

MY LIGHT SHINES BRIGHT

CAREGIVER GUIDE

For African American Girls Ages 5-9



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My Light Shines Bright Care Giver Guide

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Caregiver Guide

A Nurturing Home Companion to the Therapist Guide
for African American Girls (Ages 5-9)

Three Pillars:

- Inner Light (Self-Esteem)
- Light Bubble (Boundaries)
- Weather Map + Shelter (Differentiation & Regulation)

Designed to coordinate with:

- My Light Shines Bright - Therapist Guide
- My Light Shines Bright - Coloring & Skills Workbook

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OPENING NOTE TO CAREGIVERS

If you are reading this, it means you are willing to do the most powerful thing a caregiver can do: show up again tomorrow with love, structure, and steadiness.

Your daughter is not a problem to be managed. She is a child to be protected and guided.

And in this world, African American girls are sometimes asked to carry things too early:

to be “mature,” to be “polite,” to be “strong,” to be “quiet,” to be “easy.”

This guide is here to give you a simple, repeatable way to protect her childhood while building her skills.

Not by making her smaller. Not by asking her to shrink her voice.

But by teaching her something deeper:

- “My worth is steady.” (Inner Light)
- “My space matters.” (Light Bubble)
- “My feelings are real, and I can handle them.” (Weather Map + Shelter)

You do not need to be perfect.

You need to be consistent.

You need to be kind and firm at the same time.

That combination-nurture plus structure-is where healing happens.

- Craig S. Thurmond

My Light Shine Bright Care Giver Guide

CRAIG S THURMOND

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE (KEEP IT SIMPLE)

This caregiver guide is designed to match the My Light Shines Bright Therapist Guide.

You do not need to read this like a textbook.

Your job is to do three things:

- 1) Use the same language the therapist uses.
- 2) Practice the same skills at home for a few minutes a day.
- 3) Protect your daughter's dignity while teaching her tools.

THE DAILY TIME COMMITMENT

- 3 minutes per day (most days)
- 10 minutes one day per week (to review a skill or script)

THE RULE

Do the practice when she is calm, not only when she is upset.

We don't wait for the storm to learn how to build shelter.

THE THREE PILLARS (MATCHES THE THERAPIST GUIDE)

- Inner Light = Self-Esteem
- Light Bubble = Boundaries
- Weather Map + Shelter = Differentiation and Regulation

WHAT YOU WILL SAY OVER AND OVER

- "What's your weather right now?"
- "Is that your weather or someone else's weather?"
- "What is your shelter?"
- "Your name matters. Your body matters. Your choices matter."
- "Your light stays on, even when you make mistakes."

PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE (THE 3 PILLARS + WEEKLY RHYTHM)

PILLAR 1 - INNER LIGHT (SELF-ESTEEM)

Caregiver message:

- “Your worth is not up for debate.”
- “You are enough.”
- “You can learn hard things and still be loved.”

PILLAR 2 - LIGHT BUBBLE (BOUNDARIES)

Caregiver message:

- “You are allowed to say stop.”
- “You are allowed to need space.”
- “Your body belongs to you.”

PILLAR 3 - WEATHER MAP + SHELTER (DIFFERENTIATION/REGULATION)

Caregiver message:

- “Feelings are weather. Weather changes.”
- “We separate what happened from what we feel.”
- “We choose shelter.”

WEEKLY RHYTHM (ALIGNED TO THERAPIST GUIDE)

- Week 1: Weather Map + Shelter Choice
- Week 2: Body Weather + Calm Down Beat
- Week 3: Scripts for name/turn-taking/gossip
- Week 4: Consent + One Step Back
- Week 5: Affirmations + Strength Tag
- Week 6: Protecting Joy + “Their weather vs my weather”
- Week 7: Comparison Trap + Leadership Voice
- Week 8: Integration + Graduation (Light Map)

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CHAPTER 1 - WELCOME, CAREGIVER: YOUR LOVE IS THE TREATMENT PLAN

Your presence is the message.

Children learn safety through the tone in your voice, the softness of your face, and your steadiness.

When you stay calm, you teach her that feelings are not emergencies.

When you set respectful boundaries, you teach her that love does not require self-erasure.

When you correct a harmful label, you teach her that she is not what the world tries to call her.

