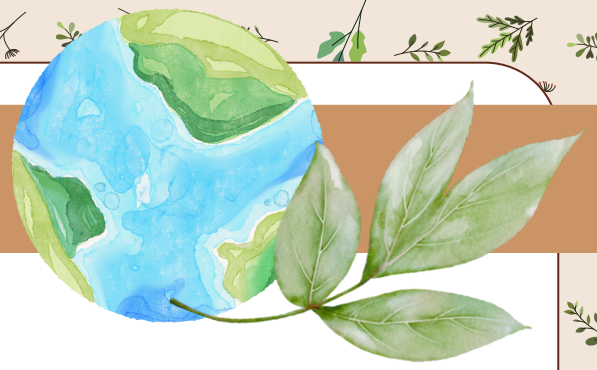


Life Lessons...



Reflective Language

“Reflection is putting words to **someone’s internal experience**—their feelings, thoughts, or behaviour—so they can understand it.”

What is Reflective Language?

Reflective language is when you **notice, name,** and **gently mirror** a child’s feelings, thoughts, or behaviour—without judgement, correction, or fixing.

The aim of reflective language is to directly support a child’s nervous system. Children with trauma are not primarily thinking—they’re *reacting*.

When you reflect what you see, feel, and understand, you help shift them from survival mode toward regulation.

It tells the child:

“I see you. I hear you. You make sense.”

In play therapy, this is a core skill because it builds:

- Emotional safety
- Trust and connection
- Self-awareness
- Regulation over time

Why It Matters : Especially for Children with Trauma

Trauma-affected children :

- Are constantly scanning for safety “Am I safe? Does anyone get me?”
- Struggle to understand their feelings
- Feel misunderstood or ignored
- React through behaviour instead of words

So when we reflect back those thoughts and feelings the child can feel calmer and let their guard down more.

Overall Reflective language helps by:

- Giving words to feelings
- Reducing overwhelm
- It builds emotional literacy
- It reduces shame!
- Showing acceptance without needing to “behave better” first

Supporting brain integration
(feeling → thinking → regulating)

When a child is dysregulated...

Reflect first, guide later

Instead of:

- “Calm down.”

Try:

- “Your body feels really out of control right now.”
- “That’s a big feeling.”

Once they feel understood, they are more able to regulate.

What This Builds Over Time

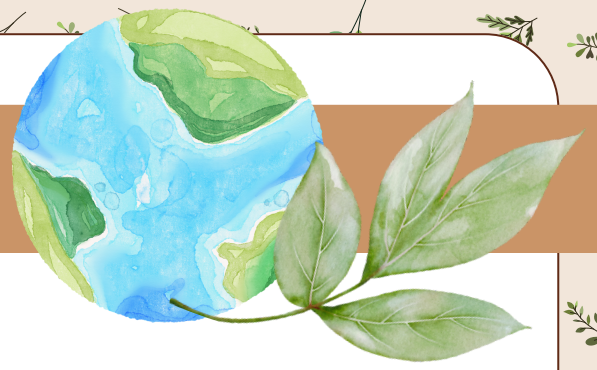
With consistent use, children develop:

- Emotional vocabulary
- Self-awareness
- Trust in adults
- Ability to regulate feelings
- A sense of “I make sense”

How reflective language makes kids feel:

- Helps kids feel seen and understood
- Builds emotional vocabulary
- Reduces escalation (because they don’t have to fight to be heard)
- Strengthens trust and attachment
- Supports self-awareness and regulation

Life Lessons...



What Reflective Language Sounds Like:

1. Reflecting Feelings

Name what you see or sense.

- "You look really frustrated."
- "That felt unfair to you."
- "I can see how upset you are."
- "You're really excited about that!"

Tip: You don't have to be perfect. Close enough is enough.

2. Reflecting Behaviour

(Without Judgement)

Describe what is happening, not whether it's "good" or "bad".

- "You threw the toy really hard."
- "You're stomping your feet."
- "You moved away from me quickly."

This reduces shame and increases awareness.

3. Reflecting Meaning

Gently link behaviour to possible feelings or needs.

- "You didn't want to stop playing."
- "You really wanted that to go your way."
- "It's hard when things change suddenly."

4. Reflecting Effort or Intention

Notice what the child is trying to do.

- "You kept trying even when it was tricky."
- "You were working really hard on that."
- "You wanted me to understand you."

Reflective language is not about getting it perfect.

It's about being present, curious, and accepting.

- Connection first.
- Understanding second.
- Change comes later.

Top #5 Focus points

1

When a child is dysregulated, logic doesn't work. Reflection does."

2

You are not fixing. You are understanding.

If you jump to:

- Advice
- Questions
- Correction

You miss the moment.

3

Don't over talk

If you're doing long explanations, you've lost them.

4

Don't fake it. Kids pick up inauthentic tone instantly.

5

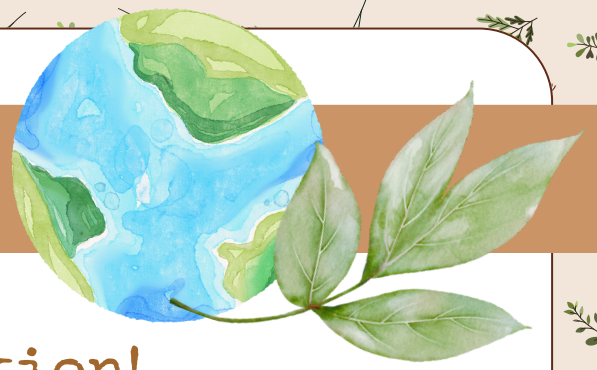
If you're guessing, say it:

"I might be wrong, but it looked like that upset you

Reflective thinking turns
experience into insight.

John C. Maxwell

Life Lessons...



Putting in into action!

Notice → Name → Pause

Example:

"You're really angry right now..."

(pause)"

"That didn't go how you wanted..."

(pause)"

.

What to avoid?

Try to reduce:

- Questions
("Why did you do that?")

- Judgement
("That's not nice")

- Fixing
("It's okay, don't worry")

- Dismissing
("You're fine")

- Teaching in the moment
("Next time you should...")

These can shut the child down or escalate behaviour.

#Remember

WHEN A CHILD DOESN'T RESPOND

That's normal.

Reflection is not about getting an answer.
It's about helping the child feel understood.
Stay calm. Stay present. Repeat if needed.

Quick Examples

Child refuses bedtime

- "Stop being difficult."

Instead try-

- "You don't want the day to end."

Child hits another child

- "That's naughty."

Instead try-

- "You were really angry."

Child withdraws

- "What's wrong?"

Instead try-

- "You got really quiet just now."

Child excited and loud

- "Settle down."

Instead try-

- "You've got a lot of energy right now!"

Child is yelling

- "It's not ok to yell inside"

Instead try-

- "You're really angry right now."

Child shuts down

- "Ignoring me won't help"

Instead try-

- "It feels hard to talk about this."

Child refuses to go somewhere

- "You just need ot get in the car"

Instead try-

- "Part of you doesn't feel safe going."