberlain, P. & Delfabbro, P, 2015

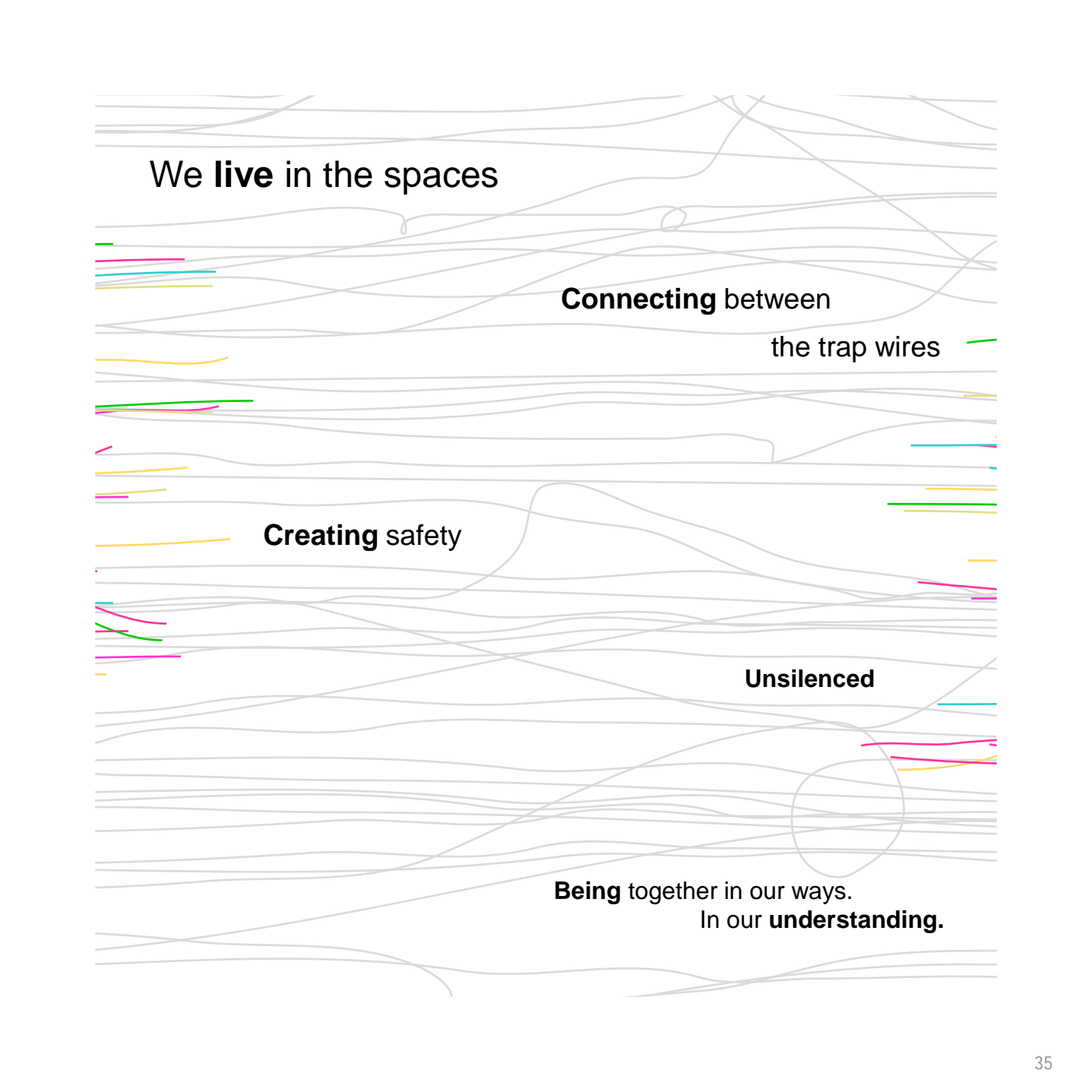


Victims-survivors have very many reasons to fear that are specific to their personal, social, cultural, economic, geographic and political realities. Yet responders often do not seek to understand victim-survivors' lived expertise concerning their reasons to fear and their strategies for resisting and surviving violence, abuse and injustices.

(Coates & Wade, 2007)

OUR RESISTANCE





We **live** in the spaces

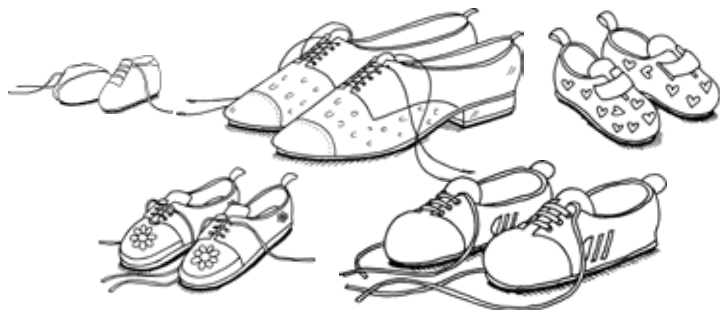
Connecting between
the trap wires

Creating safety

Unsilenced

Being together in our ways.
In our **understanding**.

“ We connect in codes.
We wonder and wish.
We use words and silences.
We adjust and invent.
We communicate in ways without words.
We languish. We fear.
We fear for each other.
We anger.
We manage each others dignity.
We use all our energy.
We monitor others and manage our expression.
We lightly walk within the lines.
We can't rest.
Yet we remember.
And we know.
And we create.
We love.”



Holding on may only

be in

the privacy

of our minds.



Our resistance knows no end...

“I’ll never stop protecting you.”

“I’ll keep finding a way through.”

“I’ll keep finding the least harm for you.”



An imperfect letter



Dear every child,

What you see

what you know and what you wonder

what you notice and do and don't do

what you say and what you don't say

is so important

All that you have been treasuring

Everything and everyone you have been
caring for

All that you try to protect and take care with

What you hold on to is your gift to the world

What you value is valuable

What matters is you

The ways in which you are understood
and misunderstood matter

What others choose to notice or not see,
to do and not do matters to you

What you experience that doesn't feel
good, or is confusing

Where you wish things were different

Where you need and rely on caring
choices from others

What you do and don't do when hurt or
hurting

All matters

Where you find to go, what you do to find
spaces

to take care of what is yours

to be as you are.


You matter

I may not know you. We may not meet.
But this knowing we share.

From us.



OUR REFLECTIONS & RESOURCEFULNESS



**His perpetration
of harm...
... is not my
'failure to parent or
protect'.**

"The violence and abuse he perpetrates creates a 'wedge' between how I want to parent and how I have to parent."

"His use of violence forces me to have to tend to immediate safety concerns just to do everyday things."



"Because of the violence and abuse used against us, the way I want to parent can be an impossibility outside of my control and only involve unhelpful or unwanted options."


"The space left is so small that I am having to strategise and parent within these spaces for the immediate and for the long term."

"He is debilitating any strategy I take. And I get blamed for the actions (or inactions) of the perpetrator."

I am blamed that I am not 'protective enough', 'attached enough' or 'doing enough'."



I am set up to fail at parenting and measured for failure.

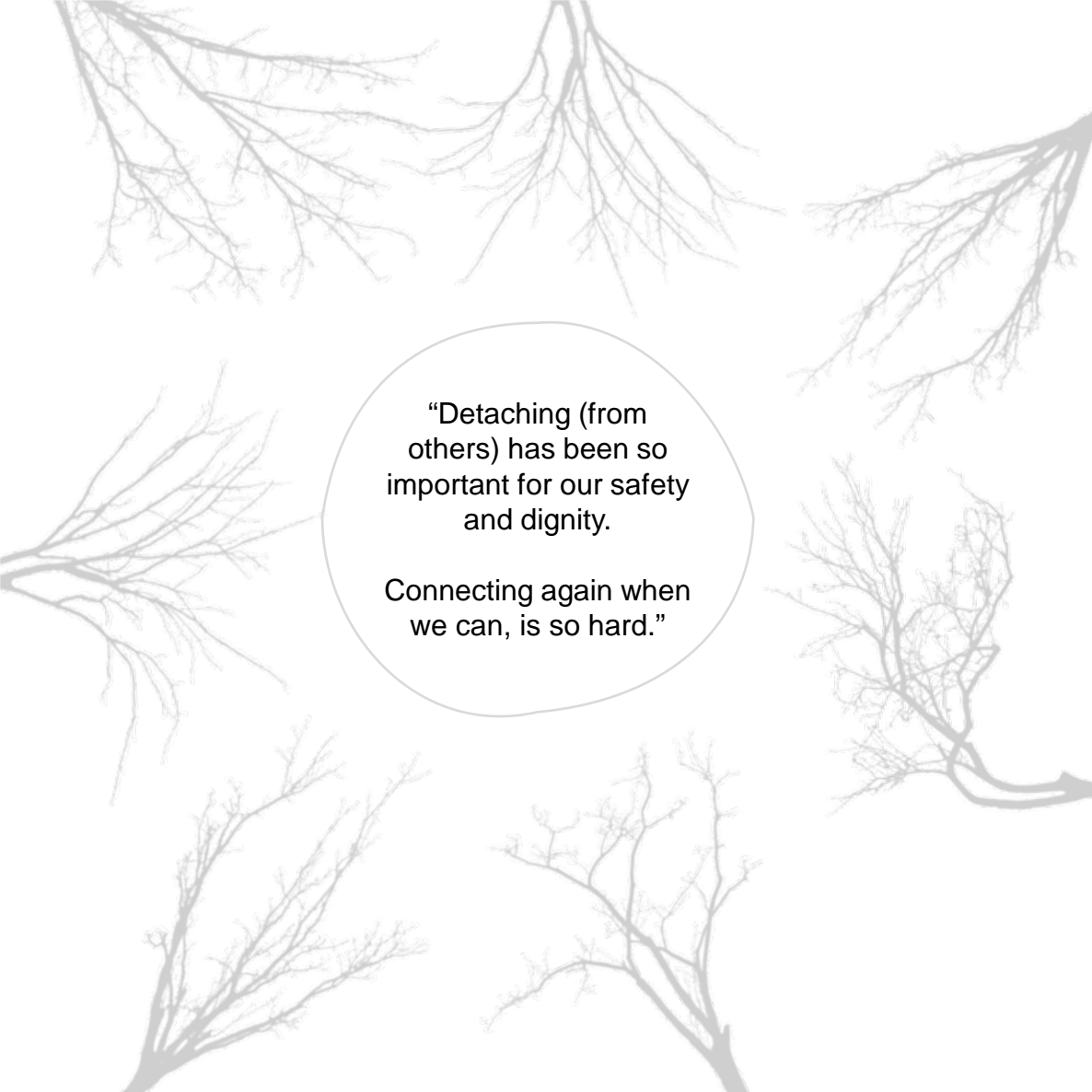


**His efforts to
isolate us
... is not our
'failure to connect'
with each other or
with others.**

“It’s difficult to parent alone. We are not meant to.


