

BRIDGES



Building connections for
pregnancy and motherhood
support

A SECULAR-PRO LIFE PROJECT



WELCOME

This curriculum was lovingly designed by Secular Pro-Life (SPL), a coalition of atheists, agnostics, protestants, Catholics, and everything in between. We are passionate about creating space for people to be valued at their humanity, regardless of their background or beliefs. This resource seeks to meet people where they are, especially those wanting to choose a path of their own as they partner with a pregnancy center, support group, or other motherhood outreach.

While emotional and spiritual conversations can be vital and appreciated for many, for others they might be off-putting or overwhelming. Still more may be interested in discussing some spiritual topics but not all. This curriculum is therefore not an attempt to critique or replace beneficial curricula organizations are already using. Its purpose, instead, is to add to the library of resources that can be useful to participants with a diversity of preferences and comfort levels. Regardless of the audience or setting, our goal is to make every pregnant person feel seen, valued, and empowered.

To the mother receiving this workbook:

Congratulations! Establishing a relationship with a resource center or support group is a major step in your journey, and it takes a lot of courage. We hope this workbook honors you, encourages you, and fosters authentic community in this unique time of your life.

To find out more about SPL, please visit us at secularprolife.org.

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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

Bridges is designed as a pregnancy support resource for a variety of settings. It is not an instructive curriculum so much as it is an opportunity for mothers to reflect and share from their own experiences while exploring options for how they will build their future. Whether in a pregnancy center, a secular counseling practice, a church outreach, a community support group, or anything else, *Bridges* hopes to foster connection so that anyone walking through pregnancy feels less alone.

Each session includes two reflection activities and a number of questions for discussion with either a counselor or a small group. It is recommended that the participant be given journaling time to write out answers before sharing aloud. There are additional pages for journaling at the back of the resource if more room is needed. Writing time can be built into the session, or done as homework so that answers are ready beforehand. While discussion creates the most robust opportunities for growth using this curriculum, participants should feel comfortable opting not to disclose whatever answers are too sensitive for the session.

Though the curriculum is best done in order, it is not necessary to stick to the sequence presented in this workbook. Lessons may be done as content becomes most relevant, or omitted where alternate material seems more beneficial. We simply ask that you do not alter the content of this workbook without prior written consent, and to clarify for participants any time materials are being used that are not directly sourced from the *Bridges* curriculum. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us on the form at secularprolife.org/bridges.

Stories included throughout the workbook are anecdotes shared with us through various partners, with permission granted from the original authors. All names have been changed to protect privacy.



Additional materials you will need:

- One 3-ring binder with a clear slip-cover front
- One pack of colored pencils
- A set of old publications (magazines, junk mail, newspapers, etc.)
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- A device with internet access (phone, computer, etc.)

SESSION 1: THE LANDSCAPE

In this session, we'll be uncovering more about what makes you uniquely you.

Take some time to lay some ground rules with your counselor or group. What names do you prefer to go by? What topics are potentially uncomfortable? How can these sessions be best crafted as a respectful place for you to thrive?

How would you describe your personal journey right now? Confident? Stagnant? Growing? Exploring?

Have you ever come in and out of seasons of feeling more or less worthy of love, support, closeness, etc? What factors made the difference?

What are ways that you've been labeled in the past? Teacher's pet? Bad influence? How have others' perspectives of you shaped what path you took? Do you wish others saw you in a different way?

Activity 1



On the following page, you will find an empty circle. This is your personal "pie chart." Choose some elements that you'd like to include in this visual representation of your everyday life. These can fit any category; your roles in life, priorities, experiences, passions, etc. There is no wrong answer!

