

An illustration of five diverse women standing in a circle, embracing each other. The women have various hair colors and styles, and are wearing different colored tops. The background is a soft pink with yellow geometric shapes. The title 'Rooted & Resilient' is written in large, bold, black letters across the bottom of the illustration.

Rooted & Resilient

Food, Body, & Family Boundaries

What We Will Cover



Hi! I'm Stephanie Hardison. I am a LCSW. My identities include fat, queer, and Latina.

Presentation Topics

Roots of Food & Body
Policing

Impact on Trust, Safety
& Anxiety

Framework & Practical
Scripts

Internal Toolkit &
Resilience

The Roots of Food & Body Policing



Diet Culture

Pervasive societal messages about weight, food, and body size that normalize policing what and how we eat.

Cultural & Generational Norms

Inherited beliefs and practices around food and body passed down through families and communities.

Family Roles

Expectations shaped by roles – caretaker, rebel, peacemaker, that influence behavior and identity around food.

Inherited Beliefs

Deeply rooted stories and values about bodies that quietly shape how we see ourselves and others.

The Roots of Food & Body Policing

Examples from lived experience show how cultural messages, generational patterns, and family roles shape our relationship with food and body.

"Clean your plate"

Generational patterns around food

"You look healthy now"

Family stories reinforce body rules

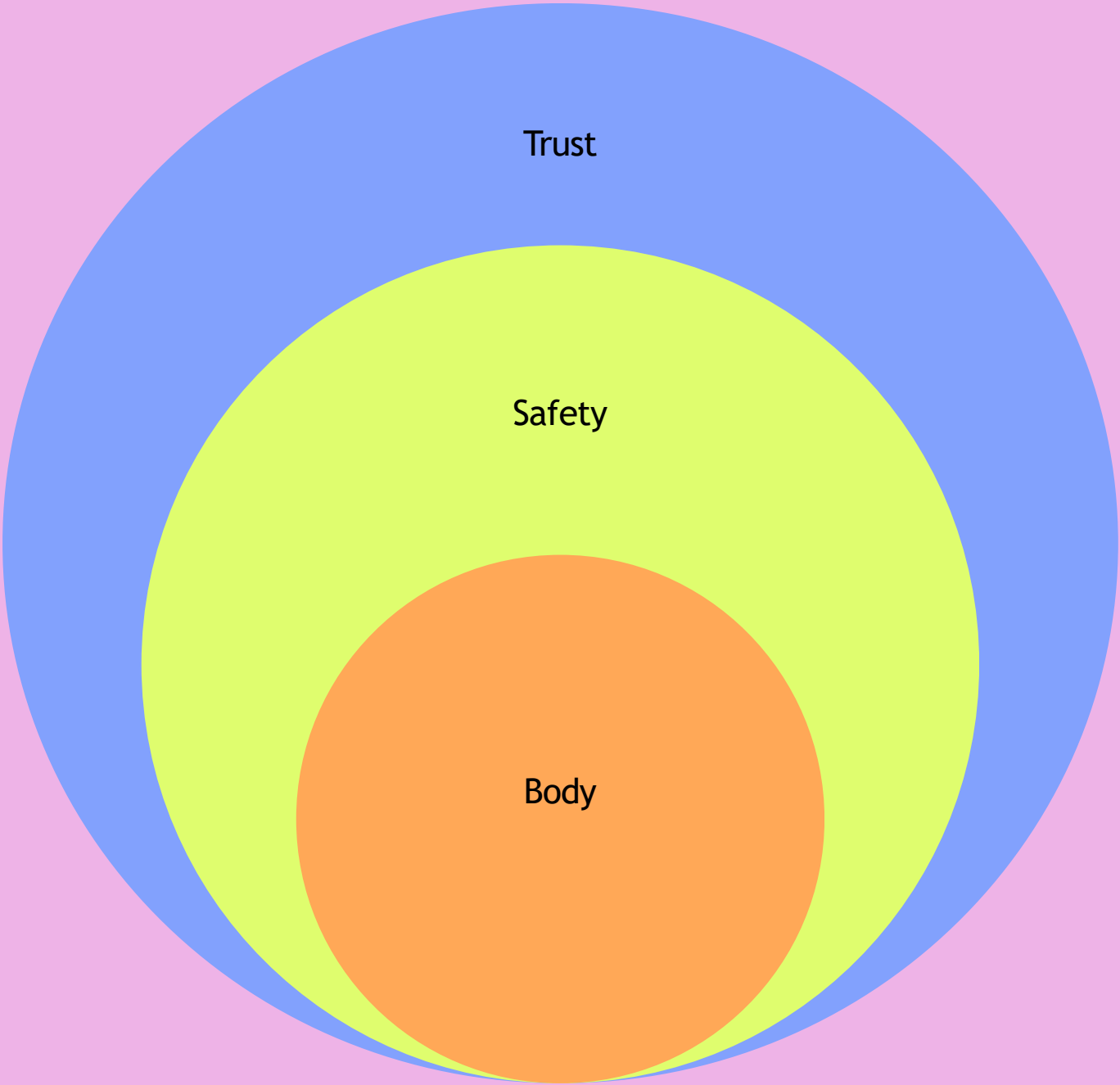
Peacemaker: avoiding conflict over food

Family roles shape boundary dynamics

Caretaker role: managing others' eating

Rebel role: resisting food rules openly

Impact on Trust, Safety, Body Relationship & Anxiety



Erosion of Trust:

In self & others

Compromised Safety:

Rigid or unclear limits

Heightened Anxiety:

Eating & social situations

Framework: Expectations, Rules & Boundaries

	Definition	Key Characteristics
Expectations	What we hope or believe will happen in a relationship or situation	Often unspoken; shaped by upbringing, culture, and past experiences
Rules	Explicit or implicit guidelines that govern behavior within a family or relationship	Can be stated or assumed; may be rigid or flexible depending on family dynamics
Boundaries	Limits that establish what is acceptable, safe, and respectful in our interactions	Protect emotional and physical wellbeing; require communication and consistency

Framework: Expectations, Rules & Boundaries



Definition



Key Characteristics

Why It Matters

Distinguishing between these three concepts helps clarify where tension originates

Clarity reduces conflict and supports healthier family communication

Common Confusion

Expectations are often mistaken for rules; rules are often mistaken for boundaries