But if our village leaves us, we have to.”



A circular graphic with a central text box and six branching tree-like structures around it. The structures are arranged in a circle, with three on the left and three on the right. The central text box is a white circle with a thin black border. The text inside is black and centered. The tree-like structures are made of thin, dark grey lines branching out from a central point, resembling a stylized tree or a network of connections. The overall design is minimalist and symbolic.

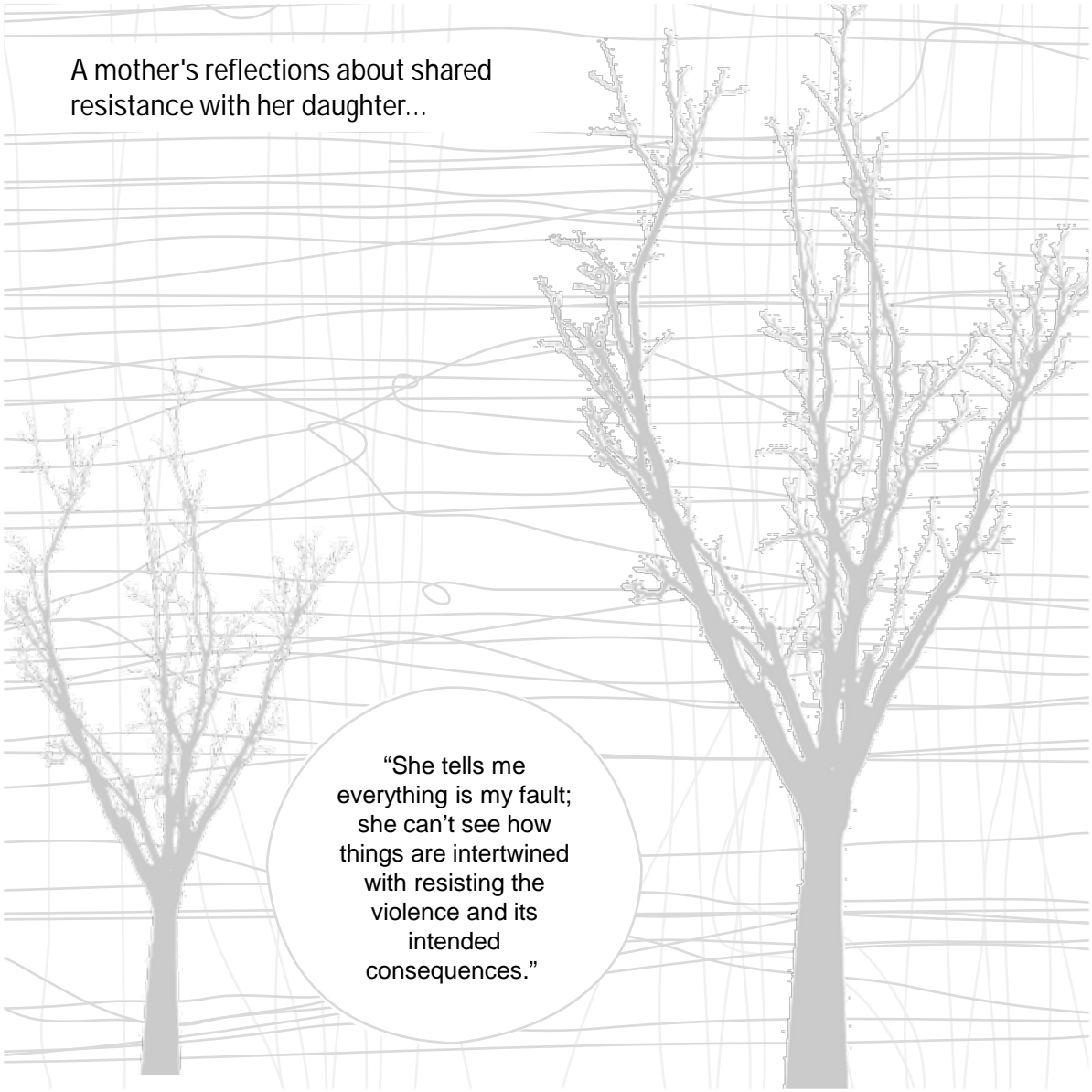
“Detaching (from
others) has been so
important for our safety
and dignity.

Connecting again when
we can, is so hard.”

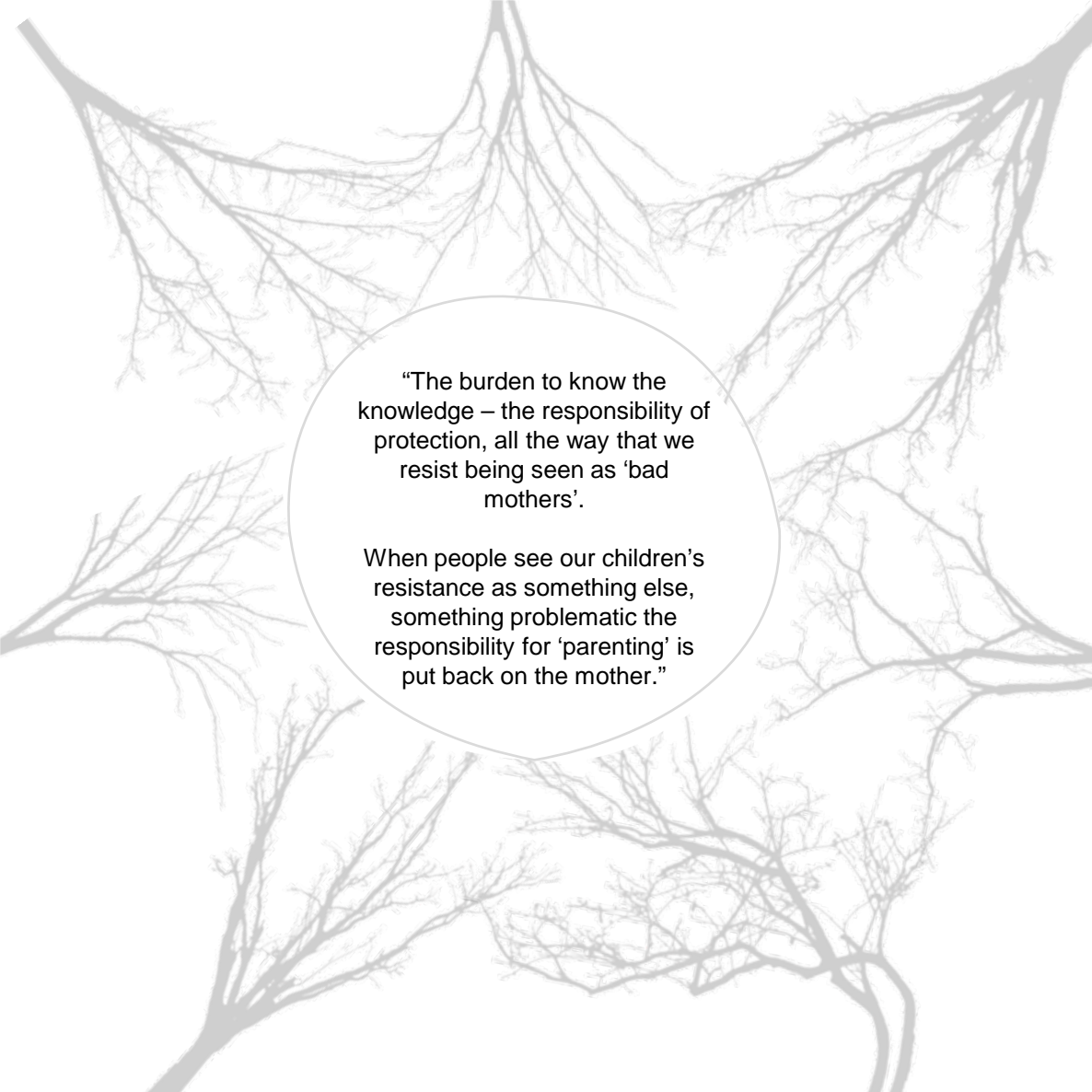


**What you can't see in
our lives, and what
we don't say about
our lives... doesn't
mean we are passive
or don't understand
our lives and needs.**

A mother's reflections about shared
resistance with her daughter...