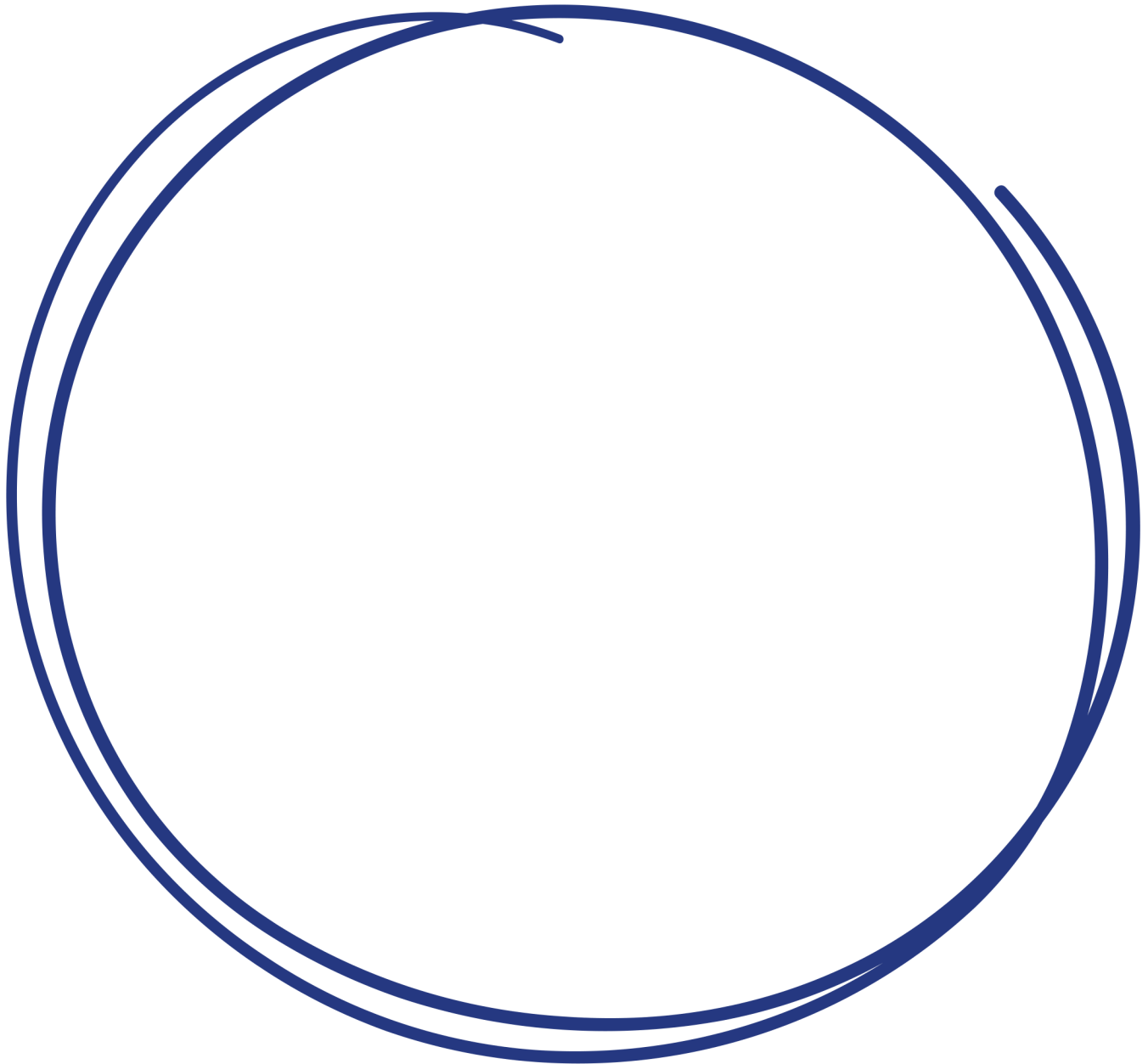


Once you have your elements selected, fill out the circle as though it was a pie chart, with the largest sections representing the things that are most important, time-consuming, etc. and the smallest portions representing the things to which you devote less energy, interest, etc.



Place a large star within any parts of the pie chart that you wish looked different.

MY BLUEPRINT



**See previous page for instructions*

Activity 2



In the space below, write a letter to the world describing some things you wish people knew about you that perhaps they don't quite yet.

Dear World,

What I wish you knew about me is that...

A large rectangular area with a blue border and horizontal lines for writing. There are two decorative scalloped corners on the right and bottom edges.

SESSION 2: THE ANNOUNCEMENT

With any new undertaking, breaking the news that it's happening can be filled with complex emotions. If you're navigating this curriculum, then you've probably already gone through the motions; setting a timer and waiting anxiously as a pregnancy test calculates results that might forever change your life.

This time is an opportunity to reflect on the emotions, conversations, and immediate decisions following the results of that pregnancy test. Perhaps you jumped for joy with a name already picked out for your little bundle. Maybe your stomach turned in anxiety and dread. Perhaps your partner cried with excitement, and perhaps they stormed out. Whatever your situation, now is a chance to slow down and really process that something big is certainly unfolding.

Where and when did you find out you were pregnant?

How did you feel in that moment? Has that feeling changed over time? What factors influence this the most for you?

Who have you told about your pregnancy and what kinds of reactions have they had?

What feelings have others' responses brought up for you? Is there anything you would change?



“MOTHERHOOD IS THE
BIGGEST GAMBLE IN
THE WORLD. IT IS THE
GLORIOUS LIFE FORCE.
IT’S HUGE AND SCARY
— IT’S AN ACT OF
INFINITE OPTIMISM.”
- GILDA RADNER

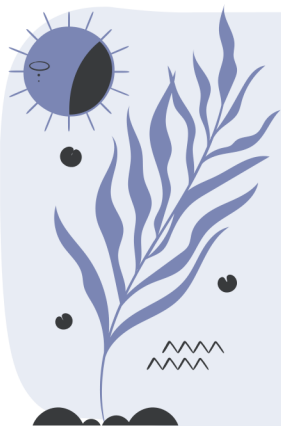
Activity 1



In the space below, write to your baby describing the moment you realized you were pregnant and some of the thoughts you have about the future.

Dear Baby...

When I got the news, I felt:




My hopes for you are:

My fears about the future are:



THINGS THAT MAKE ME
CELEBRATE MY PREGNANCY



THINGS THAT CAUSE
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ABOUT
MY PREGNANCY



IN A PERFECT WORLD, HERE'S WHAT MY
SITUATION WOULD LOOK LIKE...

Activity 2



In the boxes here, list out things in your immediate circumstances that influence how you feel about your pregnancy. These can be relationships, workplace pressure, financial resources, health concerns, exciting opportunities, feelings about motherhood, future hopes or worries, etc. Take an inventory of everything that may be shaping your perspective & reflect on anything you would change if you could. Discuss your answers.

SESSION 3: THE TEAM

Parenting takes a village, but there's a difference between those who support the family and those who define the family. Read the following stories as you consider your own family makeup:

"At the time I was just enjoying myself. I didn't think about getting pregnant; I just kind of liked this guy and was playing house. When I found out I was expecting, the father and I were still dating, but things quickly fell apart. He was the kind of dad who was ok with me having a child, but who didn't really want involved...unless it was convenient. We don't have a formal custody agreement; he just comes around, and usually only when he wants to show off his cute kid to some new girlfriend. I don't want my son to have so much inconsistency, but I also don't want him growing up never knowing his dad or not having the possibility of a relationship with him. Now that I'm married to another man, there's so much to sort out and I grieve that things aren't simpler." -Avery

"My mom died many years before my first child was born. My father is a registered sex-offender and someone I really just don't want my kids around anyway. So when it was time to start thinking about what Christmas would look like, or who could babysit, I was at a complete loss. I don't live near any other family or close friends anymore, so the isolation I feel is sometimes crippling." -Rachel



"My husband is kind and playful. He sees me when I'm weak, depressed, overworked, or nearing a panic-attack, and he almost always shows up with chicken wings and tells me to go take a nap. As a stay-at-home mom, I often feel the bubble of my own existence bearing down into itself. He helps me zoom out, bears my burdens with me, and treasures his kids in a way that makes me want to be a better mom." -Gloria

"My aunt is a saint. She's a tough-love kind of person, but it was her seriousness that helped me see I had to get my boys out of that house and somewhere safe. Their father is an addict with violent tendencies, and while I never wanted to admit it...my addiction was crushing me, too. She took us in, fought for me to get well, and my children have her to look up to as she raises them right alongside raising me." -Whitney

Activity 1



As you think about your Team, assess the circle closest to you. These are **not** work acquaintances, people who may or may not help babysit, or unfamiliar folks who follow you on social media. This inner circle should represent the regulars who are an everyday part of your life and will likely play an integral role in your pregnancy and your child's future.