Understanding the difference empowers intentional boundary setting

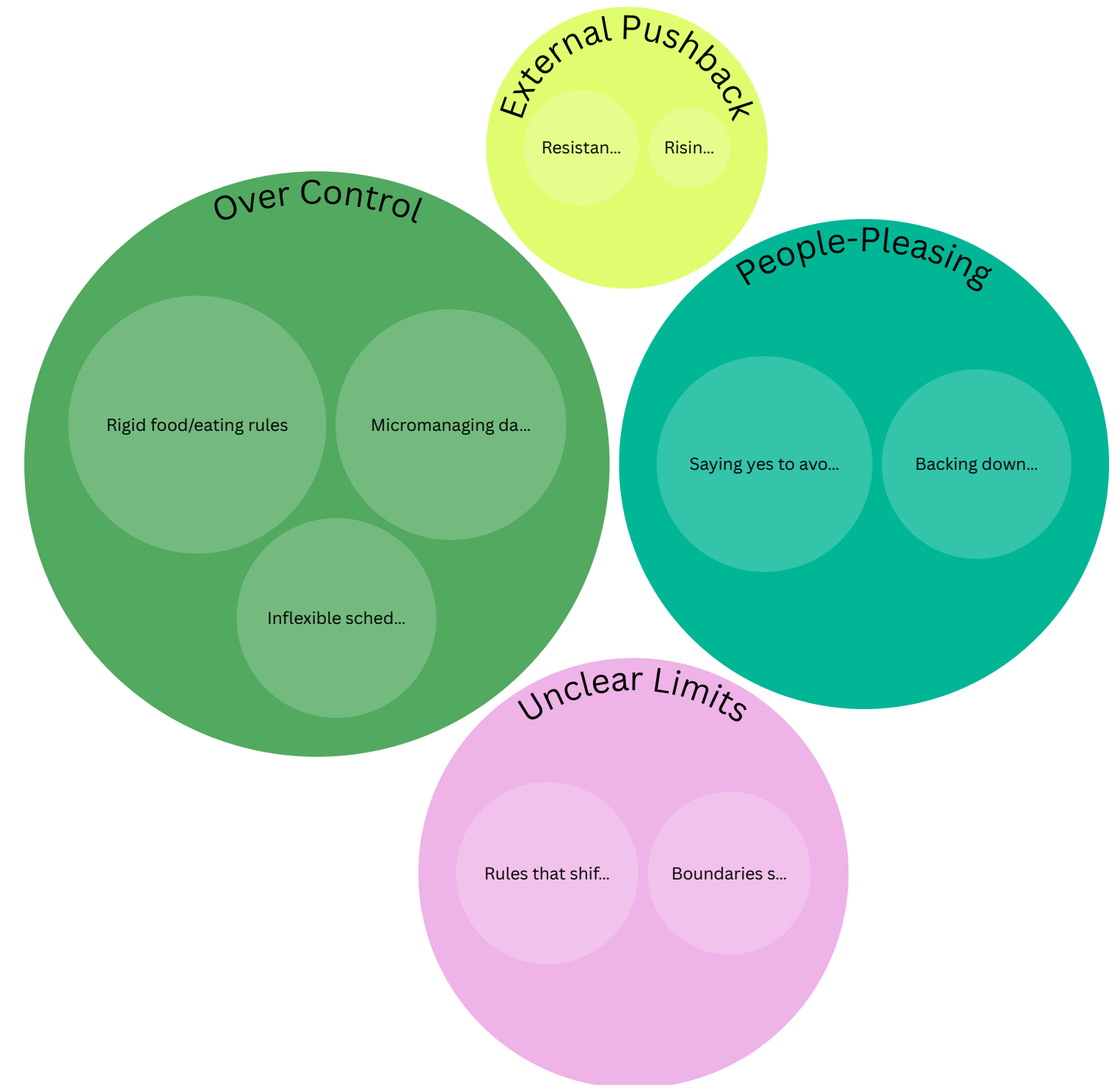
Your Role

You get to define your own boundaries — they are not inherited obligations

Boundaries are an act of self-respect, not rejection

Framework: Examples, Traps & Challenges

Families often mix expectations, rules, and boundaries, leading to over control, people-pleasing, and unclear limits. Recognizing these traps helps you respond to pushback and guilt with clarity.

