

Engaging Fathers with Intention: A Reflective Approach

We're here to reflect, connect,
and explore new ways of
engaging fathers.

Presented by Alex Flores M.A.



Learning Objectives

Connect with peers to share our experiences and identify patterns.

Explore relational tools to invite fathers with intention.

Explore the ways in which fathers experience the perinatal system.

Reflect on implicit bias and default patterns.



Breath and Arrive

Lets Connect!

How many years have you been working with families?

What word comes to mind when you think of fathers you engage with in your role?



Shared Agreements for Reflective Space

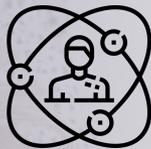
Listen to understand



Stay open and curious



Speak from experience



Take space, leave space



Allow conversations to emerge



Show up authentically



Reconnect!

Now think of any fathers in your life; your own, your brother, your uncle.

What words come to mind?



What We Mean by Reflection



Reflection is an invitation to pause and notice.

We're not here to fix or judge, we're here to expand how we see.

A Personal Window into Fatherhood

A moment that shifted
everything

Becoming a father while
feeling unseen

What assumptions might
get in the way of a father
being seen as present,
capable, and valuable?



Father A: What Do You See?

You walk into a postpartum hospital room. A young father, maybe early 20s, stands off to the side of the bed. He's wearing a hoodie, jeans, and beat-up sneakers with one hand in his pocket, the other holding his phone.

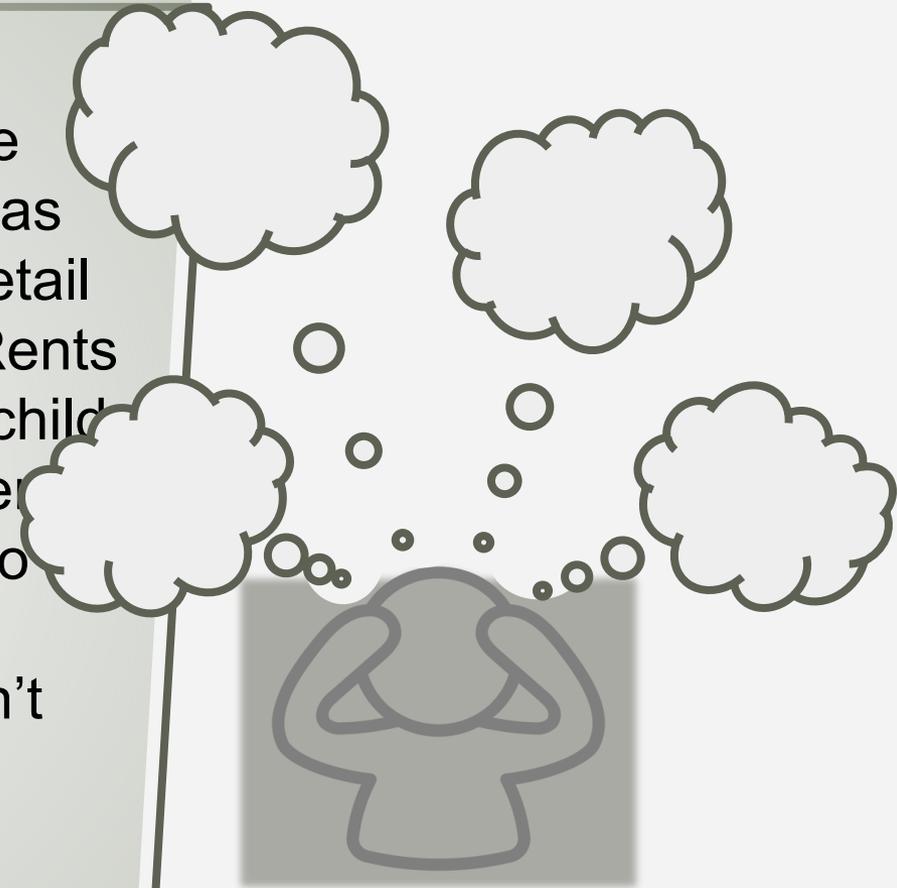
His shoulders are hunched, his eyes glance up quickly, then back to the screen. His face looks blank with low affect and unreadable. He doesn't say much.

There's a backpack on the floor next to him, half-zipped. The mother is holding the baby, and he keeps a slight distance, standing close but not too close. almost as if he is trying to blend into the background.

The energy around him is hard to read. Is it disinterest? Or is it something else?