1. Describe who your partner is for your pregnancy experience. Do you have a positive or negative association with their role?

2. Who do you trust the most to navigate your motherhood with? What about them encourages you? What about them would you change?

3. Describe anyone else in your closest community. Who are the people you generally spend your time with and how will their influence impact your journey?

4. Are there people in your life you do not want to have a relationship with your baby? What might it look like to create safety and/or a healthy home for both you and your child?

5. Is there anyone or anything missing from the equation for you? Take time here to grieve any unmet expectations or relationships that are not what you imagined for this season of your life:

6. Are there boundaries you want to start considering now that might be beneficial to your health as a mom, and to your child (with partner, close family, work, etc?)

Activity 2



Imagine you're buying wall art to decorate your kitchen. As you look through the options, you notice a plaque that says, "In this family we...". It lists out things like: "We always say I'm sorry. We laugh without fear. We eat cereal out of the box. We welcome outsiders. We hug until it hurts," etc.



Now imagine that someone has offered to make you a custom sign with things that would make your family dynamic unique. List out the "rules" for your household below. Include everything from fun things to serious emotions. Share anything that communicates the tone you want to set in your home.



SESSION 4: SPECIAL CONTRACTORS

Now that you've thought through who your closest teammates in parenting might be, think through the auxiliary individuals who will be a larger part of your village. These "special contractors" might not have roles in your essential day-to-day activities as a mom, but you will entrust them with at least one element of your child's life, and they should be chosen carefully.



“EVERYBODY IN A VILLAGE
HAD A ROLE TO PLAY IN
BRINGING UP A CHILD—AND
CHERISHING IT—AND IN
RETURN THAT CHILD WOULD
IN DUE COURSE FEEL
RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYBODY
IN THAT VILLAGE. THAT IS
WHAT MAKES LIFE IN SOCIETY
POSSIBLE...THERE WAS NO
SUBSTITUTE FOR IT. NONE.”

-ALEXANDER
MCCALL SMITH

A MOTHER'S THANK-YOU LETTER:

“Dear Friend,

You'll never know how much you helped me.

I was deeply ashamed; my little girl was crying on the flight from Ohio to Colorado and I felt the weight of every other passenger who surely must be thinking what a more immature version of myself used to think when babies cried in public: “Can't she get that kid to be quiet?!” I knew I was failing; my postpartum anxiety told me that good moms had sleepy, content babies, no matter what the in-flight air pressure was doing to their eardrums. Good moms knew what to do, and I didn't. But then you stood up and offered to bounce my baby on a little walk back and forth down the aisle. You said, “That's ok. Babies cry! I did once, and you did too. It's just how it works.” You reminded me that my baby isn't a burden; she's a person. Even if she's loud sometimes.

I was tired, and beyond burnout. Preschool was helping build breaks in the day and routine for our family, but a death in the family left us reeling and unable to keep up. You brought us meals for two straight weeks. I have never eaten so much beef and noodles! But if you hadn't stepped up, I don't know how I would've kept my family afloat when I felt like I could barely keep myself together.

I didn't think my daughter was ready to join your club, but you celebrated her shyness and made her feel welcome; less self-conscious.

Under your coaching, the things that made her “weird” weren’t problems; they were just preferences that could be channeled into greatness. Her sensory issues and particular behaviors never frustrated you. Your patience and warmth gave her a home outside of just my arms. While I grieved that she was branching out so much further than I could control, I got to watch her become her own person. Being able to trust her with you opened up a chapter of parenting for me that I deeply treasured.

I was nervous about her test scores. She was a bright problem-solver, but she had a hard time focusing in the classroom. You were not necessarily a “nice” teacher, but you had a magic that she responded to. You took your job seriously and she thrived in your structure and high expectations. You were never intimidated by her challenges or by my anxiousness; you were the steady and confident presence we needed when we needed it. She is fearless now because of you.

I am the mom I am now because of **all** of you.”

-Leah



Activity 1




Think back on who your village was as a child. Who were the people that spent time with you, encouraged you, babysat you, taught you? On the next page, list them out. Discuss what their involvement in your life meant to you. What do you think it meant to the people raising you?

MY CHILDHOOD VILLAGE

TEACHERS, COACHES, ETC.



FAMILY & FRIENDS



OTHERS



As you think about the people who will play special (even if limited) roles in your child's life, does anyone stand out? Do you have social connections that you believe will help you with mothering? Are there trusted people in your life who can babysit, share holidays with, etc?

How do your current relationships build you up, or tear you down? How do you think they would describe your influence on their lives? Is there anyone you need to let go, or new friends you want to meet in this season?

Brainstorm at least 3 actions you can take to broaden your village. *Ex: Attend an open house at local day care, join a workout class, explore social media groups.*



“IT’S SO HARD TO ASK FOR HELP. BECAUSE YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO BE ‘MOMMY.’ AND YOU NEVER WANT TO SAY: ‘I NEED HELP BEING MOMMY.’