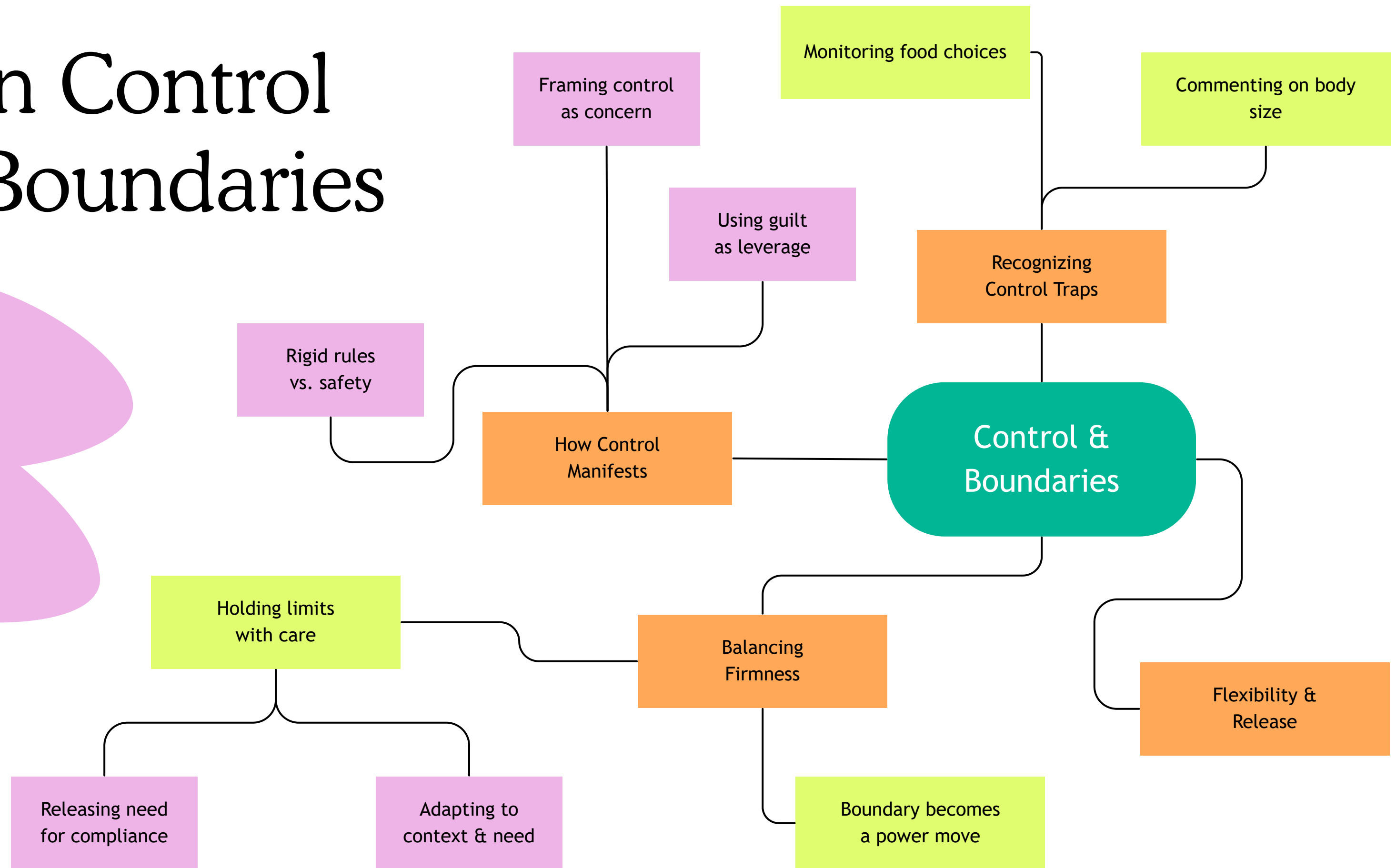


Common traps include: over controlling food choices, people-pleasing to avoid conflict, and setting limits that are too vague to hold. Challenges arise when others push back, guilt surfaces, or emotions run high, all normal parts of the boundary-setting process.

Focus on Control Within Boundaries



Tip: A boundary protects your wellbeing, it is not a tool to change others. Ask yourself: "Am I setting this limit for safety, or to control the outcome?" True boundaries come from values, not fear.



Practical Scripts

Use these scripts to navigate food, body, and family conversations with confidence. Each phrase is a tool, choose what fits the moment.



Deflector / Pivot

"I'm choosing to focus on something else right now."
Use this to redirect invasive questions or comments without engaging. Keeps the boundary calm and clear.



Brief & Firm

"I'm not going to discuss that."
Short, direct, and non-negotiable. No apology or justification needed. Especially useful in high-pressure family moments.



Reframe

"I'm focusing on how I feel rather than how I look."
Shifts the narrative from appearance to wellbeing. Reduces defensiveness and models positive self-talk.



Remember: You don't owe anyone an explanation for your boundaries. These scripts are starting points, adapt them to your voice and situation.

Internal Toolkit: Coping Ahead



Visualisation & Self-Talk

Mentally rehearse challenging interactions and use affirming self-talk to prepare your mindset before entering difficult situations.

Setting Intentions

Decide in advance how you want to show up, what you will and won't engage with, and what success looks like for you.

