

Family Visit Safety & Care Plan

This resource is to help you be proactive and prepare to care for yourself while interacting with family members who can be challenging or activating to you. This could be a trip you are taking to visit family, or family traveling to visit you. It is best to fill out before they visit, while you are planning for their trip - you may realize things that you want to share with them proactively about what to expect. Filling this out can be triggering, it is ok not to know who you have to support you, or where you can go. This can also be a tool to identify spaces for growth and strategy to build more of a support system.

Before and After Care

When we know we are going to be engaging in something activating of previous versions of ourselves or previous harms, especially if we are feeling burnt out or low capacity, it is helpful to make a plan for how we will support ourselves before and after the activity. Please reflect on the following prompts and make a plan for how you will set yourself up before, and make space for reflection and decompression after the upcoming visit.

Pre-Care: *How can you set yourself up to feel supported throughout this visit?*

Prior to this visit, give some thought to what resources support you in feeling safest and most comfortable. Can you do certain activities to ground before you interact with these family members? Is it important for you to have a full belly prior to doing emotional work? If so, there might be a benefit to eating before you connect rather than primarily connecting over food. Is it supportive to have physical / mental stimulation or a grounding object? Consider bringing grounding objects or fidgets with you as you connect with family to draw on throughout the day as needed.

After-care: *What are resources you can rely on after a family interaction?*

After-care is a way in which you can feel closure after a vulnerable experience. In planning for the time you take to connect with family, you may want to consider additional time for after-care. Everyone has their own personal resources to pull on to close an emotional space. You could plan to watch a favorite tv show, call a friend or loved one, have a therapy session (this could include any practitioner you have a supportive relationship with), take a long bath, spend time in nature, go for a drive, dance to a good playlist, eat a delicious meal, or engage in expressive arts. Thinking about your after-care in advance will give you space to process whatever comes up in the process of interacting with family. Instead of crunching this in before you head off to other meetings or go out for the evening, having buffer time is valuable to fully integrate any emotions that come up for you.

Identifying support: (can be done in partnership with [Podmapping tool](#))

- Is there someone who is **already familiar with your past tensions with family** that you could inform about this visit and see if they would be open to helping you prepare or debrief the space?

- Is there someone that really **sees and affirms you as you are now**, and can support you in regrounding in your current self-conception after family interactions?

- Is there someone **who can support these family members in integrating** what came up for them that you could draw on for support if you are feeling stuck in an interaction with the family?

- Is there **someone who could join you** during interactions with family, and be a distraction or change the subject if you need a bit of space?

Could you reach out to 1 or more of these to let them know about the upcoming family trip and proactively plan to check in a couple times throughout the visit about how it's going?

Boundary Mapping:

As you prepare for the visit it can be helpful to plan for how you want to navigate your own boundaries throughout your time together. During the visit, you may feel an impulse to share more than you actually feel comfortable with, or to be more available and responsive than you actually have capacity to do sustainably. This worksheet is meant to support you in taking a moment to intentionally decide what you know you feel comfortable sharing, what you are unsure about or want to feel in the moment, and what you know you don't have capacity to share right now so that there is less pressure to decide in the moment. *The examples are not suggestions, they are merely structural examples of what a response to the prompt. might look like.*

Time Boundaries: How much time do you have to put toward connecting with family during this trip? What limits do you intend to set for the length of interactions

YES	MAYBE	NO
<p><i>Ex. seeing them at least X times while they are in town.</i></p>	<p><i>Ex. I intend to spend about Y number of hours together, but am open to spending more time together if _____ or less time together if _____.</i></p>	<p><i>Ex. getting sucked into spending all day every day together for the time they are in town.</i></p>

Activity + Space Boundaries: What types of activities do you or don't you want to do with these family members? How does that connect to what spaces you feel open to sharing with them?

YES	MAYBE	NO
<p><i>Ex. I would love to get dinner at X restaurant together.</i></p>	<p><i>Ex. I am open to introducing them to X friend, if we are doing a specific activity together.</i></p>	<p><i>Ex. I do not want to host them in my home.</i></p>

Identity and Experience Boundaries: Which parts of your identity and experience do you feel comfortable talking about and sharing with these family members? Which identities or experiences are you more hesitant to share? What experiences or identities feel deeply personal and you would prefer not to disclose?

YES	MAYBE	NO
<p><i>Ex. I am comfortable speaking about how my chronic pain and physical disabilities have been shaping my life recently.</i></p>	<p><i>Ex. I might share more about my organizing community depending on how initial conversations about values have been going.</i></p>	<p><i>Ex. I do not want to talk about my dating life or poly ethics during this trip.</i></p>

Recognizing Signs & Planning for Care:

	What are warning signs (thoughts, behaviors, emotions, mood, feelings in your body) that you are beginning to feel:	What practices help you when you are feeling:	How might you proactively plan to engage those practices throughout the trip?
<p>Overexposed / like the family members are too in your space?</p>			
<p>Unseen / invalidated / like people are perceiving a different version of you than your self conception?</p>			

Judged / like people are trying to challenge how you live your life or your values?			
burnt out / like this is requiring too much of your emotional energy			