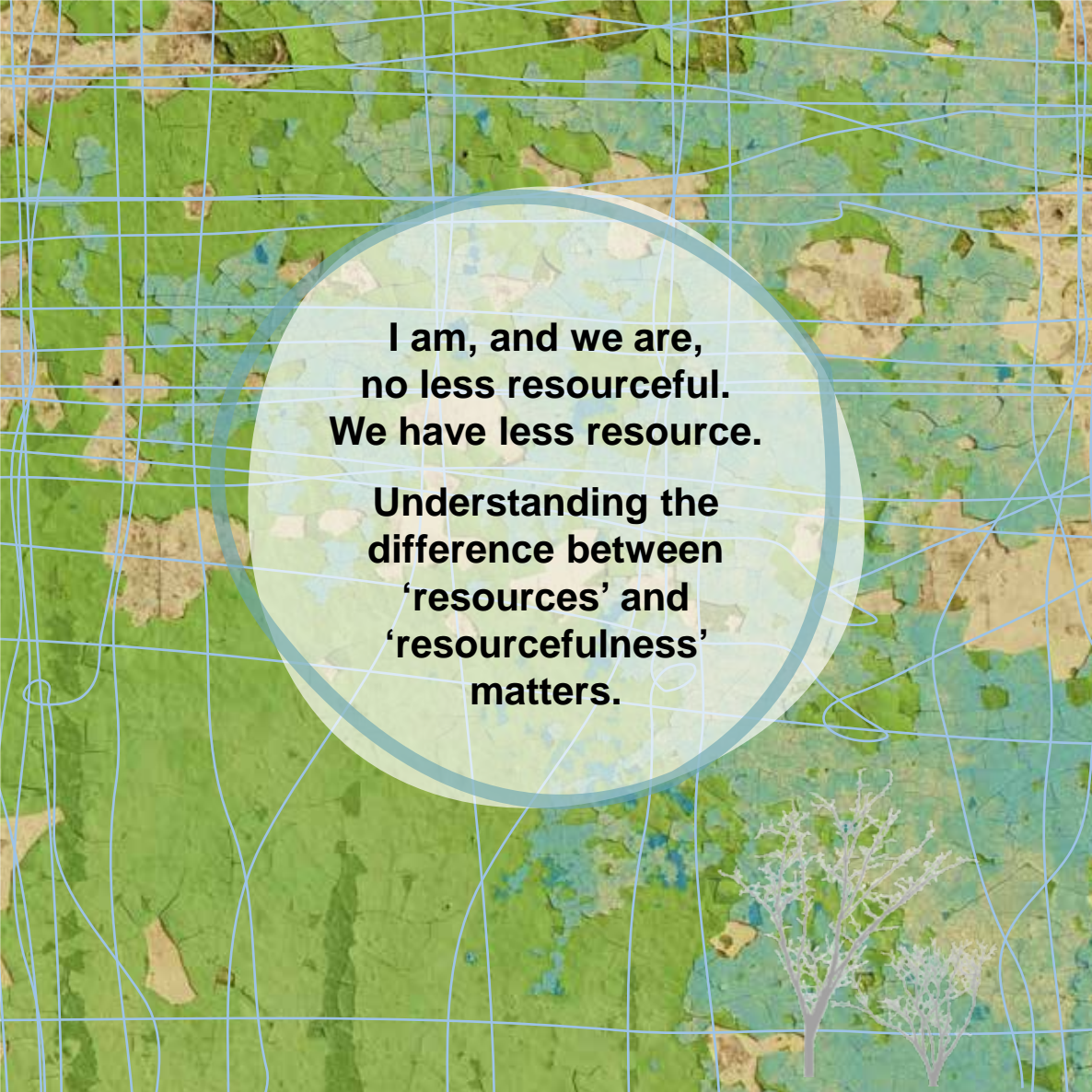


"She tells me
everything is my fault;
she can't see how
things are intertwined
with resisting the
violence and its
intended
consequences."



“The burden to know the knowledge – the responsibility of protection, all the way that we resist being seen as ‘bad mothers’.

When people see our children’s resistance as something else, something problematic the responsibility for ‘parenting’ is put back on the mother.”



**I am, and we are,
no less resourceful.
We have less resource.**

**Understanding the
difference between
'resources' and
'resourcefulness'
matters.**

"Because of his use of violence and abuse my resources are depleted."

"Sometimes I am saddened that I am not being the parent I want to be – because I can't."

My access to useful resources is limited and undermines the way I parent."

"The ways I parent reflect my limited options – these options are not always my preferred choices."

"How I use resources may be **monitored and scrutinised** by the person abusing us, and/or scrutinised by systems measuring us."



Our resourcefulness takes so much energy...

"How can I fulfil all my responsibilities to my child/ren when under targeted attack and under supported?"


"The abuse gets worse over time. I can't sustain this on my own."

"I try to cook better meals, but I can only stand in the kitchen for some minutes."

"How can I fulfil all my responsibilities when its such physical labour, and I can barely deal with the pain in my body. Meds aren't enough."

"They say if you comply with school, meds, therapy, cook meals etc. then we can offer you support. They have it all upside down. I need safety first to be able to do these things....."

"The deadlines are real and with catastrophic consequences.... The struggle to 'comply' with these deadlines imposed by services/systems as if it's helpful. It's asking more."



**My low energy
does not mean I
have low care.**

Nurturing needs resources

When and where can I find ways to nurture between feeling depleted and being monitored?

How will I sustain this over time?

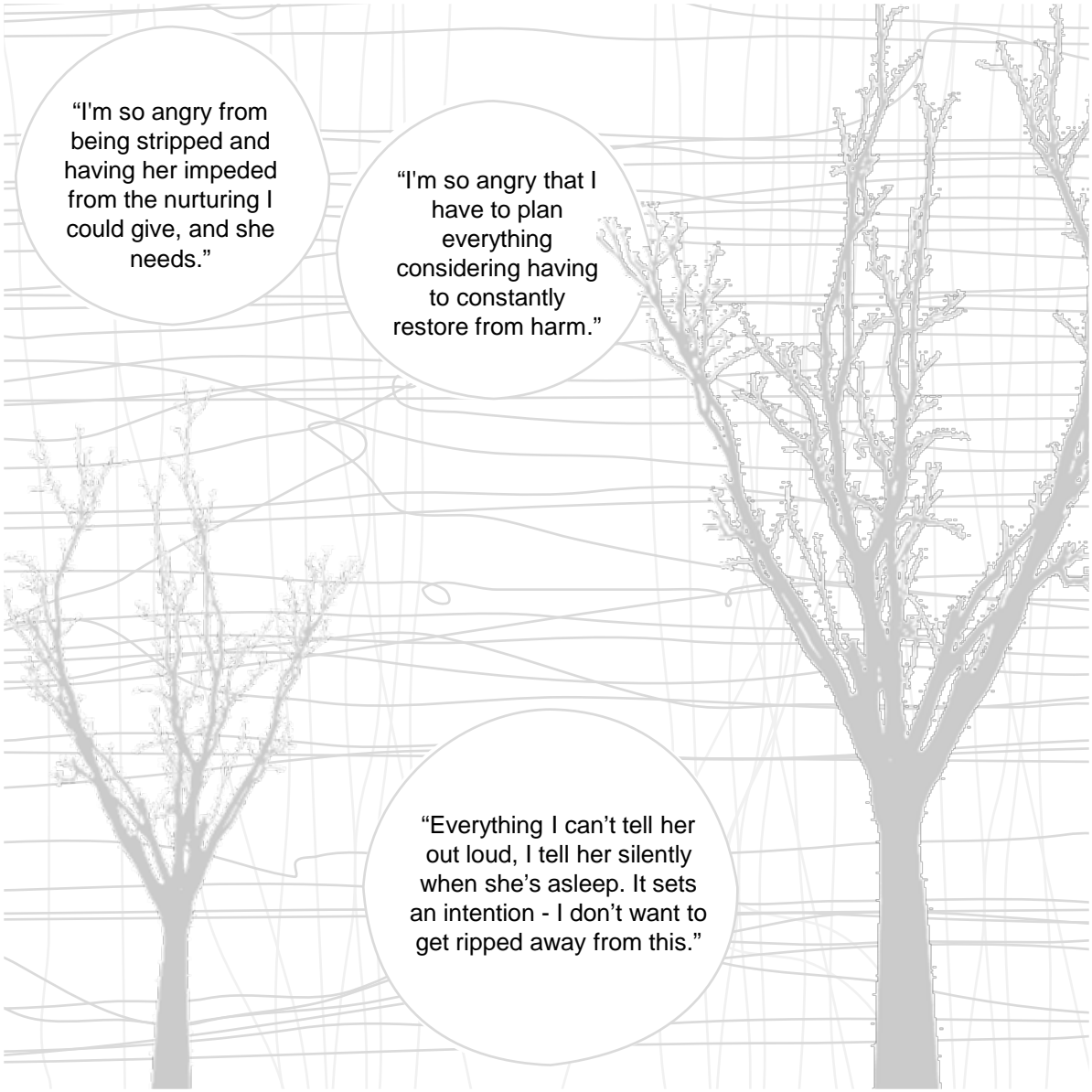
How do I find ways to nurture when he is deliberately undermining my efforts and I am depleted?

How much can I be targeted in my mothering and still be able to do what is needed?

Every day I am resourceful to nurture even when I am depleted and undermined by the violence and abuse.

I create ways to be nurturing even while subjected to the threats and cruelty of his use of violence and abuse.