-HUMANS OF NEW YORK

Activity 2



On the next page, write a "Help Wanted" ad for a friend. Include any "must haves" that would create a bond with you especially (certain sports, an affinity for animals, etc.), but also traits you'd like them to have as they influence you and your mothering. Take special time to describe how you would want them to fit into your family dynamic.

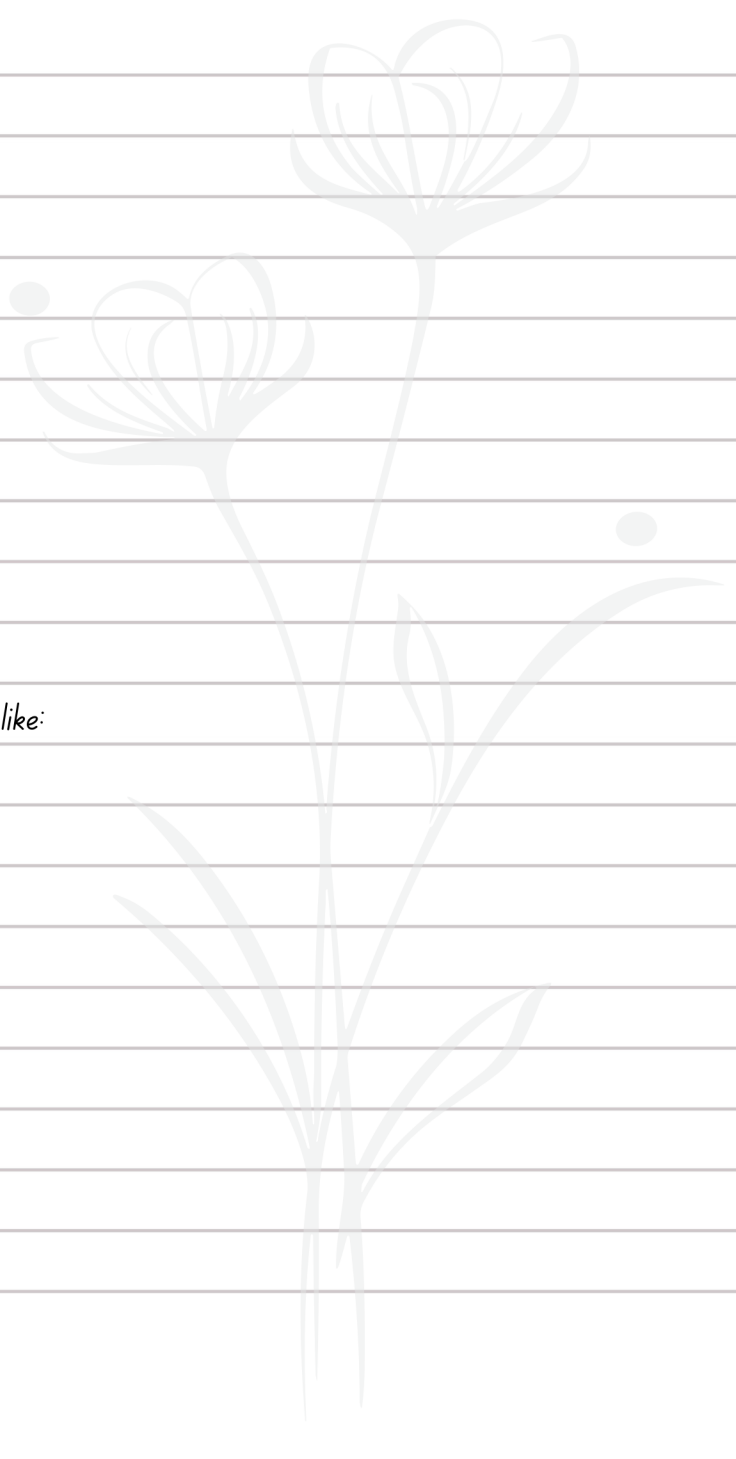
FRIEND WANTED:

Must love:

Must be available for:

Must fit into my family like:

Must treat me like:



SESSION 5: BLUEPRINTS

Knowing where you have been can be one of the best ways to chart out where you're going. Take this session as a chance to reflect on the big picture of your experience thus far.

How would you describe your childhood? What are elements of it that you want your child to have? What are elements that you would change for them?

How do you view your self-worth? Where do you feel like your value comes from?

What are you proud of having achieved? What personal growth has gotten you this far?

What would you change about your life if trauma, worry, finances, time, etc. were not a factor?

Have you ever sought justice or reconciliation only for it to fail? How did it impact you?

Activity 1



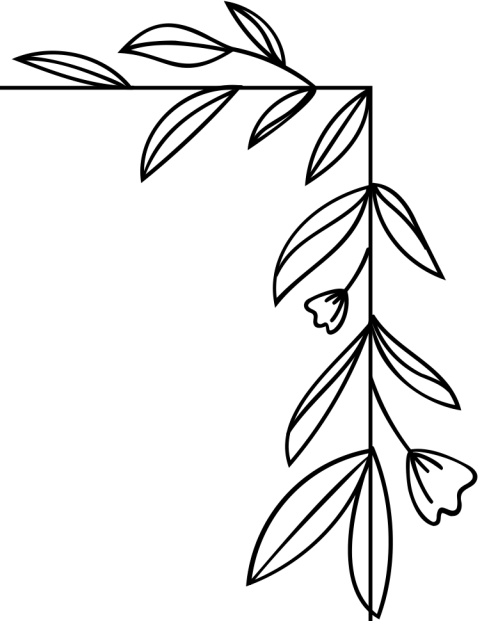
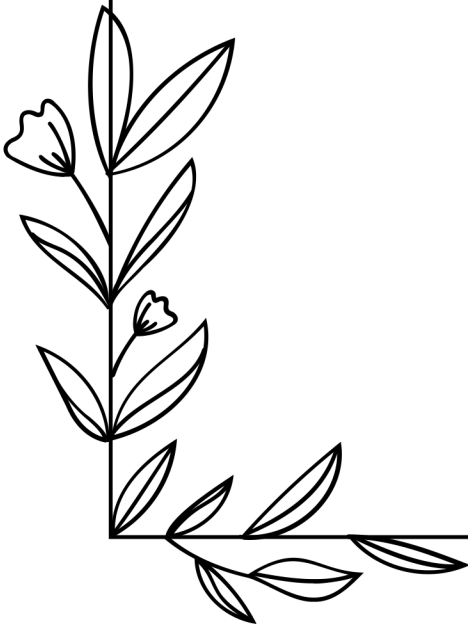
On the next page, write an open reflection about any thread of your story that you haven't yet discussed. It can be something from your past, something to celebrate, some anxiety about your future, or even just how you're feeling today. Use this space to address whatever your "elephant in the room" might be.