THIS GUIDE IS FOR CAREGIVERS WHO WANT TWO THINGS AT THE SAME TIME

- A daughter who is protected and nurtured
- A daughter who is skilled, confident, and safe in her body and her voice

YOUR THREE CAREGIVER PROMISES

- 1) I will not confuse her boundaries with disrespect.
- 2) I will not confuse her feelings with her identity.
- 3) I will not ask her to carry adult weight in child-sized hands.

You are not alone in this work.

You have a plan.

You have language.

You have a rhythm.

And that rhythm changes everything.

CHAPTER 2 - PROTECTING GIRLHOOD: THE HOME AS A SAFE PLACE TO BE YOUNG

African American girls sometimes receive the message that they must be “ready” too soon: ready to manage emotions, ready to manage adults, ready to manage everyone’s comfort.

This program protects girlhood by building two things:

- Softness: the right to be young, playful, unsure, and cared for
- Strength: the right to have a voice, have boundaries, and keep dignity

WHAT “PROTECTING GIRLHOOD” LOOKS LIKE AT HOME

- You let her be upset without shaming her.
- You correct disrespectful behavior without attacking her character.
- You praise effort and integrity more than performance.
- You teach her scripts so she doesn’t have to freeze or explode.
- You keep her joy clean. You do not punish her for being happy.

THE BIG CAREGIVER SHIFT

Instead of asking:

- “Why are you acting like that?”

Try:

- “What’s your weather right now?”
- “What happened?”
- “What do you need for shelter?”

That language turns conflict into coaching.

And coaching builds a confident child.

CHAPTER 3 - PILLAR 1: INNER LIGHT (SELF-ESTEEM YOU CAN'T TAKE AWAY)

The goal is simple:

Her worth stays steady even when her day is messy.

WHAT YOU ARE TEACHING HER

- "I can make mistakes and still be lovable."
- "I can learn hard things."
- "I don't have to compare myself to feel good."

DAILY AFFIRMATIONS (HOME VERSION)

Say one per day. Repeat it twice.

- "My skin is beautiful. My hair is magic. I am cute just the way I am."
- "I am smart. I can learn hard things. I can try again."
- "My ideas matter. I can lead and I can decide."

SCHOOL/CLINIC VERSION (IF YOU WANT A NEUTRAL OPTION)

- "My body and my hair deserve respect."
- "I can practice and improve."
- "My ideas matter."

THE STRENGTH TAG (THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL)

Once per week, choose 3 non-physical strengths and “tag” her with them.

Examples:

- kind, brave, thoughtful, honest, creative, persistent, gentle, fair, curious

Caregiver script:

- “When I saw you (behavior), it showed me you are (strength). That’s part of your light.”

Weekly tag:

- “This week, you’re wearing your (strength) tag.”

WHEN SHE FALLS SHORT

Say this:

- “Your behavior needs coaching, but your light stays on.”

Then coach the skill.

CHAPTER 4 - PILLAR 2: LIGHT BUBBLE (BOUNDARIES, CONSENT, AND DIGNITY)

Boundaries are not disrespect.

Boundaries are protection.

WHAT YOU ARE TEACHING HER

- "I can say stop."
- "I can ask for space."
- "I can correct a name."
- "I can protect my body and my peace."

TWO-LANE SCRIPT RULE (THIS MATCHES THE THERAPIST GUIDE)

Teach BOTH versions so she has options:

- Home Version (Real-Talk)
- School/Clinic Version (Neutral)

SCRIPT 1 - UNWANTED NICKNAME

Home:

- "Stop calling me that. My name is (Name). That's what you need to call me."

School/Clinic:

- "Please stop. My name is (Name). Use my real name."

SCRIPT 2 - TURN-TAKING / CHOICE CONTROL

Home:

- "We're taking turns. My choice first, then yours."

School/Clinic:

- "We're taking turns. My choice first, then yours."

SCRIPT 3 - GOSSIP / OVERSHARING

Home:

- "I don't need to hear that. I'm walking away."

School/Clinic:

- "I'm not discussing that. I'm going to do something else now."

CONSENT SKILL (HAIR TOUCH OR BODY SPACE)

Teach this exactly:

- “Please don’t touch my hair. Ask me first.”

Safety option:

- If she feels unsafe, she steps back and says:

“I need space. Don’t touch my hair.”

PHYSICAL TOOL - ONE STEP BACK

Practice it like a game.

- Step backward one full step.
- Say: “I need more space right now.”

WHAT TO PRAISE

- Calm firmness
- Clear words
- Protecting her peace

Praise line:

- “That was respectful and strong. That’s a boundary.”