Father A: What You Didn't Know

22 years old. Raised by a single mom. Never met his dad, but was surrounded by uncles. Works retail and picks up handyman jobs. Rents a room with his girlfriend. First child. Couldn't make many appointments due to work, but deeply wants to be involved. He's eager to be the father he never had—but doesn't know where to start.



Father B: What Do You See?

You enter another room. A man in his early 40s stands near the window, dressed in a suit as if he came there straight from the office, scrolling through emails on his phone.

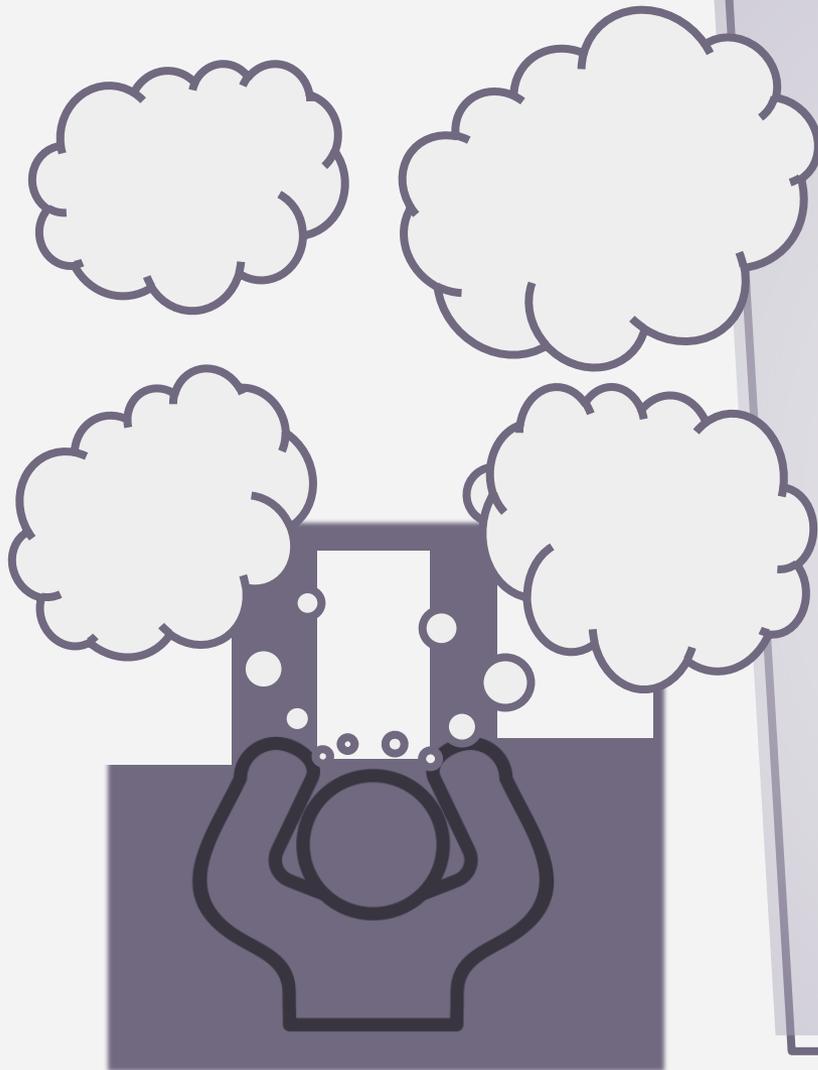
His brow is furrowed not in frustration, but in focus. He gives a polite nod as you enter, makes brief eye contact, then returns to his phone.

He doesn't seem rude, but he does seem distant.

When you ask a question, he gestures toward the mother without much verbal response.

His presence feels hard to read but is professional, composed, but maybe distracted.

Father B: What You Didn't Know



In his 40s. This is his third child. He's been present at every appointment. Keeps his phone nearby because he's managing stress at work. Recently started therapy to work through childhood trauma from his own emotionally distant father. Struggles with connection but is doing his best to show up differently than what he experienced growing up but is often distant and finds himself working instead of connecting with his family and children.

Small Group Reflection

What came up for you?

What shifted when you heard their stories?

How might you approach engagement differently now?





Group harvest

What came up for you?

Were there any patterns or shifts that stood out when hearing others share?

How might what you heard today shape the way you engage fathers moving forward?

