

FIVE SMALL MOVES · WHY THEY EARN THEIR PLACE

What You're Already Doing Right.



The five quiet wins that don't feel like enough - and are.

If **Bluey** makes you cry and you're not sure why, it's because the show names the parts of parenting nobody tells you count. The pause at the door. The "fair enough." The sitting on the floor. **This guide names five of those moves** - the ones we see most in clinical work - gives them their proper developmental names, and tells you, briefly and with the science, why they matter. Then it gets out of the way.

CREATED BY

Aimee
Behaviour Support Practitioner · NDIS
Founder · Daniel's Diaries

COMPANION TO

The Daniel's Diaries platform
danielsdiaries.com.au
Where your child becomes the planner

A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Most parenting content tells you **what to fix.**

This one doesn't. The five things in here are things you almost certainly do already — at the front door, at the kitchen table, in the car, on the floor — and that nobody has called by their proper name. **They have proper names.** Co-regulation. Repair. Autonomy support. Attachment maintenance. Each of them is doing more developmental work than the parenting move that gets the airtime — the right thing to say, the consequence, the family meeting.

Bluey works because it shows the small, unglamorous, often silent moments — the ones that don't look like wins. This guide does the same thing. It names five of them out loud, gives you the brain story behind each, and gets out of the way.

WHY THIS MATTERS CLINICALLY

Parenting research keeps converging on the same boring finding: it isn't the dramatic moves that build secure attachment, emotional regulation, and resilience. **It's the small, repeated, low-key ones** — the ones that don't feel like enough. The five moves below are the ones that show up most consistently in the developmental literature. None of them are heroic. All of them are doing the work.

1

What it looks like

The everyday version. The thing on the floor of your kitchen, in the car park, at the front door. The version you're already doing.

2

What it actually is

The proper name. Co-regulation, repair, autonomy support, attachment maintenance. The thing you've been doing without anyone telling you it counted.

3

Why it earns its place

The developmental science. Short on purpose. Enough that you trust the move next time you're tempted to do something more impressive.

Daniel will walk you through. One move per page. Recognisable situation, parent's actual line, three short cards, and a small reality check at the bottom of each. **Five pages. Twelve minutes. One release.**



MOVE 1 · AT PICKUP, IN THE CAR, OR THE FRONT DOOR

“
Hey. I'm here. Tell me when you're ready.
 ”

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Saying nothing first.

You put your bag down. You don't ask how the day was. You don't ask if they ate their lunch. You sit nearby — close enough to be felt, far enough to be ignored — and you let them come to you in their own time. **Sometimes they do. Sometimes they don't.** Both are fine.

WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS

Co-regulation.

Two nervous systems in one room, the calmer one offering the dysregulated one a baseline to match. **Words aren't required. The body is doing the talking.** It's the most active parenting move you'll do today, even though it looks like nothing.

WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE

Questions cost. Presence doesn't.

The prefrontal cortex doesn't switch on with questions — it switches on with safety. Questions cost cognitive load a regulated brain has to spare and a dysregulated one doesn't. **The pause is the open door;** the questions, when they come, walk through it.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM. WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE.

You're not disengaged. You're choosing not to ambush.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM

A nervous system that learns coming home is safe. Over months, that nervous system stops **needing** the pause — but still uses it.

WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE

Being on the couch in silence isn't disengagement. It's a regulated parent offering a regulated room. **The two look identical from the outside and feel completely different from the inside.**

Not this "How was your day? Did you eat your lunch? Did you remember your hat? Who did you sit with?" Five questions in twelve seconds is the parental version of an interrogation. Even the warmest version of it costs.

MOVE 2 · AFTER YOU SNAPPED, OFTEN AT BEDTIME, USUALLY UNPROMPTED



I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry.



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A short apology.

You said something sharper than you meant. Half an hour later, you go in. You name what you did. You don't explain the day, the work, the headache, or the thing they did first. **You name what you did. Then you stop.** You don't extend and you don't fish.

WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS

Repair.

The technical name for the part of the relationship that does more attachment work than getting it right the first time. Rupture is unavoidable. **Repair is the variable.** Decades of attachment research point to the same finding — the parent who repairs cleanly raises the kid who can.

WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE

Repair is the predictor, not perfection.

Children with parents who never miss are not who attachment researchers are looking for. Children with parents who miss and repair are. The relationship learns to handle stress. The kid learns that **conflict doesn't end love.**

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM. WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE.

Six words is plenty. Six minutes is too many.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM

A template for being a person. They watch you take responsibility once and they spend the next twenty years **knowing it can be done.** That's a model, not a lecture.

WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE

Self-flagellation. The long apology becomes about you. The short one stays about them. **If there's a behaviour to discuss, that's a different conversation, on a different day.**

Not this "I'm sorry, but you also..." The 'but' undoes the sentence in front of it. The repair is over the moment the next clause arrives. Their behaviour is its own conversation, on its own time. Don't fold it in.

MOVE 3 · AT THE KITCHEN TABLE, WITH THE WORLD ENDING OVER A SANDWICH

”
Yeah. That's hard.
 ”

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Holding without fixing.

They're upset about something that doesn't, on the face of it, warrant the size of the upset. **You don't argue with the size.** You don't talk them out of it. You don't offer the obvious solution. You stay near, name the feeling once, and let it pass at its own speed.

WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS

Co-regulation through holding.

You're modelling that big emotions are survivable, that they pass, and that being witnessed in one is different from being managed out of one. **The feeling gets to land.** Then it gets to leave. Both stages are needed.

WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE

Held feelings learn to pass. Fixed feelings learn to hide.

A child who learns "big emotions get solved" learns big emotions are wrong. A child who learns "big emotions get held" learns big emotions are temporary. **One trains suppression. The other trains regulation.** Both stick.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM. WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE.

The size of the feeling is not the size of the trigger.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM

A nervous system that has experienced its own waves passing without intervention. Over time, that nervous system stops **needing** you to ride them out — but still wants you nearby.

WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE

Permissiveness. **You can hold the feeling and still hold the limit.** The sandwich is the same shape it was before they were upset. Their experience of it is the thing that's allowed to move.

Not this "It's not that big a deal. There are kids who don't have a sandwich. Why are you crying about this?" You can't argue someone out of their own nervous system. The argument adds shame on top of the original feeling and now there are two.

MOVE 4 · AT GETTING-DRESSED TIME, WITH FIFTEEN MINUTES TO LEAVE

Which one? You pick.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Letting them be in charge of small things.

You hold up two shirts. Either is fine. They pick. **You don't editorialise, don't 'are you sure?', don't suggest the warmer one.** The choice was real. They made it. The morning moves on without comment.

WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS

Autonomy support.

The structured, low-stakes practice of letting a child have power over their own life. Self-determination theory calls it the third leg of intrinsic motivation, alongside competence and connection. **Without it, neither of the others stick.**

WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE

Small autonomies prevent large escalations.

A child who has no power over anything in their life will eventually take power somewhere. **Better that they take power over the cup at age four than over school refusal at twelve.** The small choices aren't trivial — they're insurance.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM. WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE.

The frame stays yours. The choice is theirs.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM

A child who experiences themselves as someone with agency. **Over years, that's the thing that shows up as 'resilience' on a school report.** The shirt isn't the point. The practice is.

WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE

Letting them run the household. The choice is between two acceptable options. **Constrained agency is the whole point** — you chose the two shirts; they chose between them.

Not this "Just put the shirt on. We don't have time for this." Sometimes true, sometimes necessary. But over a week, every removed micro-choice is one larger one waiting to happen — usually at the school gate.

MOVE 5 · ON A SUNDAY, DOING NOTHING IN PARTICULAR

I'm here. I'm not going anywhere.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Sitting on the floor while they play.

Phone in another room. Not on a screen. Not multitasking. Not making it educational. **Not even necessarily playing along** — just being in the room, available, with no agenda. They might involve you. They might not. Either is fine.

WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS

Attachment maintenance.

The boring, repetitive, unglamorous topping-up of the bond. Not a special occasion. Not quality time as performance. **Just the ordinary kind that gets the attachment system its baseline.** The deposit, not the withdrawal.

WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE

Presence is the precondition for everything.

Children who feel a parent is consistently available tolerate brief absences. Children who feel a parent is intermittently available pull harder for it. **The floor-sitting is what makes the rest of the parenting day land** — the limits, the consequences, the hard conversations.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM. WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE.

Boredom is allowed. Phones are not.

WHAT THIS GIVES THEM

A nervous system that has the parent on a low background hum. Not asked for. Not earned. **Just there.** Over time, that's what 'secure base' actually feels like from the inside.

WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE

Quality time. **Quality time has an agenda. The floor doesn't.** Boredom is a feature, not a bug — it's the thing that signals "we're not here to perform."

Not this "I'm here, but I just need to answer this email." You're not. The body is here; the attention is somewhere else. Children read that gap accurately and stop relying on the body being there at all.

A NOTE FROM AIMEE · BEFORE YOU GO

If any of this **felt familiar** — that's the point.

These five aren't a checklist. They're a release. Most parents are doing more of this work than they realise — at the front door, at the kitchen table, in the car, on the floor — and the developmental science says these unglamorous moves are doing more than the dramatic ones. **You're not behind. You're not failing the latest framework. You're already doing it.** This guide is just the part that names it.



The five moves in this guide are five corners of a much bigger framework. There are seven major roads being built across childhood and adolescence, and the work of supporting your child is the work of helping them become the **town planner** of their own brain — not its passenger. That's what Daniel's Diaries is. A platform built on the same brain-as-town language, where your child works through cycles of skill-building across emotional regulation, resilience, behaviour, social mapping, and future planning, on their age band, at their own pace.

MOST PARENTS START HERE

The full Daniel's Diaries platform

Your child's first cycle through the framework — guided by Lenny, Coco, Kip, Pepper, Eddie, Kai, and Billie (the seven character guides). **From \$19/month.** Self-guided through to practitioner-supported tiers.

→ [DANIELSDIARIES.COM.AU](https://danielsdiaries.com.au)

IF YOU'D LIKE TO READ MORE FIRST

More free tools like this one

The Parent's Decoder, the Traffic Light Check-In, the First Week Back kit, and more — built by the same clinician, all designed to be read or used in under ten minutes. **Free.**

→ [VISIT OUR GUMROAD LIBRARY](#)

A SMALL REQUEST

If this guide gave you a small release — the kind where your shoulders drop a couple of millimetres — the most powerful thing you can do is send it to one other parent who needs it. **The work of parenting is lonely.** It gets less lonely when more of us have language for what we already do.

CREATED WITH CARE BY

Aimee · Behaviour Support Practitioner (NDIS) ·
B.Psych.Sci (Honours candidate) · Founder of Daniel's
Diaries · aimee@foundationalminds.com.au