Identifying Support

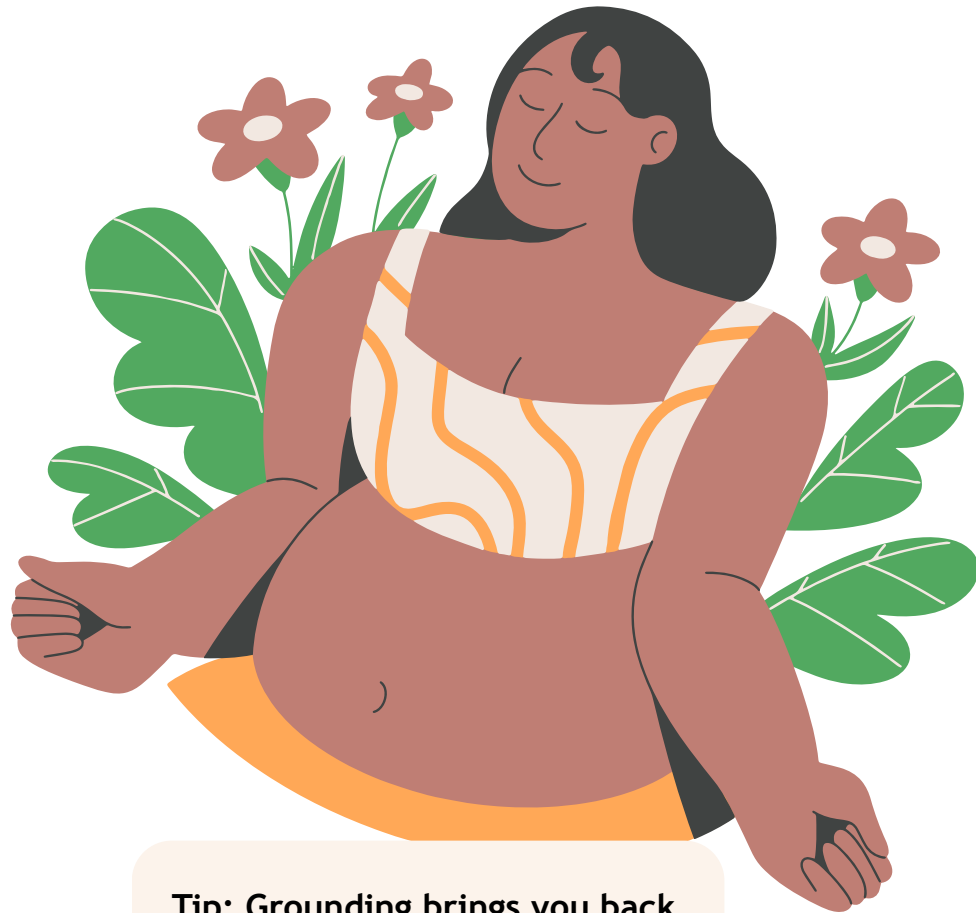
Know who or what you can lean on — a trusted person, a grounding phrase, or a safe exit plan — before you need it.

