



FREE FIELD GUIDE

When your child blames you for leaving

A steady response for a painful moment — for younger children and teens.

First, take one breath

Hearing “This is your fault” can land hard. You do not need to win an argument tonight. Your child may be grieving people, routines, or the life they knew. You can hold your own truth and make room for their feelings.

What you can say to a younger child

“I hear that you miss how things were. It makes sense to feel upset. The unsafe behavior was not your fault, and it was not your job to fix it. I made an adult decision to work toward safety. You can ask me questions whenever you are ready.”

What you can say to a teen

“You do not have to agree with every decision I made to tell me how this affected you. I want to hear the part that hurt. I will be honest about what I can share, and I will not ask you to take sides or carry adult details.”

If the conversation heats up

Try: “I want to keep talking, and I do not want us to hurt each other. Let us take ten minutes and come back.” Return when you said you would. If your child prefers, invite a note, text, walk, or trusted adult to help begin.

Educational peer support, not legal, medical, or mental-health advice. Adapt these ideas to your safety and your child’s needs. For immediate danger, call local emergency services. In the U.S., The Hotline: 800-799-7233 or text START to 88788; 988 provides mental-health crisis support.



FREE FIELD GUIDE

Make room for the next conversation

You can repair without making promises you cannot keep.

Listen for the loss underneath the words

Ask one question, then pause: "What do you miss most?" "What feels hardest at school?" "What do you wish I understood?" Reflect back what you heard before explaining.

Name what is and is not theirs to carry

Children can have mixed feelings about a parent or caregiver. They should not have to manage contact, relay messages, investigate adult events, or decide whose account is true. If custody or contact questions arise, get individualized help from a qualified advocate or attorney.

Offer one dependable thing

Predictability can be small: a bedtime check-in, the same pickup person, a calendar for known plans, or a weekly one-on-one hour. Say what you know and acknowledge what remains uncertain.

One thing my child has asked for:

One honest, doable promise I can make this week:

A note from Victoria

I have lived through leaving while pregnant. I know courage does not make every conversation easy. You do not have to carry this one alone. A Contagious Smile's peer-to-peer support is here alongside professional care when needed.

Educational peer support, not legal, medical, or mental-health advice. Adapt these ideas to your safety and your child's needs. For immediate danger, call local emergency services. In the U.S., The Hotline: 800-799-7233 or text START to 88788; 988 provides mental-health crisis support.