Activity 2



Write a letter from someone who has hurt you, as though it were their apology letter to you. What things would you need to hear them say to feel a sense of closure or healing? You do not have to read your letter aloud, but discuss the process with your group.

I'm Sorry...



BOUNDARIES: THE KEY TO THRIVING

Written deep down in your fabric as a person are limitations that don't make you flawed, but rather, human. Everyone has inclinations toward being an introvert or extrovert, preferences about which jokes are funny vs. which go too far, etc. Part of thriving is honestly assessing our circumstances and whether or not they violate the boundaries we need.

Boundaries can be found in things like how and if we want to be touched, what demands can be placed on our time, who we allow to influence our children, and a thousand other categories. Parenthood, however, can create a paradigm shift that causes mothers to feel as though they cannot have boundaries anymore.

New encroachments on your limitations are around every corner. Whether it's the 3am feeding session that definitely crosses your exhaustion threshold, or a stranger at the grocery store who wants to hold your baby who you don't know how to reject. But motherhood is not the time to let go of boundaries; it is the time to take inventory of them and find out how to enforce them in ways that accommodate your new role.



If you find it hard to know where to start with boundaries, you may want to reflect on times you've felt disrespected or burned out. What led to that, and what could've prevented the issue?

You may not always be good at assessing and communicating your boundaries, but remember that you are not infinite. No one is. You cannot continue to pour from an empty well and survive for long. Boundaries are about creating endurance and longevity. Triathletes do not sprint their entire race; they are able to complete immense physical feats because they listen to their bodies and pace themselves according to what's sustainable.

Any time you add a new child to a family, what used to be sustainable may have to shift. Be willing to assess your situation and implement a pace that honors your limitations, thereby setting you up for amazing achievements.

Activity 1



Take some time to reflect and fill out the below survey before discussing any answers with your group.

BOUNDARIES SELF-ASSESSMENT

	Yes	Sometimes	No
I wish other people would speak to me differently, but have a hard time confronting them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to keep the peace; I rarely disagree with others or contradict my friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often wonder whether I'm in trouble, even when I can't remember doing something wrong.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in my ability to confront others when I have been hurt or taken advantage of.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I struggle to ask for help and sometimes wonder if I'm a burden to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have trouble making decisions and feel anxious about my future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I often have to explain myself or justify my time, decisions, spending, etc. to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often find myself scrolling endlessly or snacking mindlessly without the ability to stop.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Based on your answers above, discuss with your group any areas where you would like to grow in assertiveness, self-control, or boundary-setting.

Boundaries can be anything from preferences around your diet to rules that protect deeply held beliefs about how you want to be treated, and everything in between. They are also very clear.

For example: "I want to spend less time on my phone" is not quite a boundary, but rather a goal. In order for it to be achieved, it will require some boundaries. Things like, "I do not check my email on the weekends," or "I don't scroll on my social media after 10 pm," are boundaries that can be enforced on the way toward that larger goal.

Boundaries should also come with clear expectations for the people who will be affected

by them. You should always let the listener know what will happen if they overstep the boundary you're attempting to set.

For example, telling someone the boundary: "I don't check my email on weekends," ought to come with the clarification that if they do email you, they will need to wait until later in the week for a response. Things like, "You can't talk to me like that," should come with clear repercussions from you in the event that your request is ignored. If you can't enforce a consequence, then you may need to work on developing that boundary more.

