

*“When I was not able to follow through on a promise to my inner child, I made amends and let them know I was still learning. That started to build trust.” -Fellow Traveler*

*“A simple reparenting thing I do is look in the mirror and say “I love you” to my reflection at least once a day.” -Fellow Traveler*



## **REPARMENTING CHECK-IN**

The ACA Solution is to become our own loving parent. Reparenting is a skill that can be learned, and the more we practice the check-in, the more we deepen this skill. Initially, we might use the reparenting check-in primarily to work with triggers and address dissociation. While we cannot avoid getting triggered, we can choose to do a check-in to see what part of us needs love and attention. Later, we learn to do check-ins throughout the day. When we check in, we interrupt reactive behavioral patterns and create new healthy ones. These moments are where freedom lies.

Checking-in helps strengthen the loving parent. It also develops our capacity to identify and feel our feelings, grounds us in our bodies, and helps us identify our inner family members and their needs. In this active practice, we turn the love and care inward that we’ve directed to, or sought from, others, often at our expense. We increase our ability to protect, nurture, and guide our inner children each time we do a reparenting check-in.

Some find that writing down their answers to the check-in by using the accompanying worksheet makes it easier to focus. Others like to do the check-in as a silent meditation.

### **Ground: What are you feeling at this moment?**

What is your breathing like—short, rough, fast, constricted? Deep, smooth, slow, or open? What emotions do you feel—sadness, anger, hurt? What physical sensations do you notice—constriction, fluttering, warmth? Let yourself feel all of this without judging. Ground your attention in your body by noticing any other sensations you’re aware of, such as the feel of your feet against the floor. After you identify your physical sensations and emotions, give yourself a chance to experience them before moving on to the next step.

### **Who: Who (what inner family member) is this?**

A triggered inner child tends to feel more vulnerable emotions like fear, shame, sadness, or embarrassment. An inner teenager tends to feel anger, resentment, frustration, and rage. Still, all inner family members can feel all emotions. Asking yourself, "How old is this inner family member?" can help you determine who needs attention.

If you don’t know which inner family member is activated, that’s okay. Just being curious helps diffuse the trigger and builds internal trust.



### **What: What activated this part of you ?**

External causes can trigger us—such as a person, place, or thing. We can also get triggered internally by our critical parent or other distorted thinking. Sometimes it's a combination of internal and external causes. Once triggered, we unconsciously think and feel like we did as a triggered child or teenager.

While the original trigger might be external, the critical parent or another part of us can add blame or shame to the trigger. We can set a boundary by asking that inner family member to take a break and let them know we'll connect with them afterward. "Thank you, I've got this."

Identifying "what" triggered our inner child or inner teen and reparenting around that helps us not react and instead tend to the original pain as inner loving parents. This knowledge also points us toward actions we can take after we complete the check-in.

### **Tend: How can you tend to this part? What does this part of you need?**

What do they need? How do you feel toward this inner family member? Connected? Curious? Compassionate? If not, how can you access these qualities to reparent? Once you sense some connection to these qualities, proceed.

If the teenager is triggered, then listen, empathize, and reassure them. "This was never your responsibility, and you bravely took this on when no one else was there to do it. I will handle this."

If the inner child is triggered, then listen, empathize, nurture, and reassure them, again by focusing on their feelings and needs. "I see how hurt you feel. You did nothing wrong; it's okay. I love you. You're enough. You're safe with me." Physical soothing helps—a hand on the arm or heart, rocking, a cup of warm tea. Short, simple phrases (rather than lots of detail) seem to be what the inner child needs to hear most.

Tending to our inner child or inner teen's emotional concerns with love is not agreeing or disagreeing with the story they're telling themselves. Engaging with their story or distorted thinking would reinforce brain patterns that keep you in The Problem. Instead, empathize with your inner children's feelings and needs, which helps resolve their distress and puts you in The Solution.

A few examples of loving parent messages:

It's okay to feel this.

I'm here. I'll keep you safe.

I love you. You are enough.

I get that you're angry. I've got your back.

*"I resisted the idea of reparenting for years because I didn't have access to the inner loving parent and didn't know how to start. As soon as I heard others in check-in meetings, everything changed. I followed their lead, and my recovery accelerated exponentially." -Fellow Traveler*