

I AM PROUD OF WHO I AM



CAREGIVER GUIDE

for African-American Boys (Ages 5–9)

Craig S. Thurmond, MSW

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I Am Proud of Who I Am: Caregiver Guide

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I AM PROUD OF WHO I AM CAREGIVER GUIDE

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A Home Reinforcement Companion to the Therapist Guide

and Coloring & Skills Workbook

For African American Boys Ages 5–9

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AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Craig S. Thurmond, MSW, is a retired / former licensed clinical social worker with extensive experience in high-risk child, family, and adult systems. Raised in North Amityville on Long Island, New York, in a single-parent home affected by poverty and violence, personal loss shaped his understanding of trauma, resilience, and the systemic impact on development.

Professionally, Craig has worked in both Adult Protective Services and Child Protective Services, navigating complex family systems, institutional pressures, and the intersection of trauma, race, and authority. He is prior military, bringing a grounded understanding of structure and accountability while rejecting shame-based or compliance-driven approaches when working with children. He focuses on protecting childhood, restoring dignity, and building resilience for children forced to mature prematurely.

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Important Notice

This guide supports the work done in therapy. It does not replace professional mental health care, clinical judgment, or mandated safeguarding procedures. If you are worried about your child's immediate safety or you believe someone is harming your child, contact the treating clinician and follow local emergency and reporting procedures.

Chapter 3

How This Program Works at Home

This program is designed to eliminate ambiguity across settings. Your job is to help the home environment speak the same language as therapy.

- Use the same metaphors your child practices in sessions: the Invisible Crown, the Personal Force Field, and the Emotional Control Panel.
- Repeat short anchor phrases (not long lectures).
- Correct behavior while protecting identity.
- Practice skills during calm moments so your child can access them under stress.

Chapter 4

The Three Pillars (What You Are Reinforcing)

Daily Use Sheet (Fridge-Ready)

- Self-Esteem (Invisible Crown): worth is permanent; behavior is correctable.
- Boundaries (Personal Force Field): your child controls access to his body, space, and name.
- Differentiation (Emotional Control Panel): your child learns to name feelings and separate his feelings from outside noise.

Use this page daily. Keep it short and consistent.

Morning - Crown (worth + pride)

- Name one strength you saw yesterday.
- Say: "Your crown stays on. I saw your _____."

After School - Control Panel (check-in)

- Ask which "light" is on. Offer one calm tool.
- Say: "Which light is on: Green, Yellow, Blue, or Red?"

Conflict Moment - Force Field (boundary)

- Back your child up for respectful boundaries. Correct unsafe actions.
- Say: "Your 'no' is allowed. Use your power words."

Evening - Regulation (reset)

Chapter 5

Core Scripts You Must Know

- Do Calm Down Beat or 3 slow breaths.
- Say: "Let's get back toward Green."

Invisible Crown (Self-Esteem)

Use this when your child makes a mistake, feels ashamed, or thinks he has to earn love.

- "Your crown stays on."
- "Worth is permanent. Behavior is correctable."
- "We repair. We don't label."

What not to do:

- Don't use shame labels (lazy, bad, dramatic, disrespectful).
- Don't withdraw connection to force compliance.

Quick reset (if you mess up):

"I came in too hard. Let me try again. Your crown stays on. We can fix the behavior together."

Personal Force Field (Boundaries)

Use this when your child's name, body, or space is being disrespected, or when he needs to say no safely.

- "Stop. That's not my name."
- "Back up."
- "No. Ask me first."
- "Protecting yourself is not disrespect."

What not to do:

- Don't punish your child for using respectful boundaries.
- Don't tell him to accept disrespect to keep adults comfortable.

Quick reset:

"You were right to protect yourself. Next time, use a calm strong voice. I'm backing you up."

Emotional Control Panel (Differentiation + Regulation)

Use this when emotions rise, when your child shuts down, or when outside stress spills onto him.

- "Which light is on: Green, Yellow, Blue, or Red?"
- "That's outside noise. It doesn't get to name you."
- "One calm tool. Not ten. Let's do the Calm Down Beat."

What not to do:

- Don't ask "why" questions during escalation.
- Don't lecture or demand eye contact when your child is dysregulated.

Quick reset:

"I'm going to slow down. Your body comes first. We can talk when you're back toward Green."

Chapter 6

Eight-Week Home Practice Plan (Aligned to the Therapist Guide)

Every week, you will practice one small skill daily (1-3 minutes). Your therapist will also give you a brief post-session handoff: what was worked on, one skill to practice, one strength to watch for, and one phrase to use at home.