Activity 2

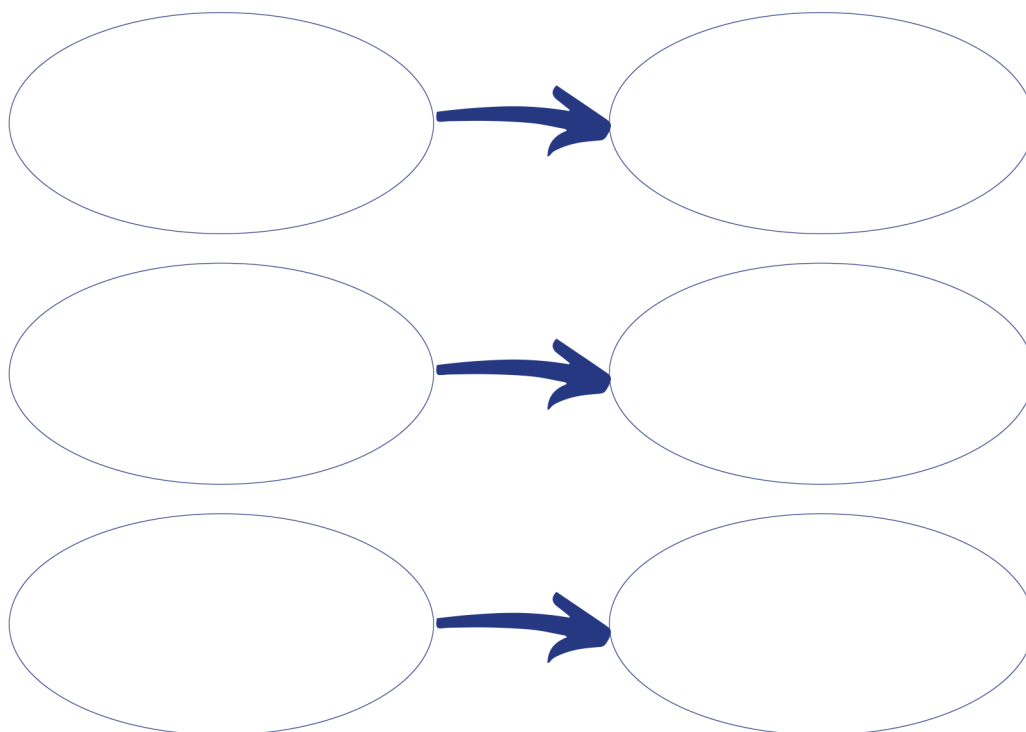


Select 3 major areas of your life that could use at least one helpful boundary. Describe the limit you want to be respected and the reasonable response you think you could execute if that boundary were to be crossed.



Discuss with your group any areas where boundary-setting and keeping feels too overwhelming or difficult. What supports might you need to start making progress?

BOUNDARY



ACTIONS IF
CROSSED:

SESSION 7: CONSTRUCTION

Dreaming about your future, especially with this new addition, can be both fun and scary at the same time.

What about your own personal future are you excited about? Worried about?

How is your pregnancy affecting your current circumstances? Job, relationships, mental health, etc.?

What changes are you anticipating for your future when the baby arrives?



“EVERYTHING GROWS
ROUNDER AND WIDER
AND WEIRDER, AND I SIT
HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF
IT ALL AND WONDER
WHO IN THE WORLD YOU
WILL TURN OUT TO BE.”

-CARRIE FISHER

Activity 1



Think about your childhood goals and dreams. Write out a list and color code what you have already done, what you can achieve soon, and what might have to wait until other opportunities open up.

YOUR DREAMS & PARENTING ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

Have you ever felt guilty for pursuing your own dreams? Accused of being selfish or too distracted? When we prioritize our goals in life, sometimes people can see that as taking resources from things they think are more important. Moms often feel like they can never win; if they work, they're spending too much time away from their kids. If they stay at home, they're not contributing enough finances to the household.

The issue with the kind of thinking is that it ignores the reality that parents are complex **human beings**. They are not glorified babysitters, nor are they simply parts of the corporate world who might become "distracted" by family. They are individuals with needs for rest, fulfillment, community, wellness, finances, and many other things. Caring for these elements of your personhood is not at odds with being a parent; it is part of being a parent.

Children who grow up with healthy models for goal-setting and the discipline necessary to achieve those ambitions are more likely to feel confident reaching for dreams of their own. A parent who sacrifices all sense of self may accidentally model to their children that the most noble thing in life is to become an over-exhausted doormat, and we know this isn't true.

The world is made up of countless successful people who have children. From all-star tennis champion Serena Williams to Senator Larissa Waters (famous for breastfeeding during an Australian parliament



meeting), you'll find that having kids is no barrier to achievement. In fact, many parents are more driven, efficient, and qualified because of their experience problem-solving and carving out precious pockets of time for work.

Perhaps you are already thinking of things that will make your dreams more complicated by having kids. Maybe your body will take a while to recover from delivery, and that will affect your fitness goals. Maybe you can't think of any babysitters and you know there's a waitlist at your local daycare. Your concerns are valid.

There is, indeed, a logistic tapestry that must be woven in order to pursue your dreams, but don't believe the lie that only parents need to do this. Very few people have completely unlimited time, help, access to resources, etc. Kobe Bryant used to wake up at 3am to train for his basketball career, and that had nothing to do with being a dad. Problem-solving and discipline will always mark the road toward your goals, so take the time to get close to people that can steer you in the right direction. These might be other parents, community programs, nonprofit groups, or more. Always remind yourself that everyone, with kids or without, has to weave together support and effort as they work toward their goals. You are not alone.