CHAPTER 5 - PILLAR 3: WEATHER MAP + SHELTER (FEELINGS, SEPARATION, AND CALM)

Feelings are weather.

Weather changes.

WHAT YOU ARE TEACHING HER

- “I can name what I feel.”
- “I can separate what happened from what I feel.”
- “I can choose shelter instead of exploding or shutting down.”

THE WEATHER WORDS (MATCHES THE THERAPIST GUIDE)

- Sunshine: calm, happy, joy, loved
- Rain/Drizzle: sad, disappointed, quiet
- Thunderstorm: angry, overwhelmed, frustrated
- Clouds: worried, confused, uncertain
- Fog: numb, disconnected, spaced out

THE CAREGIVER CHECK-IN (DAILY)

Ask:

- 1) “What’s your weather right now?”
- 2) “Is that your weather, or did someone else’s weather splash you?”
- 3) “What is your shelter?”

SHELTER MENU (CHOOSE 2-3 AND STAY CONSISTENT)

- Calm Down Beat (breathing rhythm)
- Draw more Sunshine / add a safe corner
- One Step Back + “I need space”
- Quiet hands + slow count to 10
- Ask for help: “I need a grown-up.”

BODY WEATHER (WEEK 2 SKILL)

Ask:

- “Where is the weather in your body?”

Choices:

- stomach / chest / head / shoulders / hands

Then:

- “What shelter helps that part feel safer?”

WHEN SHE IS IN A STORM

Do not lecture.

Do this instead:

- lower your voice
- slow your breathing
- say: “I’m here. Let’s choose shelter.”

After she is calm, THEN talk about what happened.

CHAPTER 6 - THE 8-WEEK HOME PRACTICE PLAN (ALIGNED TO THE THERAPIST GUIDE)

RULE

Keep home practice short:

- 3 minutes most days
- 10 minutes once per week

WEEK 1 - WEATHER MAP + SHELTER

Daily:

- “What’s your weather?”
- Choose one shelter for 60 seconds.

Weekly:

- Make one Weather Map together (draw or color).

WEEK 2 - BODY WEATHER + CALM DOWN BEAT

Daily:

- “Where is the weather in your body?”
- Calm Down Beat for 60 seconds.

Weekly:

- Practice shelter even when she’s calm.

WEEK 3 - SCRIPTS FOR NAME / TURNS / GOSSIP

Daily:

- Practice 2 scripts once each.

Weekly:

- Role-play one scenario (friendly tone, then mild pressure).

WEEK 4 - CONSENT + ONE STEP BACK

Daily:

- One Step Back drill (3 reps).

Weekly:

- Practice hair-touch consent script + safety step-back option.

WEEK 5 - AFFIRMATIONS + STRENGTH TAG

Daily:

- One affirmation at bedtime.

Weekly:

- Strength Tag (3 non-physical strengths) + praise line.

WEEK 6 - PROTECTING JOY + “THEIR WEATHER VS MY WEATHER”

Daily:

- “Did someone else’s weather splash you?”

Weekly:

- Role-play the “friend’s bad mood” scenario.

Message:

- “You can care about people and still keep your joy.”

WEEK 7 - COMPARISON TRAP + LEADERSHIP VOICE

Daily:

- Effort praise line: “I saw you try even when it was hard.”

Weekly:

- Practice leadership voice:

“Wait. I have an idea. I need you to listen for one minute.”

WEEK 8 - INTEGRATION WEEK

Daily:

- Pick any one pillar and practice it.

Weekly:

- Make a simple “Light Map” together:
- Inner Light (one strength)
- Light Bubble (one boundary)
- Weather + Shelter (one coping action)

CHAPTER 7 - PARTNERING WITH THE THERAPIST AND THE SCHOOL (WITHOUT LOSING YOUR PEACE)

You are not asking for special treatment.

You are asking for your child to be treated like a child.

HOW TO PARTNER WITH THE THERAPIST (DO THIS WEEKLY)

Ask three questions:

- 1) “What pillar did you focus on this week?”
- 2) “What exact script or affirmation should we use at home?”
- 3) “What is the one home practice assignment?”

Then write it down and keep it simple.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT “ATTITUDE” (CAREPROVIDER CLARITY)

If someone labels her behavior as “attitude,” translate it into skill language:

- “She is overwhelmed.”
- “She is protecting her boundary.”
- “She needs help choosing shelter.”
- “She needs clear expectations and calm coaching.”