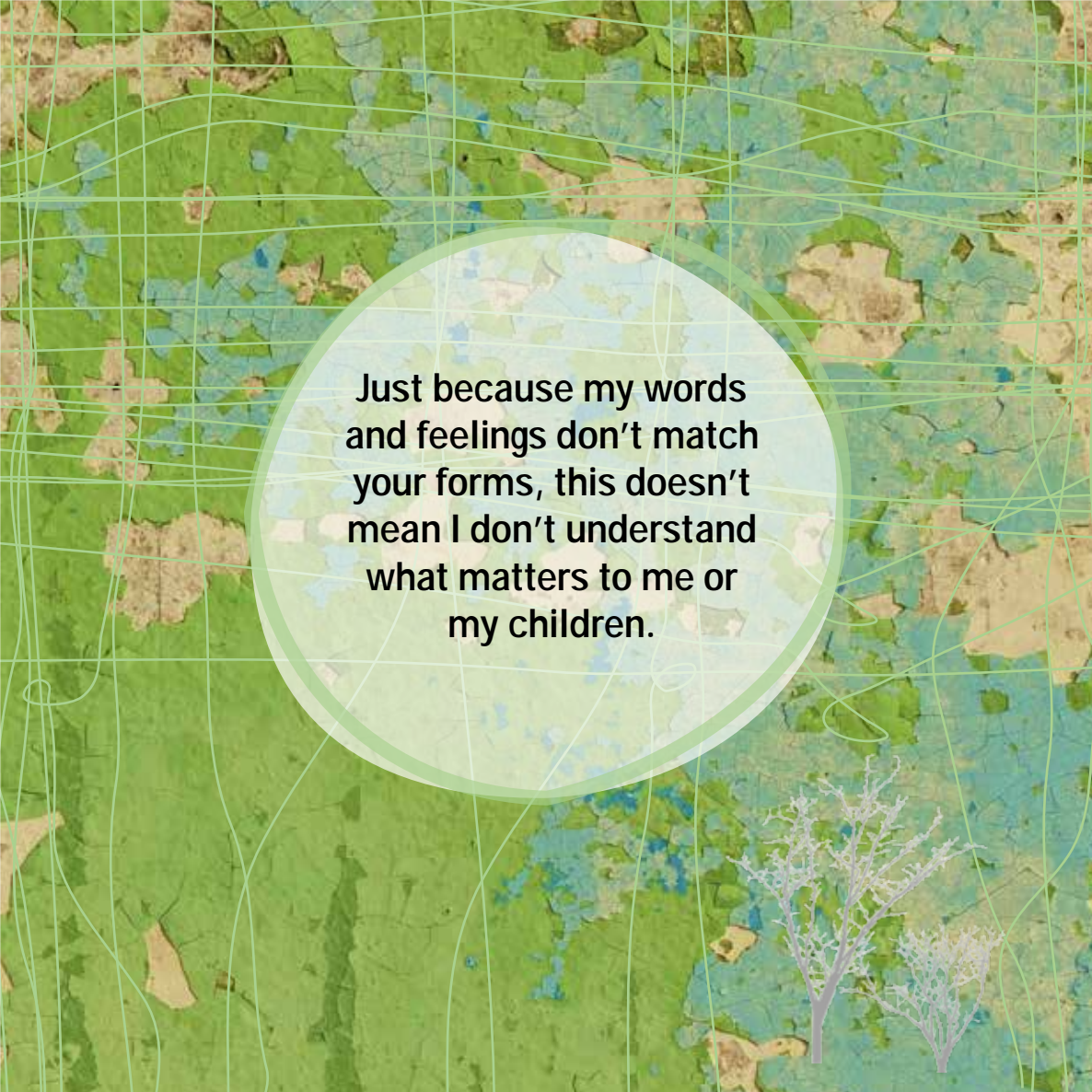
My nurture is visible and sometimes invisible as part of building safety.



"I'm so angry from
being stripped and
having her impeded
from the nurturing I
could give, and she
needs."

"I'm so angry that I
have to plan
everything
considering having
to constantly
restore from harm."

"Everything I can't tell her
out loud, I tell her silently
when she's asleep. It sets
an intention - I don't want to
get ripped away from this."

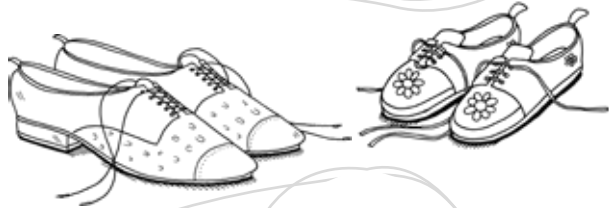


**Just because my words
and feelings don't match
your forms, this doesn't
mean I don't understand
what matters to me or
my children.**

“Every time there's some space between us (from him), an avalanche of grief and rage shows up, there is not enough space for the build-up over time.”

“I can't only make a limited space and spacing for her to feel and be..... There is not enough space or time for her to let it out and safely i.e., where she doesn't end up more pathologised.”

“I can't control space and time and I can't source that space on my own. There is so little space in-between his use of violence and in between being measured by systems.
We have less time and space to feel and to be.”

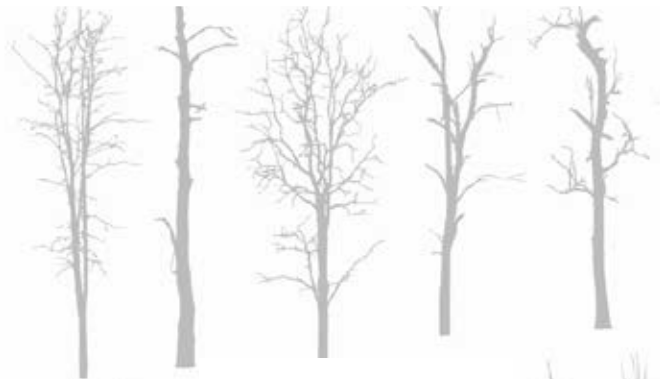


“Mum, but why does he want to hurt me?”

“I think about affirming actions to nurture and guide. I have to come up with ways to act and speak that don’t get caught up in having to defend ourselves from his attacks on our safety structures.”

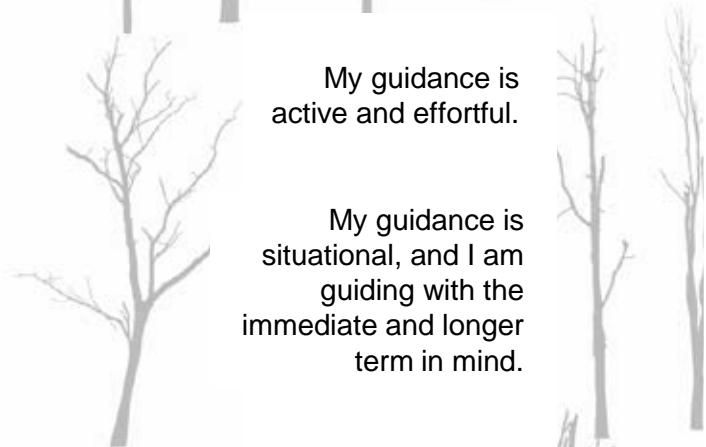
“What’s the best option for her and us right now? I have to think about the long term?”


“She asks questions I can’t answer from fear of hurting her with the truth and fear from systems saying I am imposing on her.”



My guidance is active and effortful.

My guidance is situational, and I am guiding with the immediate and longer term in mind.





**While he evades
responsibility, I fulfil
many responsibilities –
doing all I can to stop,
prevent and reduce the
violence while also
being the responsible
parent.**

Iways expecting me to be reliably responsible...

"I experience socially imposed "Mothers' guilt"— how much is going on versus how much I am working out and making work."

"I take the responsibility for the child/ren when people who are actually responsible don't. I do this to reduce the damage/harm."

"I take on more responsibility for the safety of my children from the damage done by people not taking on their responsibility."

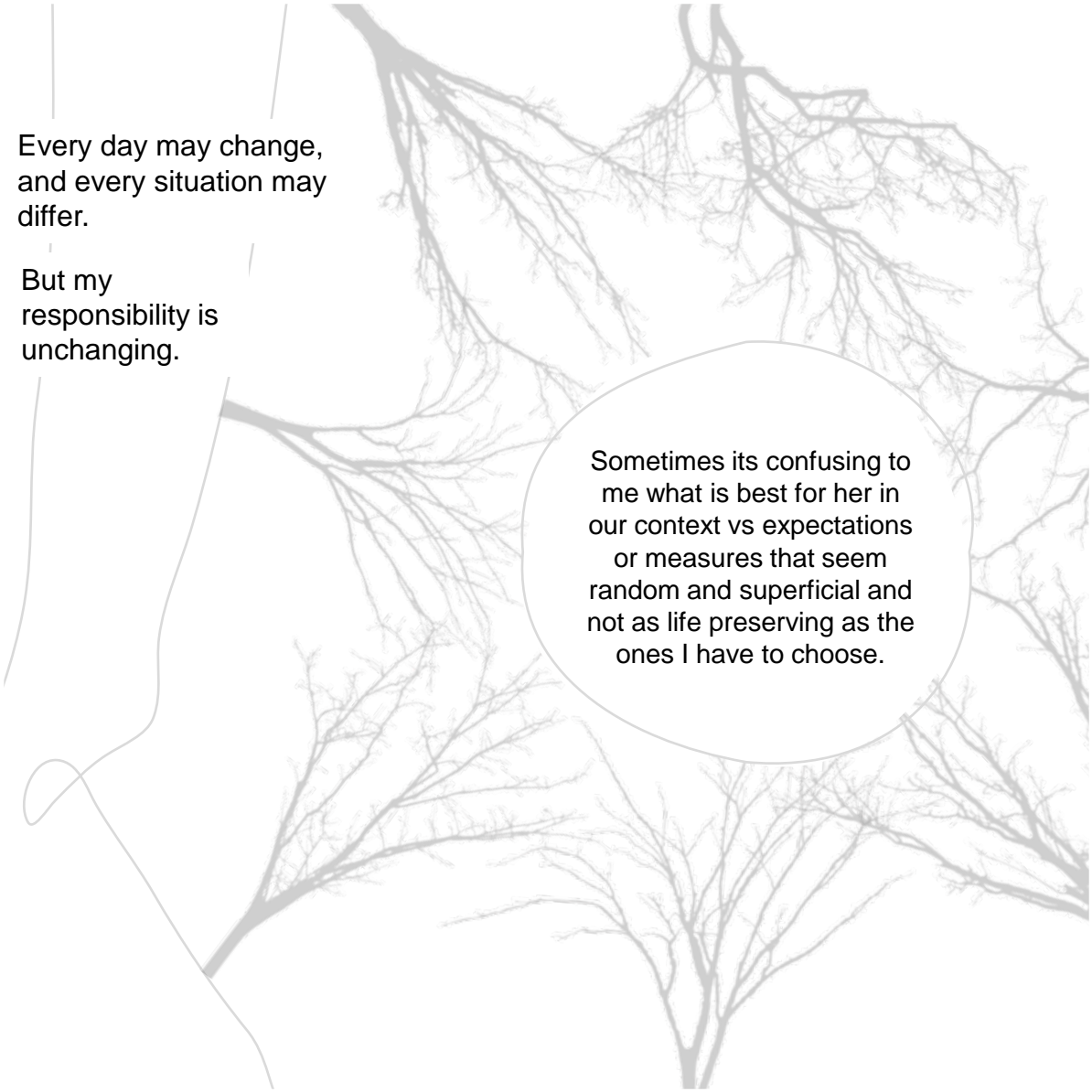


"I have to take on the responsibility (an impossibility) when it is not my responsibility. And then judged to fail against an impossible standard for something that wasn't mine to begin with."