Emotional Preparation

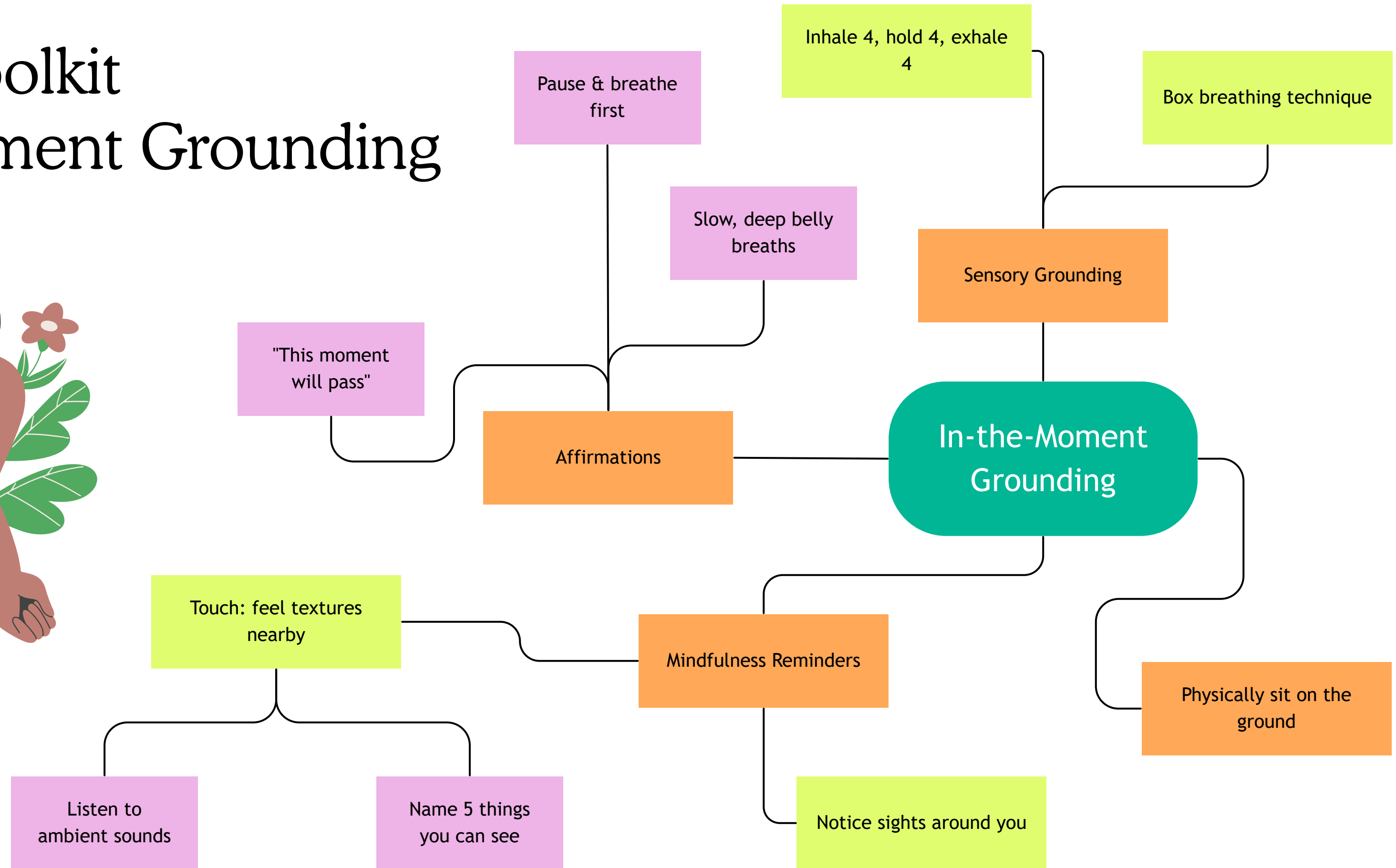
Acknowledge feelings that may arise and give yourself permission to feel without being overwhelmed by them.

Internal Toolkit

In-the-Moment Grounding



Tip: Grounding brings you back to the present moment. When a conversation feels overwhelming, pause and use one of these techniques before responding. Even 3 slow breaths can shift your nervous system. Remember: you are allowed to take space. You do not have to respond immediately.



Internal Toolkit – After-the-Fact Care



Reflection & Journaling

Write about what came up for you. What did you feel in your body? What thoughts arose? Journaling helps process and release.

Self-Soothing Practices

Gentle movement, a warm drink, music, or rest — choose what helps your nervous system settle after a difficult interaction.