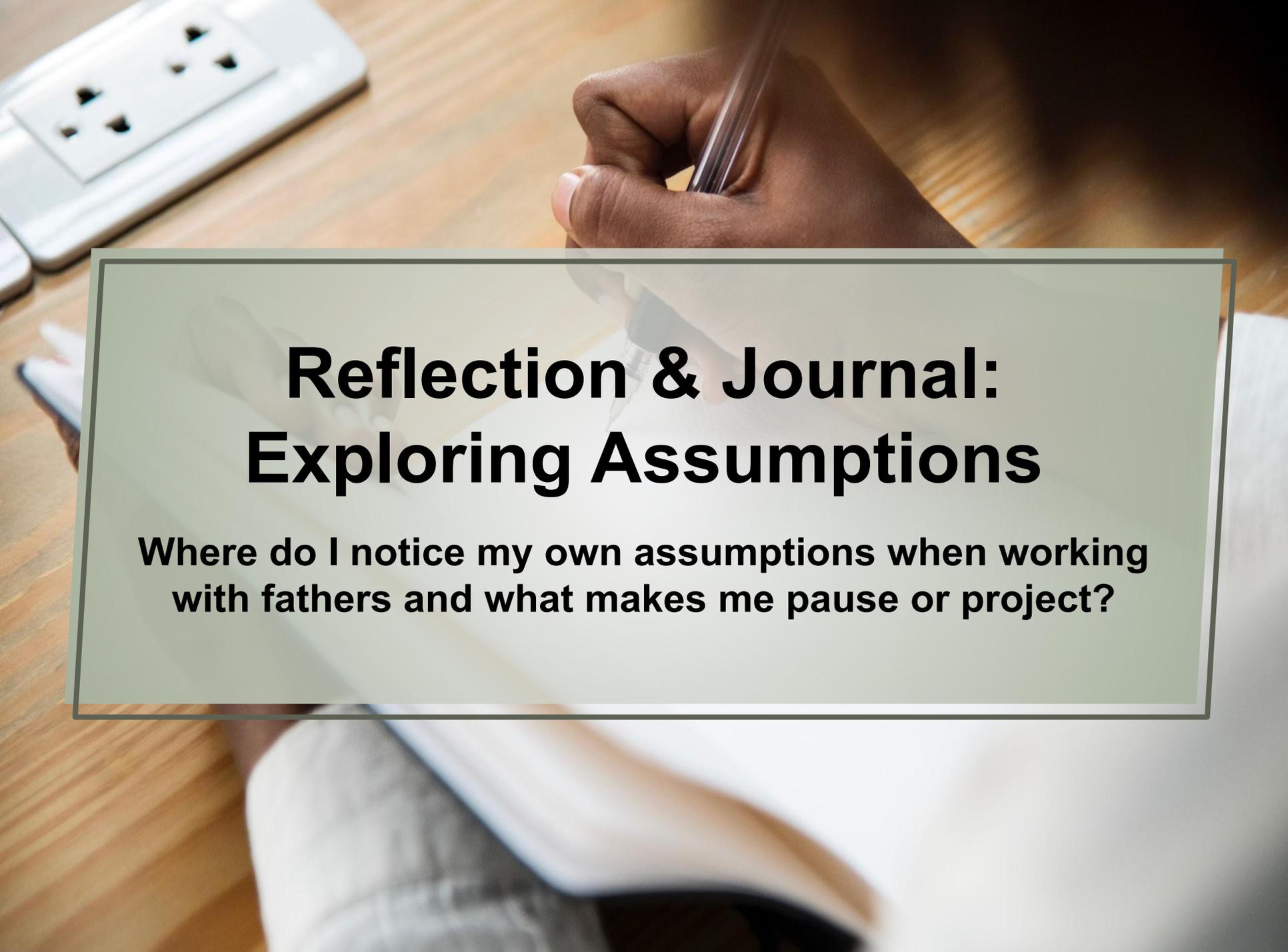
Noticing Assumptions

Our brains make quick decisions.

Quick does not always mean accurate, or fair.

Systems and culture often reinforce who we see and who we don't.



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a pen and writing in a journal. The journal is open on a wooden desk. In the background, a white electrical outlet is visible. The scene is softly lit, creating a calm and focused atmosphere.

Reflection & Journal: Exploring Assumptions

Where do I notice my own assumptions when working with fathers and what makes me pause or project?