"That's not your problem – you shouldn't take care of that" but it is going to harm/hurt my kid I am not just going to let go."

"Like an idea that by letting go of responsibility he is just going to take that up?"

"There are many impossible standards that don't belong to my mothering or protection."



Every day may change,
and every situation may
differ.

But my
responsibility is
unchanging.

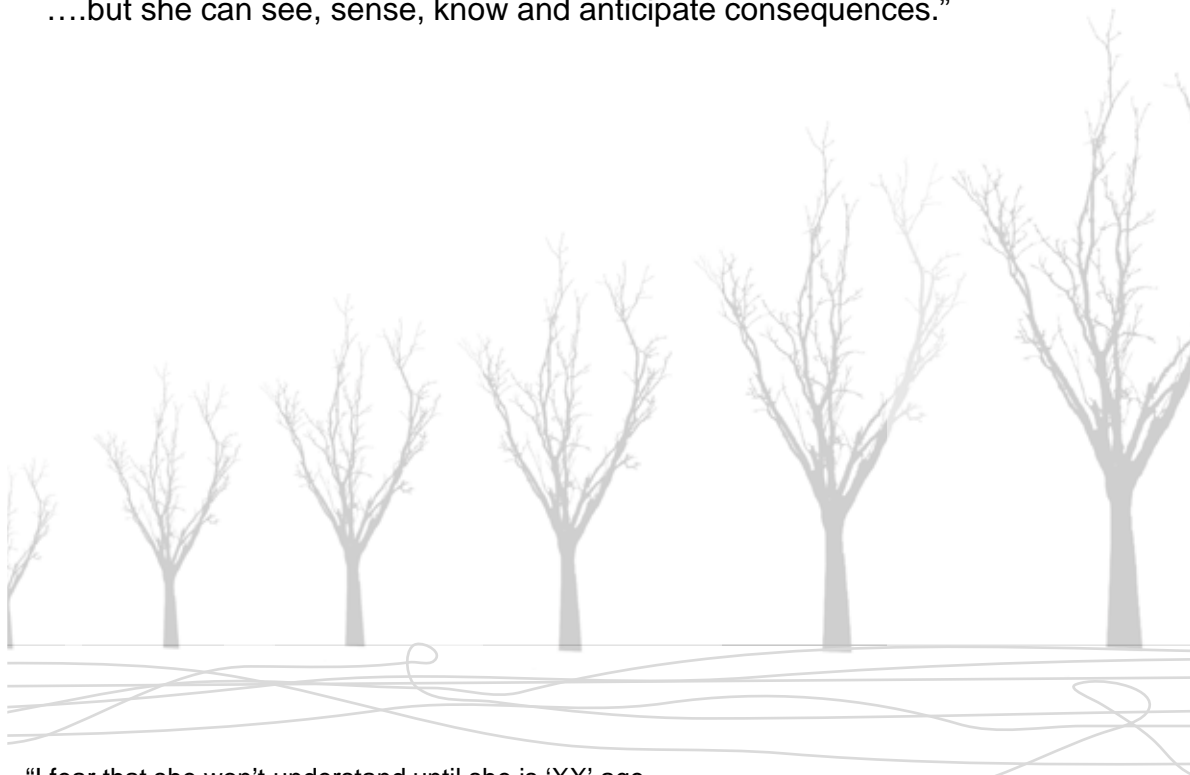
Sometimes its confusing to
me what is best for her in
our context vs expectations
or measures that seem
random and superficial and
not as life preserving as the
ones I have to choose.



**I don't lack safety skills.
We lack safety.**

**Don't impose on us an
'education or
empowerment agenda'.**

“She may not know all the details...
....but she can see, sense, know and anticipate consequences.”



“I fear that she won’t understand until she is ‘XX’ age...
If I was supported to understand how much she knows, notices,
senses and resists, that would change how we experience
these years together...how we resist together.”

It's the systems that keep you from seeing this and knowing this. Things we know in
private and without words, but the system denies us this shared knowing.




Even when I can't prevent something, and even when I can't be present, I am creating ways to uphold my responsibility. To offer safety strategies in unsafe situations.

My responsibility is mine – no one else's.
And I can't fulfil someone else's responsibilities.

My kids are not responsible for what he is doing.
I am constantly strategising so that I'm not giving my kids more responsibility than what's theirs.
I am supporting them to ask for things they need.

This doesn't mean I don't have boundaries or lack assertiveness.





**Every day may differ,
and no situation is
the same.**

**My guidance
supports safety and
dignity.**

"I create ways to
provide guidance even
through the coercion
and control of violence
and abuse."

"Children need safety
to be able to receive
guidance."

Teaching me how to
parent isn't going to
make us safer."

"Time, headspace and
even a course to learn
more about responding
are impossible options,
and it's worrying how this
is scrutinised by systems."

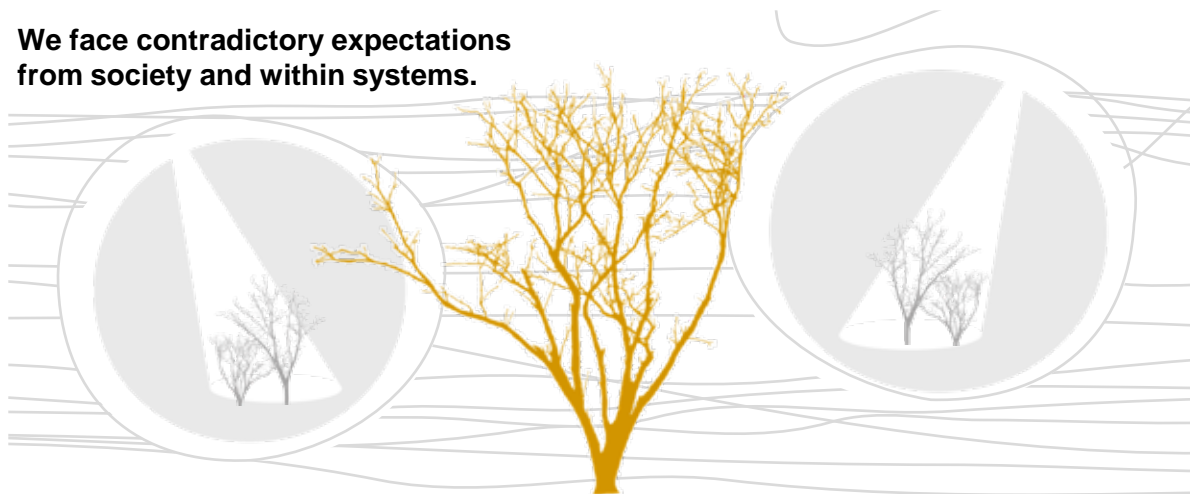
"The space to have a conversation
with your child about things that
matter."

Especially when systems tell you -
you can't talk about things.

And also judge you if you haven't."

"You are having to put
yourself and your
background through this
kind of lab space."

**We face contradictory expectations
from society and within systems.**



You tell me to act 'empowered' and tell me
I am 'not assertive enough'.

yet

You tell me what to do. You measure and
monitor what I do.

You tell me to be 'assertive', and to stand
up, and speak up for myself.

yet

You tell me to be more 'motherly',
'agreeable', 'flexible' and 'compliant'.

You tell me to 'show my emotions' and to
stop being so cold, and that it's time to
'recover and heal'.

yet

You tell me not to be 'too emotional', that I
am acting 'crazy', and will be judged as
'unstable' and 'mentally ill'.

You tell me to provide the details.

yet

You tell me not to 'interfere' with or
'undermine' the process.

You tell me to tell you what's important
about what's happened and what I need.

yet

You tell me what 'really' matters, and that
you have to remain 'neutral'.

You tell me I am 'traumatized' by him.

yet

You send me into mediation with him.

You tell me my situation is dangerous (a
'crisis') and that I need to hurry and decide.

yet

You tell me to wait and to be patient, to
trust you and the process.



**...I navigate these impossible
opposing and contradictory
expectations...**

**....while also trying to retain and
create safety from the person using
abuse against me...**

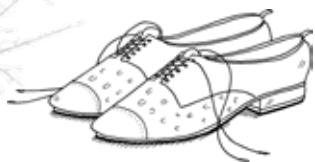
...while also parent...

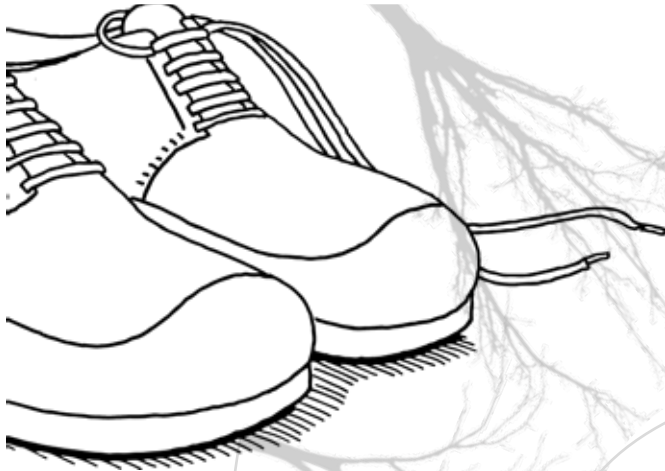
**...and I am being measured for my
parenting at the same time.**



YOUR RESPONSE

My children notice how I
am treated by others and
where I am safe or retreat.





My children notice how
you respond, ignore or
excuse the actions of the
person using abuse.





**As a responding friend,
family member,
neighbor, colleague, or
formal responder...**


We can uplift our responses.

As responders we can improve how we explore experiences of violence and abuse and make meaning about how victim-survivors (mothers and children) live, resist, respond, connect and survive.