SCHOOL SUPPORT (IF NEEDED)

Teach her the school/clinic scripts.

These are designed to be respectful and firm.

They protect her dignity while reducing escalation.

HOME RULE

We do not punish a child for protecting her space.

We coach the words, the tone, the timing, and the shelter.

THAT IS HOW YOU RAISE A GIRL WHO CAN STAND UP WITHOUT LOSING HER HEART.

CHAPTER 8 - A FINAL WORD: LET HER BE SOFT AND STRONG

Your child deserves a home where she can be fully human.

She can be bright and still be tired.

She can be confident and still be sensitive.

She can be strong and still need comfort.

She can have boundaries and still be kind.

When you practice these pillars, you are giving her a lifelong gift:

- the ability to respect herself
- the ability to protect herself
- the ability to calm herself
- the ability to keep her joy clean

Let her be a child.

Let her be loved.

Let her be coached without shame.

And when the world tries to name her something she is not,

bring her back to what you know is true:

Her light is real.

And it is here to stay.

APPENDIX A - THE DAILY 3-MINUTE ROUTINE (THE “LIGHT PRACTICE”)

Do this once per day, most days.

Step 1 (30 seconds): Weather Check

- “What’s your weather right now?”

Step 2 (30 seconds): Differentiation

- “Is that your weather or someone else’s weather?”

Step 3 (60 seconds): Shelter

- Choose one shelter and practice it:
- Calm Down Beat
- Draw Sunshine / safe corner
- One Step Back + “I need space”
- Quiet hands + count to 10

Step 4 (30 seconds): Inner Light

- Say one affirmation:
- “My light stays on.”
- “I can try again.”
- “I am enough.”

Step 5 (30 seconds): Praise (Effort or Integrity)

- “I saw you try. That’s your light.”

APPENDIX B - SCRIPT CARDS (HOME VERSION + SCHOOL/CLINIC VERSION)

CARD 1 - NAME PROTECTION

Home:

- “Stop calling me that. My name is (Name).”

School/Clinic:

- “Please stop. My name is (Name). Use my real name.”

CARD 2 - TURN-TAKING

Home:

- “We’re taking turns. My choice first, then yours.”

School/Clinic:

- “We’re taking turns. My choice first, then yours.”

CARD 3 - GOSSIP BOUNDARY

Home:

- “I’m not hearing that. I’m walking away.”

School/Clinic:

- “I’m not discussing that. I’m going to do something else now.”

CARD 4 - CONSENT (HAIR/BODY)

Primary:

- “Please don’t touch my hair. Ask me first.”

Safety option:

- One Step Back + “I need space. Don’t touch my hair.”

CARD 5 - PROTECTING JOY

- “I’m having a good day. I’m not letting your mood change mine.”

APPENDIX C - THE CALM DOWN BEAT (SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS)

Goal:

Slow the body down so the brain can think again.

How to do it (60 seconds):

- 1) Put one hand on your chest or belly.
- 2) Breathe in slow for 3 counts.
- 3) Breathe out slow for 4 counts.
- 4) Tap a gentle rhythm on your leg or the table while you breathe.
- 5) Repeat for 6 breaths.

Caregiver line:

- “We’re not fixing the problem yet. We’re choosing shelter first.”

APPENDIX D - STRENGTH TAG LIST (NON-PHYSICAL WORDS)

Choose 3 each week:

- brave
- kind
- honest
- creative
- thoughtful
- persistent
- patient
- fair
- gentle
- helpful
- curious
- forgiving
- focused
- respectful
- courageous
- resilient
- wise
- joyful
- calm
- confident

APPENDIX E - WEATHER WORDS (FEELINGS AS WEATHER)

Sunshine:

- calm, happy, loved, proud, excited

Rain/Drizzle:

- sad, disappointed, lonely, left out

Thunderstorm:

- angry, overwhelmed, frustrated, “too much”

Clouds:

- worried, confused, unsure, nervous

Fog:

- numb, quiet, shut down, spaced out

Caregiver reminder:

- “Weather changes. We don’t shame weather. We choose shelter.”

GIRLS' CAREGIVER GUIDE CLOSING STATEMENT

When you remind her that her voice, her name, and her joy matter, you are giving her a foundation no one can take away. Let her know her light shines bright, always. Your belief in her is a shelter she will carry through life, helping her walk in both softness and strength. You are her first safe place-thank you for protecting her light.