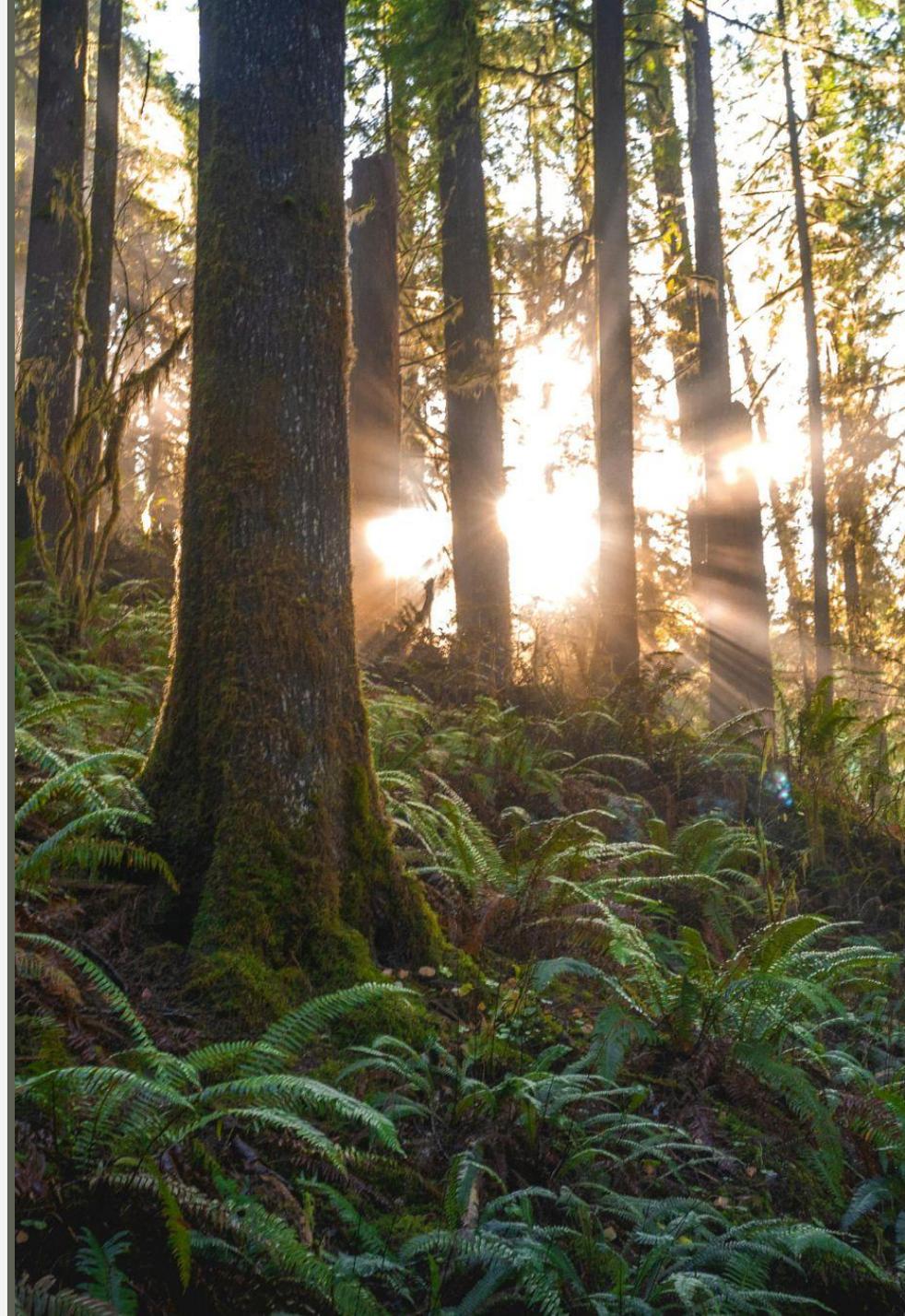
Pair & Share

Where do I notice my own assumptions when working with fathers and what makes me pause or project?

Group Harvest

What patterns or insights did you notice across the group as folks shared about their assumptions?

Did anything stand out about how we show up or what gets in the way when engaging fathers?



Breathe, Stretch, Reset



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What Shapes the Way We See Fathers?