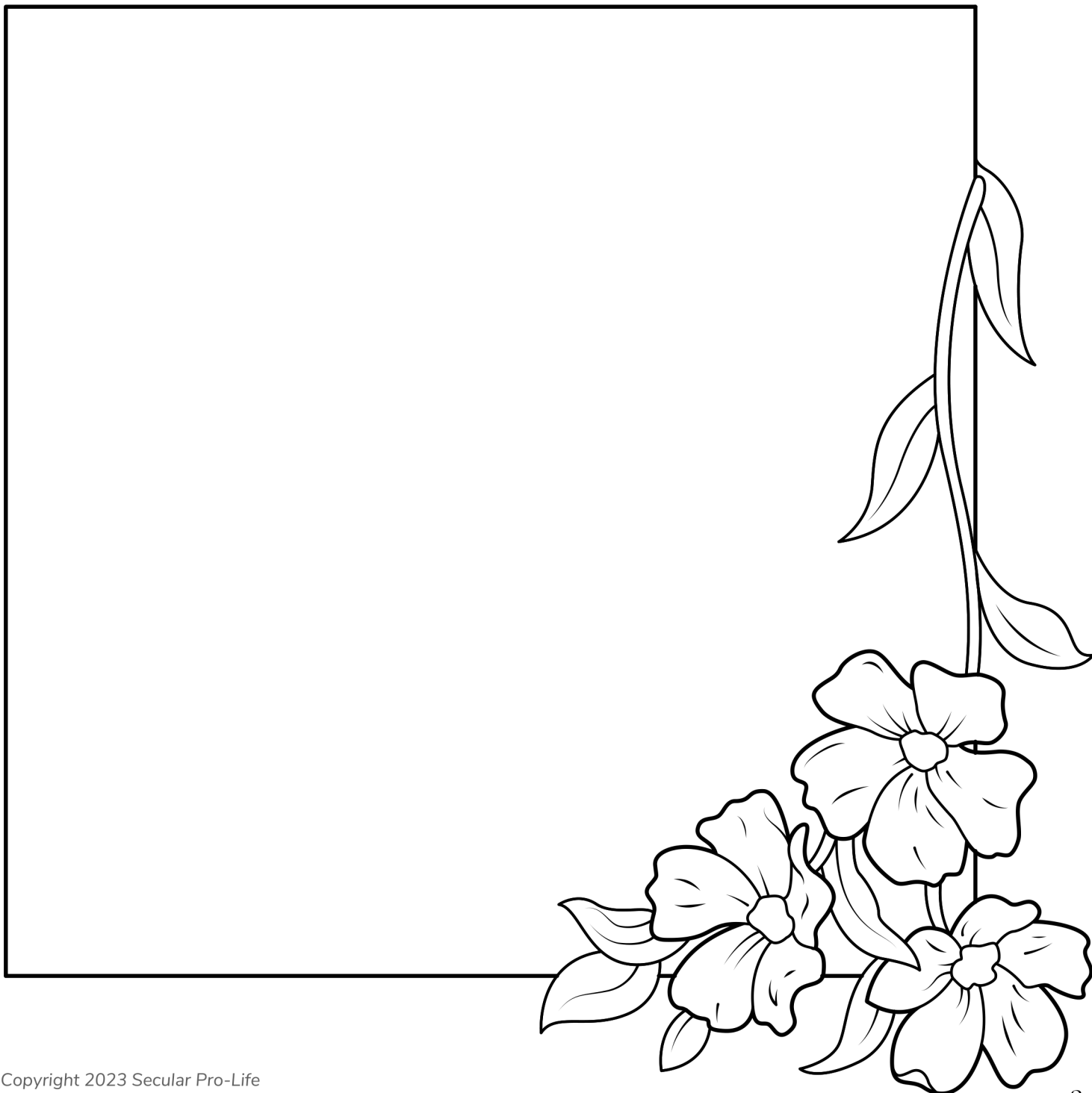
There are lots of practical solutions that can keep you on track toward your dreams. Perhaps you can partner with another working parent to trade childcare back and forth. Maybe you need to dedicate just three nights a week to your goal, and block that off on the calendar so nothing else can encroach on the time. Maybe you can work with a local college to create a self-study plan that is more sensitive to your schedule as a parent. The options are limitless!

Whatever your solution, stay consistent. Set small goals and work your way to something bigger. Rome wasn't built in a day! Don't let parenting scare you away; let your children be an encouragement and motivation on the way to your dreams. One day, they may follow in your footsteps.

Activity 2



In the space below (or using a separate sheet of construction paper) create a personal vision board using any old publications (magazines, junk mail, newspapers). To make your collage, cut and glue words or phrases, photos that match your dreams, or whatever else is relevant. Write or draw any addition that you desire. Discuss these personal aspirations with your group. When you are finished, add your vision board to the cover of your *Bridges* binder if you are using one.



SESSION 8: FOUNDATION



Dreaming for yourself can be fun, but not always easy. As a parent, however, your dreams are no longer limited to your own future. You will have incredible influence over another person and the goals they think are possible. Your parenting will be the foundation upon which your child dreams his or her own dreams.

What are some fears or uncertainties you feel about your child's future?

What are things you're excited about?
What are your wishes for your baby's future?

Have you been nesting? In what ways have you been preparing for the arrival of your child? How does it feel to go through this process?

List out some names that you like for your baby. Why do these appeal to you? Do they have any special meanings?

Have you dreamed what color hair your child might have? What about the shape of their nose? List some traits that you hope they inherit, but don't just stop at the physical! Share things about their nature, talents, passions, etc. that you hope they might inherit.

Activity 1



Create a Pinterest board with themes selected especially for your little one. Look at nursery decorations, outfits you like, toys you want for them, first birthday ideas, etc. Discuss with your group why those things appeal to you.

Activity 2



In the space below, write a letter of encouragement to your baby. Tell him or her everything you wish someone had said to you when you were small. Share what you want your child to know that will help them get through any tough times and into their brightest future.

Dear Baby,

SESSION 9: SUPPORTS

Most parents report that caring for financial needs in the first year of their new child's life is one of the most challenging parts of their adjustment. It can feel overwhelming to get everything in order, but tackling just the most important elements in small steps can help your growing family not only survive, but eventually thrive.

Did you know that most millionaires only live on 10% of their income? The best way to generate financial stability is not to spend within your means, but to spend as though you have **almost no means** and save toward the future/invest the rest. Savings are not just for retirement. They are there for when your best friend asks you to be in her wedding and you can't afford the \$170 bridesmaid dress she is requesting. Savings are what you use to pay for the next time your car's fuel pump gives out. If you don't have anything saved, you end up facing these expenses and paying with a credit card, which means you also pay huge interest rates and get trapped in debt.

Saving when you're already on a tight budget might take some buckling down. It's good to seriously consider a few intense measures that can help you make progress quickly. A few examples are things like canceling streaming services (even if just for three months), or a promise not to eat take-out until at least one credit card is paid off. Some people have refinanced their home or downgraded their car to something more affordable.

You may want to make small long-term changes, but drastic, short-term steps might also create momentum for you. Whatever your preference, just make sure it's something you can commit to. Whether it's something like cutting your budget for entertainment for the next three years, or just getting a part time job through the holidays to inject a little cash, go all-in with your plan!

Once you've created a strategy for saving so that you are buffered from generating more debt,



you'll want to pick a strategy to become debt-free. There are two popular means for doing this: the **snowball method**, and the **avalanche method**.