Week 1: Feeling Faces + Calm Down Beat

Goals: name feelings; build regulation foundation.

What to do:

- Ask: "Which face is on?" (happy/sad/mad/calm).
- Practice Calm Down Beat once per day when calm; again during mild stress.
- Reinforce effort: "Your body worked hard, and you helped it."

Exact phrases to use:

- "Which face is on today?"
- "Let's do Calm Down Beat."

Avoid:

- Don't force talking; coloring or quiet is allowed.
- Don't rush to fix feelings.

Week 2: My Big Crown + I Am Amazing

Goals: stabilize worth; build pride language.

What to do:

- Have him say one 'I am...' statement daily.
- Name one 'Jewel' you saw (courage, kindness, effort).
- Use repair language after mistakes.

Exact phrases to use:

- "Your crown stays on."
- "Tell me one amazing thing about you."

Avoid:

- Don't connect worth to grades/behavior.
- Don't use comparison to motivate.

Week 3: My Strong Words + Oops! I Try Again

Goals: replace shame-talk; build try-again habit.

What to do:

- Teach one strong-word phrase he can use under stress (e.g., "I can try again.").
- Create one planned 'try again' moment daily (small task, not a big confrontation).
- Praise persistence, not perfection.

Exact phrases to use:

- "Oops is practice. Try again."
- "What strong words do we use now?"

Avoid:

- Don't mock mistakes.
- Don't overcorrect; keep it one skill.

Week 4: STOP! That's Not My Name + NO! Protect My Space

Goals: name protection; physical and verbal boundaries.

What to do:

- Role-play: child practices "Stop. That's not my name." in a calm voice.
- Practice one boundary posture: step back + hand up.
- At home, ask permission before touch; honor 'no'.

Exact phrases to use:

- "Your 'no' is allowed."
- "Protecting yourself is not disrespect."

Avoid:

- Don't punish respectful boundary-setting.
- Don't tell him to accept disrespect to 'be nice.'

Week 5: Safe Squad Circle + Wait to Talk

Goals: help-seeking; turn-taking; reduce escalation.

What to do:

- Make a Safe Squad list (2-5 people) and where to find them.
- Practice the sequence: "Wait. Breathe. Then talk." once per day.
- During conflict, model the pause before talking.

Exact phrases to use:

- "Who is in your safe squad?"

- "Wait. Breathe. Then talk."

Avoid:

- Don't demand instant answers when he's activated.
- Don't treat help-seeking as weakness.

Week 6: I Speak My Truth + My Good Idea Road

Goals: authentic voice; internal guidance; differentiation.

What to do:

- Have him say one 'truth sentence' daily (simple and age-appropriate).
- Ask: "What's your good idea right now?" and follow through when safe.
- Name outside noise when it shows up (teasing, adult stress).

Exact phrases to use:

- "Your voice matters."
- "What's your good idea right now?"

Avoid:

- Don't punish honest feelings.
- Don't confuse disrespect with truth-telling; coach tone.

Week 7: We Are Family + My Power Plan

Goals: belonging + integration of tools; personal plan.

What to do:

- Use: "We belong together, and you are still you."
- Review his Power Plan twice this week.
- In hard moments, ask: "Which tool first-crown, force field, or panel?"

Exact phrases to use:

- "We belong together."
- "Show me your power plan."

Avoid:

- Don't use 'family' language to pressure silence.
- Don't skip practice because the week is busy.

Week 8: When I Grow Up + Graduation Review

Goals: future identity; maintenance routine.

What to do:

- Use the workbook page to name 1 goal and 1 next step (small + doable).

- Keep it strengths-based: connect the goal to who he is becoming.
- End the week by choosing a 2-minute daily routine to keep using the tools.

Exact phrases to use:

- "Your worth is permanent. We are just practicing skills."
- "What is one next step we can do this week?"

Avoid:

- Turning this into pressure or a lecture ("You better..." / "If you don't...").
- Making big promises you cannot control ("Nothing bad will ever happen" / "I guarantee...").
- Comparisons to other kids or siblings ("Why can't you be like...").
- Using shame as motivation ("After all we did for you...").

Do instead:

- Keep it future-focused and strengths-based: name one skill he built and one next step.
- Offer two realistic choices (small + doable): "Do you want to practice your plan now or after dinner?"
- Connect goals to identity: "You are the kind of kid who keeps going even when it is hard."
- End with a concrete support offer: "I will help you take the next step. We do it together."