Reconnect with Your Values

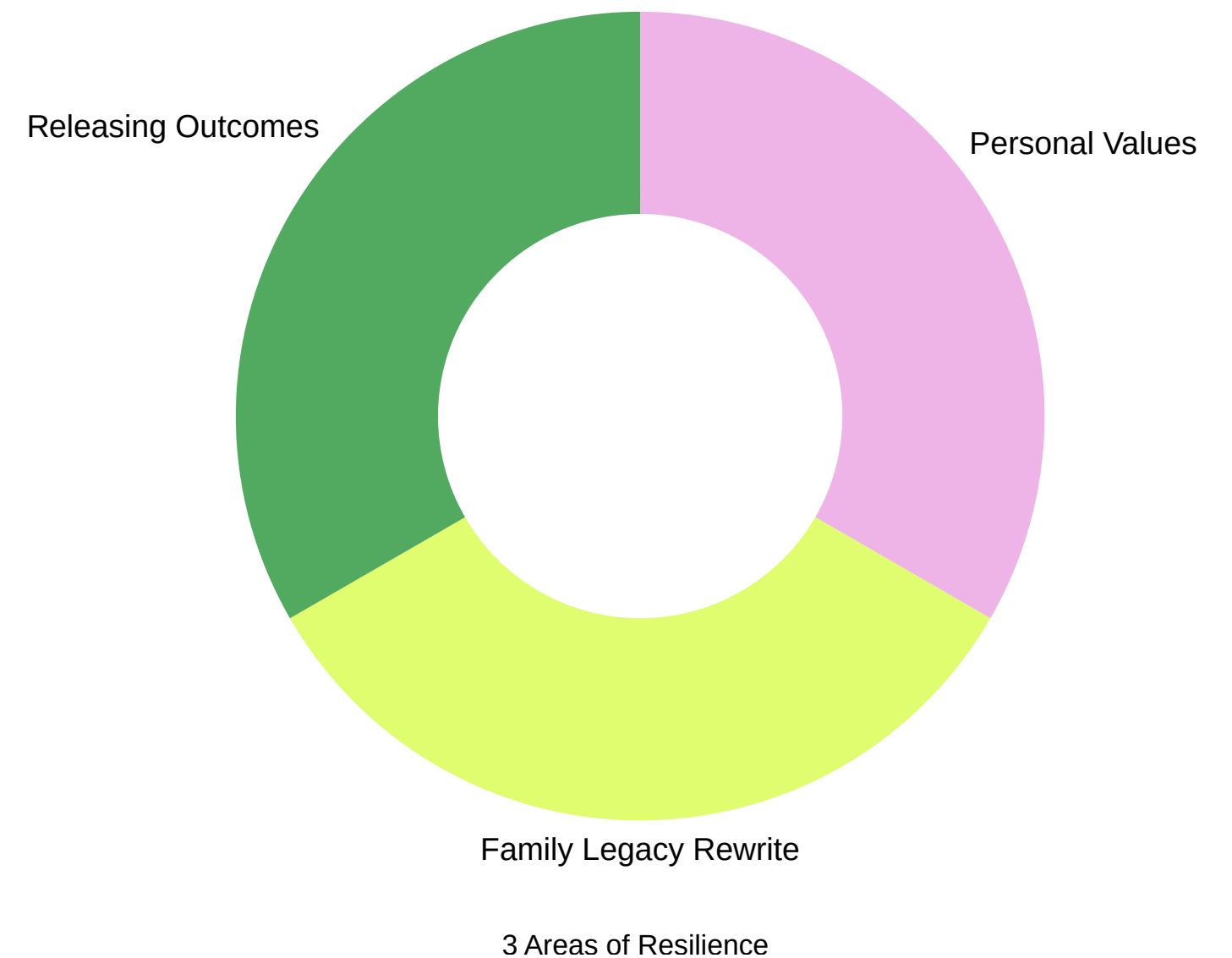
Return to what matters most to you. Your values are your anchor when family dynamics feel destabilizing.

Compassionate Self-Talk

Remind yourself: holding a boundary is an act of care, not cruelty. You are allowed to protect your peace.

Cultivating a resilient mindset

Build long-term strength by clarifying your personal values around body and family, rewriting your family legacy toward resilience, and releasing attachment to specific outcomes.



Create a visual to illustrate the three pillars of resilience: values, legacy, and release. These interconnected elements form the foundation of lasting emotional strength.

Recap & Key Takeaways

You've done meaningful work today. Carry these core insights with you as you navigate food, body, and family boundaries with greater clarity and confidence.

Understanding the roots of food and body policing helps you frame and communicate your boundaries with greater clarity.

Clear expectations, rules, and boundaries create a foundation of safety, for yourself and in your relationships.

Practical scripts empower you to respond with confidence, whether you deflect, stay firm, or reframe the conversation.

Your internal toolkit: coping ahead, grounding in the moment, and after-the-fact care will help build lasting coping capacity.

Resilience grows when you anchor to your personal values and practice releasing attachment to outcomes you cannot control.

Ways to connect

Thank you for your time!



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