Cultural norms



Personal experiences



Organizational practices



Systemic structures

How We Engage Does Matter

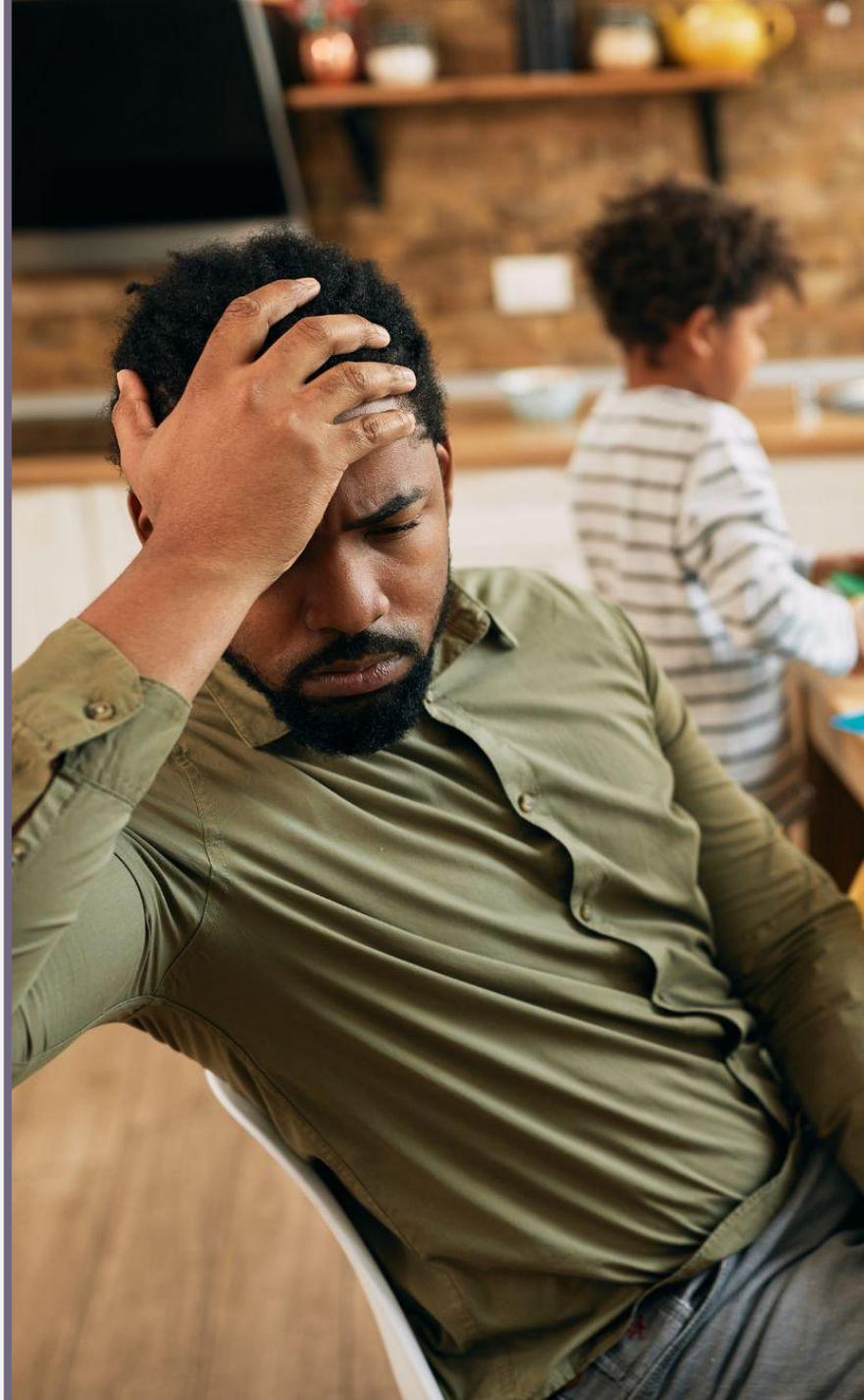
Allow space for silence and slower responses