Quick reset (if you messed up):

- Stop, breathe, and repair: "I came in too strong. Let me try again."
- Restate the message: "Your worth is permanent. We are just practicing skills."
- Invite collaboration: "What would help you feel supported right now?"

Chapter 7

Coloring & Skills Workbook Companion Index (Page-by-Page)

- Don't turn future talk into performance pressure.
- Don't drop the language once therapy ends.

Use this index to prevent drift: each page has a caregiver prompt, a single question, and one reinforcement line. Keep it short.

Page 1: My Power Plan

- Caregiver prompt: "Show me your power plan. What's step one?"
- One question: What helps you first when it gets hard?
- Skill practiced: Integration + self-efficacy
- Reinforcement line: "You built a plan. Your crown stays on."

Page 2: My Feeling Faces

- Caregiver prompt: "Which face is on today?"

- One question: Where do you feel it in your body?
- Skill practiced: Emotional literacy
- Reinforcement line: "All feelings are allowed here."

Page 3: My Strong Words

- Caregiver prompt: "What strong words do we use now?"
- One question: Which strong word helps you try again?
- Skill practiced: Repair language
- Reinforcement line: "Trying again is a strength."

Page 4: STOP! That's Not My Name

- Caregiver prompt: "Say it calm and firm: Stop. That's not my name."
- One question: What name do you want to be called?
- Skill practiced: Name protection
- Reinforcement line: "You protected yourself."

Page 5: I Speak My Truth

- Caregiver prompt: "Your voice matters. Say your truth in one sentence."
- One question: What do you want me to understand?
- Skill practiced: Authentic voice
- Reinforcement line: "Your truth is allowed here."

Page 6: My Good Idea Road

- Caregiver prompt: "What's your good idea right now?"
- One question: How do you know it's a good idea?
- Skill practiced: Internal guidance
- Reinforcement line: "Good ideas help you stay safe and stay you."

Page 7: Safe Squad Circle

- Caregiver prompt: "Who is in your safe squad?"
- One question: Who can you go to when your red light is on?
- Skill practiced: Help-seeking
- Reinforcement line: "You don't carry hard things alone."

Page 8: Calm Down Beat

- Caregiver prompt: "Let's do Calm Down Beat."
- One question: Did your body move toward Green?
- Skill practiced: Regulation (rhythm/breath)

- Reinforcement line: "Your body can calm. You can help it."

Page 9: Oops! I Try Again

- Caregiver prompt: "Oops is practice. Try again."
- One question: What's one thing you learned?
- Skill practiced: Growth mindset
- Reinforcement line: "Mistakes don't remove your crown."

Page 10: We Are Family

- Caregiver prompt: "We belong together, and you are still you."
- One question: What does support look like today?
- Skill practiced: Belonging
- Reinforcement line: "You are not alone."

Page 11: I Am Amazing

- Caregiver prompt: "Tell me one amazing thing about you."
- One question: What makes you proud of yourself?
- Skill practiced: Identity affirmation
- Reinforcement line: "That's a jewel."

Page 12: Wait to Talk

- Caregiver prompt: "Wait. Breathe. Then talk."
- One question: What do you want to say now?
- Skill practiced: Impulse control
- Reinforcement line: "You used control."

Page 13: My Big Crown

- Caregiver prompt: "Your crown stays on."
- One question: What jewel do you carry today?
- Skill practiced: Stable worth
- Reinforcement line: "Worth is permanent."

Page 14: NO! Protect My Space

- Caregiver prompt: "Your 'no' is allowed. Protect your space."
- One question: Where is your boundary line?
- Skill practiced: Physical boundaries
- Reinforcement line: "Protecting yourself is not disrespect."

Page 15: When I Grow Up

Caregiver prompt: "Your future is yours."

One question: What kind of person are you becoming?

Skill practiced: Future orientation

Reinforcement line: "You are growing with pride."

Chapter 8

Caregiver Handoff Template (Bring This to Sessions)

- Caregiver prompt: "Your future is yours."
- One question: What kind of person are you becoming?
- Skill practiced: Future orientation
- Reinforcement line: "You are growing with pride."

After each session, ask the therapist to fill this out with you. Keep it in the front of the workbook.

What we worked on (one sentence)

One skill to practice (one action)

One strength to watch for (one trait)

One phrase to use at home (one sentence)

Notes / questions for next session

Chapter 9

BOYS' CAREGIVER GUIDE CLOSING STATEMENT

Your steady presence teaches him that he is worthy of care, boundaries, and joy. Every small moment of affirmation helps him grow into the man he's meant to become. You are not just guiding him—you are showing him what it means to be loved, seen, and respected.