We can place responsibility on fathers who are perpetrating abuse for actively and enduringly undermining safety, hurting family members, and relationships between family members.

We can move beyond judging, monitoring and distrusting the efforts and commitments of the mother.

We can explore and value how mothers seek to 'imperfectly parent'. How they resourcefully fulfil responsibility, provide guidance and nurture, despite the constraints, suffering and harms of being subjected to violence and abuse.



As a responding friend,
family member,
neighbour, colleague,
formal responder...

“ We need you to
change
these things... ”

The status quo we live with...



My everyday 'imperfect parenting'...



**..is measured unreasonably
against perfection and
protection...**



**...while he acts in ways
that use control, abuse
and violence.**

The change we need from you...



**Because he acts in
ways that use control,
abuse and violence...**



**.. his abuse is measured as
unsafe parenting and
protection.**



**My everyday 'imperfect
parenting' is supported and
resourced to build the
safety for 'being us'.**

“Stop colonizing my parenting”

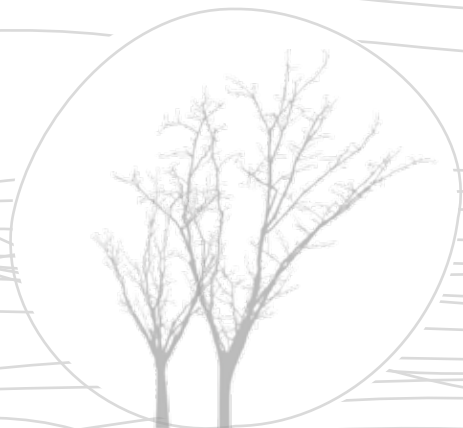
Please don't do these things...


“Please don't impose robotic ideas about what 'good parenting' looks like – deciding for us what is most important to us.”

“Please don't sanitise our experiences into a binary of perfection or failure.”

“Please don't pathologise me, label me or take my actions out of context.”

“Please don't use unreasonable system-led measures about what is possible when I am parenting in the limited spaces for living in violence and abuse.”





As a responding friend,
family member,
neighbour, colleague,
formal responder...

“ We need you to
notice
these things... ”

Notice the 'aloneness' we are left
with is used against us.

Notice the ways society and
systems are measuring our
'aloneness' against us to make
conclusions about me.



We need you to notice these measures and 'expert'
conclusions are everywhere.

Everyday measures like 'social isolation'
Everyday conclusions like 'pathologisation' and 'villainisation'.

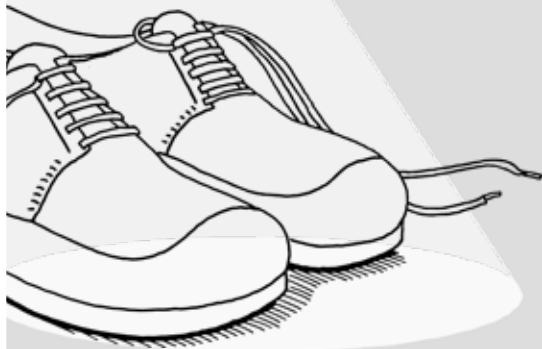
We need you to notice that measures and conclusions like
these keep adding to our aloneness.

Noticing his efforts to limit our living.

**Noticing the lines and spaces we live within
because of his use of violence.**

Noticing how long he has constrained us.

Noticing in what ways he keeps us apart.




**Noticing and knowing our
reasons to fear.**

Notice our longing.

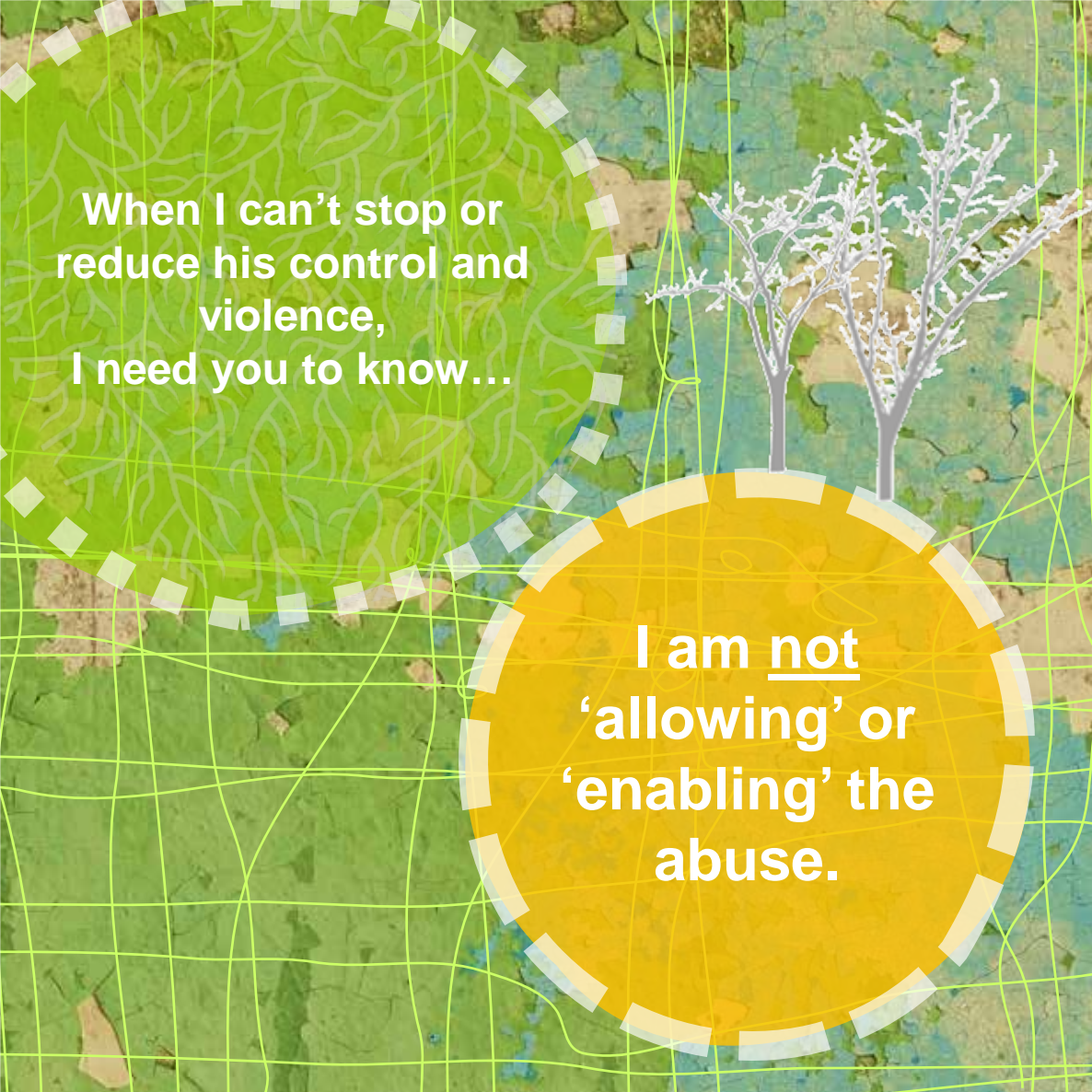
**Notice and know our concern.
Notice our efforts to protect
each other.**

**Notice our resourcefulness to
never stop responding.**



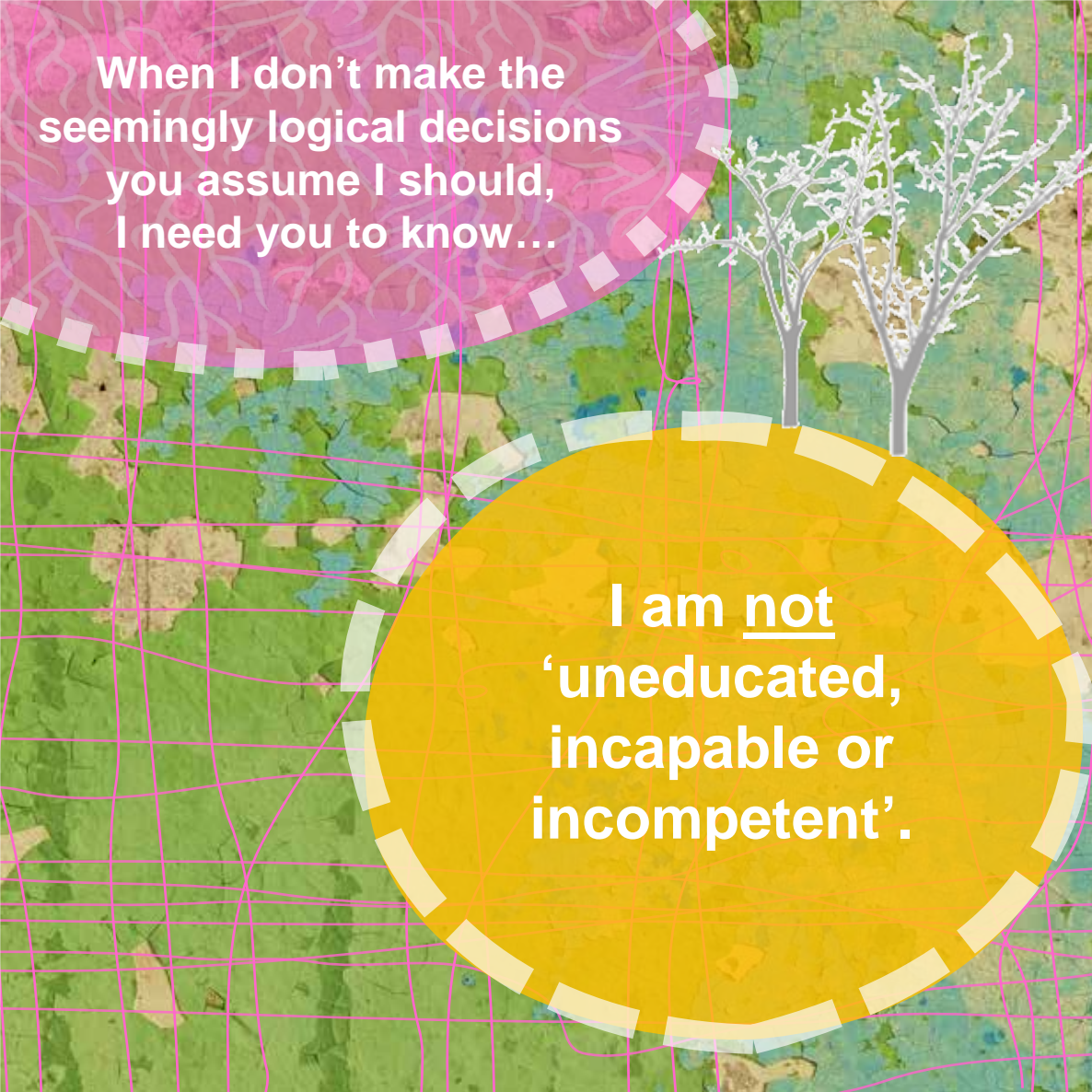
As a responding friend,
family member,
neighbour, colleague,
formal responder...