Turn your body toward the father when speaking

Acknowledge the father by name and validate their role

Ask open-ended questions with curiosity

Be intentional with your presence



Inviting Fathers with Intention

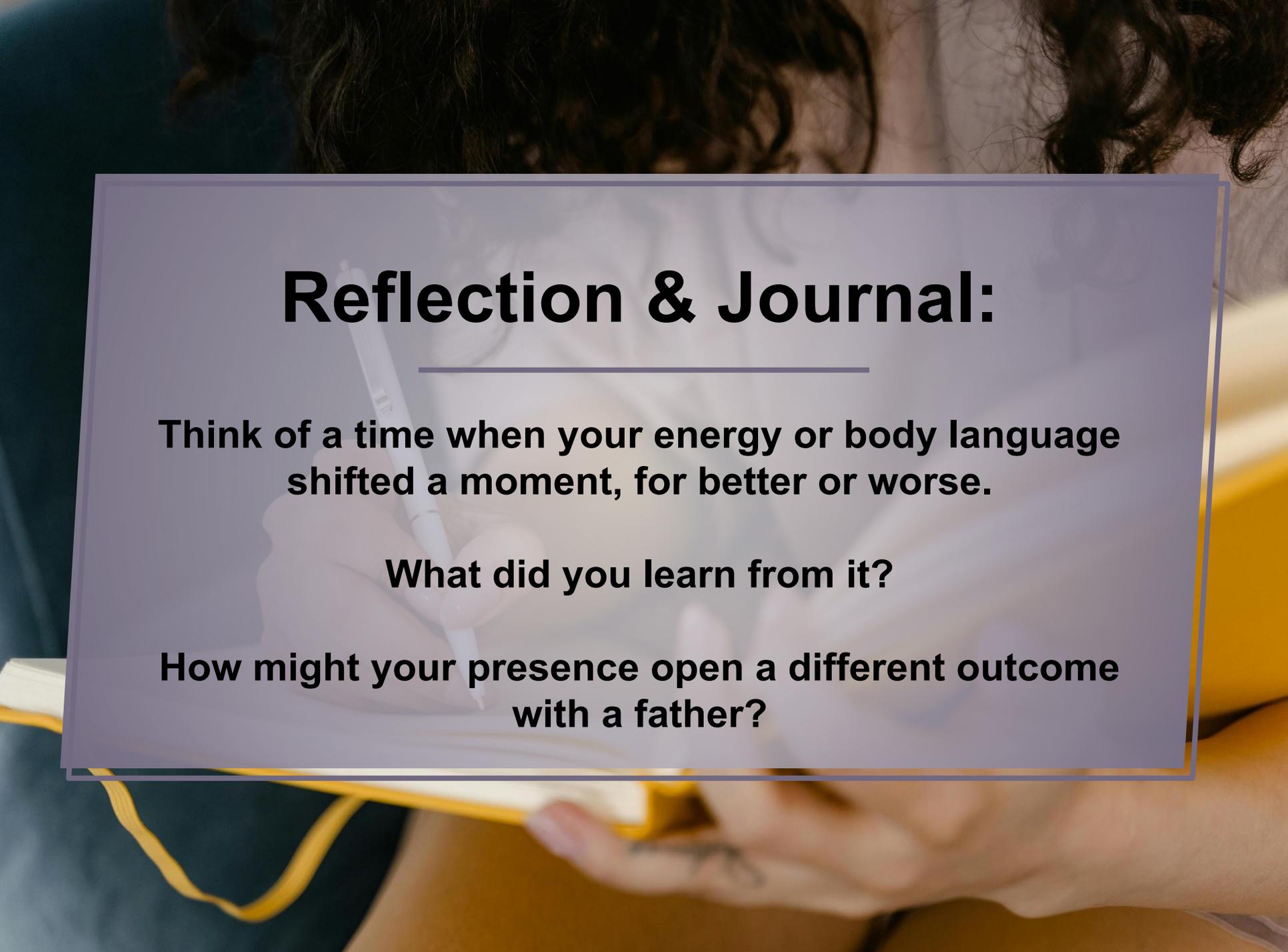
How are you holding everything right now?

What's one thing you're most excited or nervous about?

What do you want your baby to know about you one day?

Would it be helpful if I included you in this part of the conversation?

We appreciate you being here, it means a lot.

A person with dark curly hair is shown from the back, writing in a notebook with a white pen. The notebook is open, and the person is wearing a yellow top. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the writing action.

Reflection & Journal:

Think of a time when your energy or body language shifted a moment, for better or worse.

What did you learn from it?

How might your presence open a different outcome with a father?



Group Harvest

After reflecting, what are you noticing about how your energy or body language shapes connection?

What stood out to you about how small shifts can impact a moment with a father?

A top-down view of a diverse group of people's legs and feet standing on a concrete surface. The people are wearing various styles of pants and shoes, including jeans, leggings, and sneakers in different colors and patterns. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor setting. A central text overlay is present.

Bringing It All Together



Thank You!

**You are the work. The work you do matters.
You matter.**