The snowball method involves listing your debts from smallest to largest, regardless of interest rate. Here, you make only the minimum payments on everything but the smallest debt. This one, you attack aggressively and pay off as quickly as possible. Once the smallest debt is paid off, you take the full payment you were devoting to it and transfer that directly into the next biggest debt, along with that debt's minimum payment. In this way you progressively pay off each debt with more and more money rolling over, just like a snowball. This method tends to work very quickly, though it can cost more in interest overall.

The avalanche method works very similarly, rolling over payments from one fully-paid debt to the next, but it orders your debts by which interest rate is highest. This allows you to guarantee the lowest incurred interest, but depending on how big the debts are, it can move much more slowly.

Activity 1



Brainstorm a debt attack plan. Fill out the list of payments owed to various credit cards, medical agencies, student loan offices, etc. Organize them according to either the avalanche or snowball method.



List a few short-term solutions that might free up or generate cash, even if just an extra \$10/month that you can either save or put toward your debts. Whether it's canceling Netflix, hosting a garage sale, or buying generic toilet paper; every idea is worth jotting down.

TARGET DEBTS

What I think will work best for me:

SNOWBALL

AVALANCHE

Debt	Amount Owed

Creative ways to save and/or generate jumpstart cash:

Activity 2



On the following page, create a budget to help navigate your expenses. Discuss the good, bad, and ugly of your financial situation with your group.



If your expenses outweigh your income, brainstorm solutions with your group. Perhaps it was difficult to think of ways to inject jumpstart cash into your debt attack plan or savings goals. Talk with your group about community resources that may be able to help you fill the gap.

MONTHLY BUDGET

MONTH OF

INCOME			
DATE	SOURCE	CATEGORY	AMOUNT

BILLS & FIXED EXPENSES		
<i>Rent, utilities, subscriptions, car payments, insurance, savings, etc.</i>		
DUE	SOURCE	AMOUNT

VARIABLE EXPENSES		
<i>Birthdays/holidays, medical bills, groceries, gas, entertainment, etc.</i>		
DUE	SOURCE	AMOUNT

SUMMARY	
SOURCE	AMOUNT
INCOME	
BILLS & FIXED EXPENSES	
VARIABLE EXPENSES	
BALANCE	

To Do List

Weekly

Money is not our only resource. Time, too, is limited and precious. Take a moment to reflect on how you might be able to allocate time in the months and years ahead.

IN MY HOME

WITH MY COMMUNITY

AT WORK/SCHOOL

WITH MY FAMILY

OTHER

After reflecting on everything that needs done each week, use a highlighter or colored pencil to color code the duties as follows:

- Yellow: "Only I can do this"
- Green: "Perhaps someone could help me with this"
- Pink: "Someone other than me should be doing this"
- Blue: "This doesn't actually always need done"

Discuss changes you can make to your load based on these answers with your group.

SESSION 10: THE WALKWAY

As you embark on this new journey, think about what those very first steps with your new baby will feel like. What kind of world do you want to create for him/her?

Take a moment to reflect on any baggage that you may be carrying “on your back” that you might want to offload before you embark.

Are there any regrets you’re bringing into this pregnancy? How do you think that might impact your relationship with your child? Are there steps you can take to find healing around this issue?

If you could have a “superpower” as a mom, what would you want it to be?

How would you describe your worldview? How do your personal values or beliefs shape the way you experience your pregnancy?

What legacy do you hope to impart to your children? What do you want them to know you for?

What practical plans do you have in place to ensure wellbeing for yourself and your child in this new season?

Activity 1



Take time to research alone and with your group’s assistance. Fill out the personal directory worksheet on the next page, categorizing the various resources that might be helpful to you in your parenting journey.



Select 3 resources and work with staff to create a first point of contact during your session time (fill out applications, send an introductory email, save numbers in your phone for an emergency, etc.)



MY RESOURCES

Research supports near you, either online or using a directory if available through your group. Select only the things that appeal to you or fit your needs. Write out the resource name, what they do, and the best way to contact them for follow-up (phone, email address, etc.)

Material Aid

Food pantries, clothing closets, rent assistance, etc.

Example: The Gathering Place
(Clothing Closet)

Julie@tgp.org

Blank lines for writing resource information under Material Aid.

Wellness

Counseling, addiction recovery, free clinics, support hotlines, etc.

Blank lines for writing resource information under Wellness.

Community Building

Support groups, faith communities, social clubs, etc.

Blank lines for writing resource information under Community Building.

Additional Assistance

Job training, childcare, shelters, legal aid, etc.

Example: Arrupe House
(Bigs & Littles Program)

(216) 961-1260

Blank lines for writing resource information under Additional Assistance.

Activity 2



Create a personal roadmap using the template provided.

Step 1: Establish your terrain. What characteristics have been true of you for all (or most of) your life? What circumstances have impacted you? Choose at least 4 of each to add to the negative space of your map.



Step 3: On the three main roads of the map, write out events that served as watershed moments in life. One should be the pregnancy, two can be anything that shaped you.



Step 4: Draw any detours or new roads you'd like to take off the "main highways" thus far. These can be major life changes, shifts in outlooks, new places to live, etc. Describe where you hope your "detours" take you. Discuss your map with your group.



REFLECTION

Use this page to reflect on your experience, either once you have finished the Bridges curriculum or at any point in your pregnancy journey where reflection would be a helpful exercise.

IMMEDIATE THOUGHTS:

HOW DO YOU FEEL?	PROS & CONS OF THIS MOMENT:
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

WHAT INTENTION DO YOU WANT TO SET?

Feedback for yourself or others:

This concludes the Bridges curriculum. It was truly a pleasure to be a part of facilitating just some of the conversation that can help parents build connections. Our hope is that this next season brings joy, adventure, and community in a truly beautiful way.

If you have feedback, suggestions, or would like to touch base with us to create custom lessons, please visit secularprolife.org/bridges.



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