“ We need you to
know
these things... ”




When I can't stop or
reduce his control and
violence,
I need you to know...

I am not
'allowing' or
'enabling' the
abuse.




When I don't make the
seemingly logical decisions
you assume I should,
I need you to know...

I am not
'uneducated,
incapable or
incompetent'.



When I am having to
mother alone, and not
talk about what's
going on for me, I
need you to know...

I am not
being
'isolating' or
'alienating'



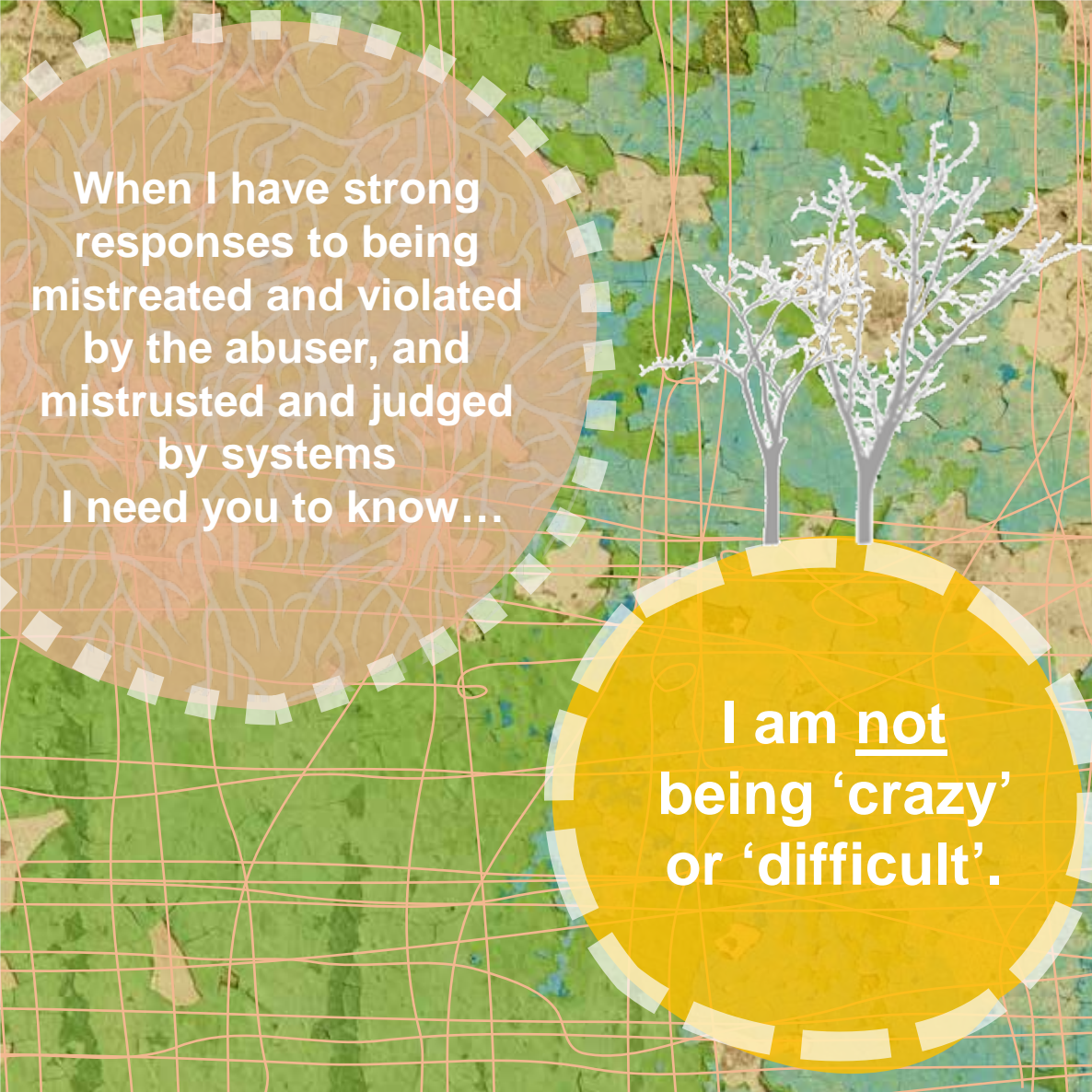
When I have to choose
things for myself, ask for
what I need, or disconnect,
I need you to know...

I am not
being 'selfish'
or 'non-
compliant'.




When
arrangements,
agreements or
'orders' have been
set out and I rely on
them being upheld,
I need you to
know...

I am not being
'uncaring' or
'unreasonable'.




When I have strong
responses to being
mistreated and violated
by the abuser, and
mistrusted and judged
by systems
I need you to know...

I am not
being 'crazy'
or 'difficult'.



When I ask to get my
things back, to be
refunded, paid
accurately,
I need you to know...

I am not
acting in
'vengeance'.




When I insist on
justice, when I don't
want to 'reconcile'
or 'get over it'
I need you to
know...

I am not being
'evil' or 'toxic'
or a 'bully'.


If/when I want
him in my life
I need you to
know...

It is not
because I think
violence is ok.



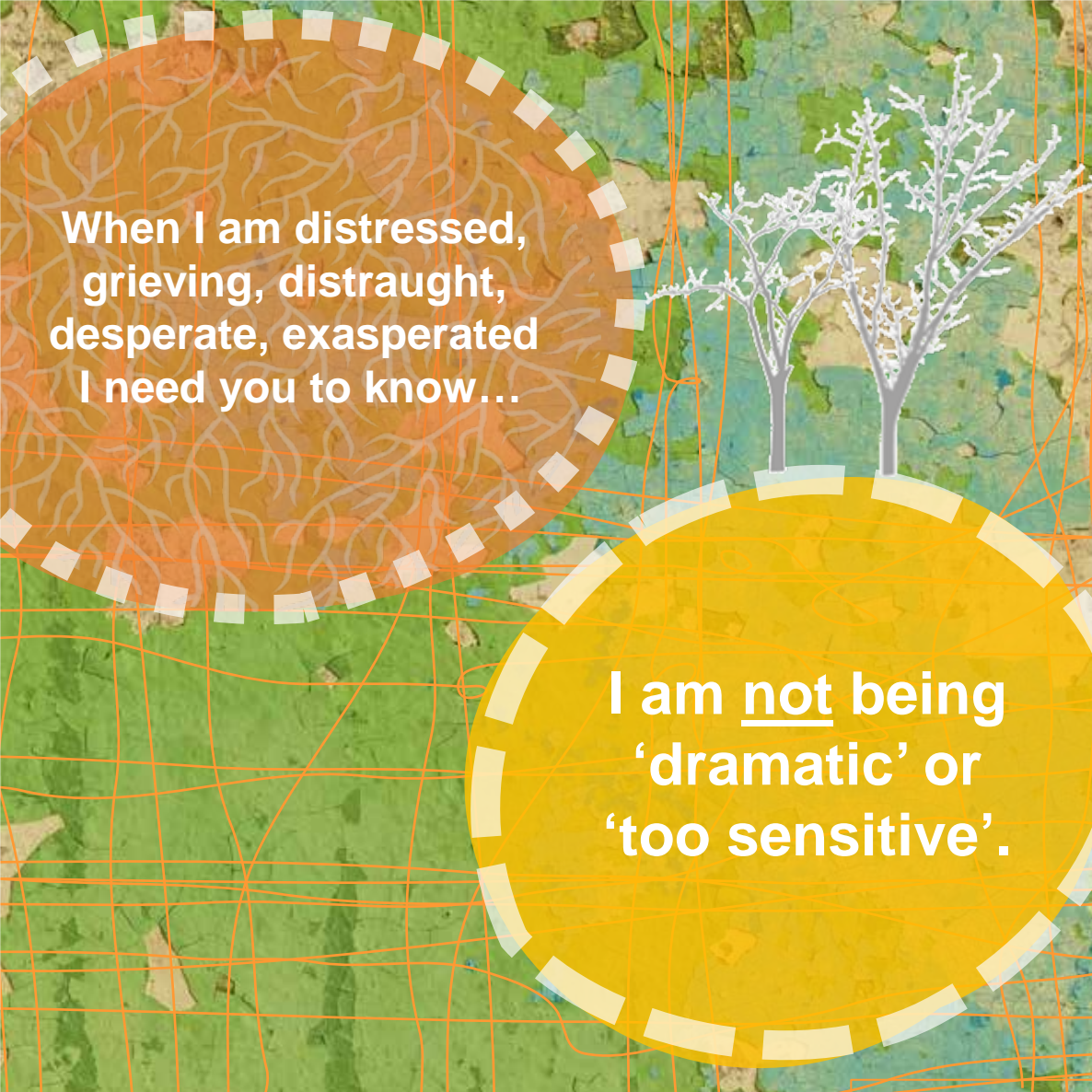
When I set up
structure, routines
and patterns to create
stability and safety
I need you to know...

I am not being
'demanding' or
'controlling'.




When I can't find
things, remember
things, get to things
or afford things
I need you to know...

I am not being
'unstructured' or
'chaotic'.



When I am distressed,
grieving, distraught,
desperate, exasperated
I need you to know...

I am not being
'dramatic' or
'too sensitive'.

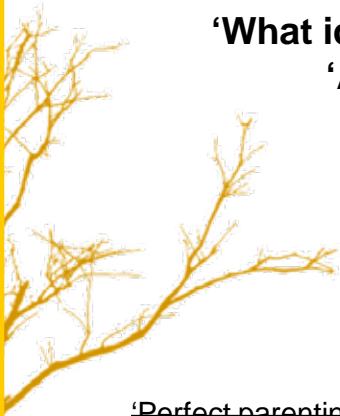


As a responding friend,
family member,
neighbour, colleague,
formal responder...

“ We need you to
do
these things... ”

**As a responder, ask yourself the ‘curious’ questions
before you respond...**

**‘What ideas and assumptions am I holding?’
‘And who benefits from these?’**



‘Perfect parenting’

There is no such thing
as ‘perfect parenting’.



Perpetrating abuse

There is no place for the
use of violence and abuse
in ‘imperfect parenting’

‘Imperfect parenting’

Parenting children is
an imperfect
endeavour.

Look at *his* use of
control, abuse
and violence.





**“ Take me off trial.
Stop scrutinizing and
measuring my everyday
imperfect parenting.**

**Don't look away from *his*
control, abuse and violence.**

**Don't make excuses for him.
Expect non-violence from
him. He *is* capable.**

”

**Hold open more
space for us.**



**For us to connect.
For us to live.**

**Unrestrained.
Unsilenced.
Unafraid.**

**Follow our lead about
what we need now
and next.**





4

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

INSIGHT EXCHANGE

Insight Exchange centres on the expertise of people with lived experience of domestic and family violence and gives voice to these experiences. It is designed to inform and strengthen social, service and systemic responses to domestic and family violence.

Launched in Australia in November 2017, Insight Exchange was established and developed in collaboration with Dr Linda Coates and Dr Allan Wade from the Centre for Response-Based Practice, Canada.

Insight Exchange is governed by Domestic Violence Service Management, a registered Australian charity (ABN 26 165 400 635).

Insight Exchange is sustained by generous donations from individuals and a silent donor, for the benefit of many.

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For more information visit
www.insightexchange.net



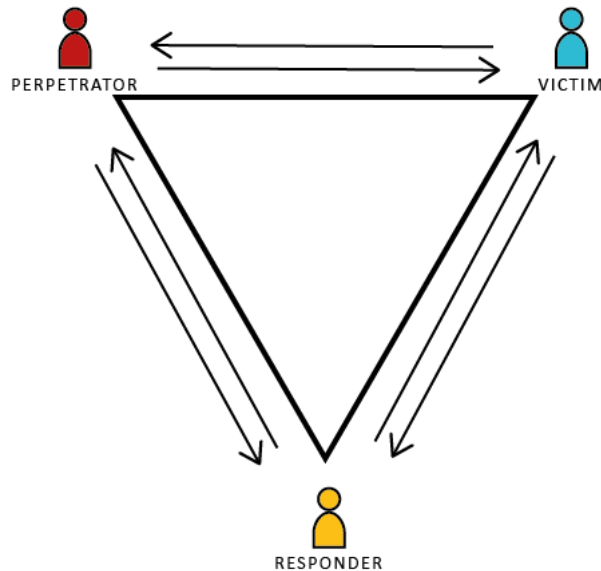
This resource is for all people. Insight Exchange respects the diversity of all sexualities and gender identities including but not limited to; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual + identities as well as heterosexual and cisgender identities.

Using this resource: The information contained within this resource is for general information purposes only. Insight Exchange assumes no responsibility for how the information in this resource is used.

Read more about using our resources:
www.insightexchange.net/guide-using/

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“A key to understanding interpersonal violence is to appreciate that it is social and interactional....All of these interactions take place in a broader context which includes natural, material, social, political, spiritual and cultural conditions.”



View the short Insight Exchange animation (3mins)

Violence is social and interactional

<https://vimeo.com/591876130>

Scan the static QR code to view the animation.





Follow My Lead
English with Australian support contacts



Follow My Lead Aotearoa
English with NZ support contacts



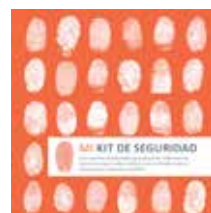
Sígueme a Mí
Spanish with Mexico support contacts



My Safety Kit
English with Australian support contacts



My Safety Kit Aotearoa
English with NZ support contacts



Mi Kit de Seguridad
Spanish with Mexico support contacts



My Dignity – My body is mine
English with Australian support contacts

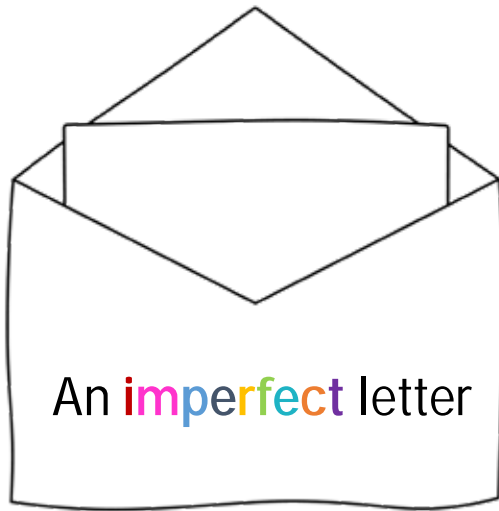
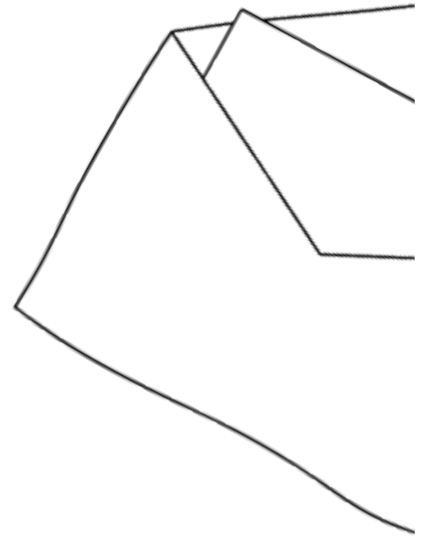
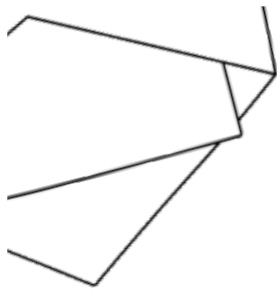


Talk (English)
Hablar (Spanish)



Fear (English)
Miedo (Spanish)

These information and reflection resources (and more) can be found on www.insightexchange.net



An imperfect letter

INSIGHT EXCHANGE

Scan the static QR code to open 'An imperfect letter'.

<https://www.insightexchange.net/children/>

Insight Exchange website has a quick-exit button



About the imperfect letter

This letter from us to every child is to take you seriously. Each as you are. Wherever you are. Whatever is going on.

We will never fully know or be able to describe in perfect words the creative and resourceful ways children live and be in response to opportunity and loss. In response to adversity, calm, chaos, connection, disconnection, kindness, violence, and more.

About the authors

We are six adults living on unceded first nations lands in four countries. We have lived different childhoods, and we face different futures, yet we hold a shared value and wish for children. A wish that each child, in any place, of any age, ability, culture or situation, be valued by society, services and systems. Valued for who they are and for what is important to them.



Australia



Aotearoa
New Zealand



Mexico



Canada

Thanks

To the children (friends, siblings, cousins) around us in our own childhoods who were safe to talk to or be silent with - we thank you.

To the adults around us (early or late, formal or informal) who took us seriously – we thank you.

Sharing the imperfect letter

This letter has no limits to where it can travel and be seen. It can be shared in any format or style.

We invite you to creatively share it or respond to it. It must always be free (no cost/fee).

If you are a child

If you are a child who has found this letter on your own, we hope it is useful to you in some way.

We hope you feel like you aren't alone. We hope that you see the spirit of all you have been treasuring, doing, and holding on to.

If you are an adult

If you are an adult reading or sharing this letter

- We invite you to let the letter travel unchanged.
- We invite you to refrain from explaining it.
- We invite you to follow children's lead in what some or all of it may mean to them.

The imperfect letter may speak quietly to a child. And the letter may create a way to talk together.



INSIGHT EXCHANGE

Scan the static QR code to open the short animation **Dad – Your choice hurts me.**

www.insightexchange.net

Insight Exchange website has a quick-exit button



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Acknowledgment



Insight Exchange acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our work and services operate and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend this respect to all First Nations peoples across the country and the world. We acknowledge that sovereignty of this land was never ceded. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.



Insight Exchange acknowledges the Indigenous Peoples in Mexico. We acknowledge the right of Indigenous Peoples in Mexico to self-organization and self-determination. We pay our respect to Indigenous ancestors, elders and communities and their collective ownership of the land. We honour all Indigenous Peoples in Mexico, and acknowledge all who have maintained their forms of community organization rooted in resistance against the pressures from the State.



Insight Exchange & RBP Aotearoa uphold Tino Rangatiratanga in partnership with Māori – the generations who have gone before, and the generations yet to come. We extend this respect to all Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge Sovereignty was never ceded.



Insight Exchange acknowledges the Indigenous peoples of Canada who are the traditional caretakers of the unceded land in which we work and live. We recognize the wisdom of Elders past and present and the interconnectedness of people and land. We honour all Indigenous peoples in Canada and acknowledge their resistance against injustice and commitment to the land and people.



Our Thanks

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We also thank the individual donors who make this work possible, to participants contributing to publications referenced in this resource, and most significantly to the people who have shared their lived experience insights for the benefit of many.



INSIGHT EXCHANGE

www.insightexchange.net

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Insight Exchange website has a quick-exit button.

