

ROOTED

# BREAK THE LINE

A father's guide to healing the boy inside, so you stop  
handing the wound to your kids.

**Joshua Betancur** · father, empath, operator · @joshua\_betancur

READ THIS FIRST

# YOU ALREADY LOVE THEM. THAT WAS NEVER THE QUESTION.

If you picked this up, you are not a bad father. A bad father does not go looking for how to be better. You showed up. That already makes you different from the man who raised you.

So I am going to talk to you straight, the way I would want it said to me. No big words. No therapy talk. Just the truth, and what to do about it.

Here it is: **you cannot give your kids something you never got.** And the stuff you never got does not just disappear. It comes out sideways. The short fuse. The shutting down. The love that only shows up when they perform. You swore you would never do it. Then one day you heard it come out of your mouth.

That is not a character flaw. That is old programming, installed in you before you could fight back, by a man who was running his own father's program. Nobody handed him the manual either.

**YOU ARE NOT BROKEN.  
YOU ARE RUNNING OLD CODE.  
AND CODE CAN BE REWRITTEN.**

This guide shows you the wound, why it runs your house, and the first moves to break the line so your kids never have to carry it. Read it once. Then do the one tool at the end. That is step one.

## PART 1

# THE BOY INSIDE IS STILL DRIVING.

Every man is carrying a kid around. The kid he used to be. The one who learned, real early, what he had to do to stay safe and stay loved.

Maybe the kid learned **be quiet and nobody blows up**. Maybe he learned **get the A, score the goal, and dad finally looks up**. Maybe he learned **don't need anything, then nobody can let you down**.

That was smart. Back then, it kept him safe. The problem is nobody told the kid it was over. So he is still in there, 30 years later, running the same moves on your wife and your children, who were never the threat.

**THE WOUND IS NOT WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.  
THE WOUND IS THE RULE YOU WROTE TO SURVIVE IT.**

### THE RESEARCH

The largest study ever done on childhood, the **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study** by Dr. Vincent Felitti and the CDC, followed over 17,000 adults. It found that hard childhoods are not rare, about **64% of adults carry at least one**, and the more a kid goes through, the higher the risk of depression, addiction, heart disease, and broken relationships decades later.

Felitti, Anda, et al. (1998), CDC-Kaiser ACE Study.

Read that again. The thing that happened when you were small did not stay small. It shaped the man, the husband, and the father. Not because you are weak. Because that is how a child's brain is built to learn.

Good news is in the same science. A rule that got *learned* can get *unlearned*. That is the whole game.

## PART 2

# YOUR KIDS DON'T NEED PERFECT. THEY NEED YOU REGULATED.

Here is something almost no one tells fathers. A small child cannot calm himself down. He does not have the wiring yet. He borrows yours.

When your kid is melting down and you stay steady, his body learns steady from your body. When your kid is melting down and you blow up, his body learns the world is not safe, even at home. This is not opinion. It has a name.

### THE RESEARCH

Scientists call it **co-regulation**. A child's nervous system literally syncs to the nearest calm adult to learn how to handle big feelings (Dr. Dan Siegel; Dr. Stephen Porges, polyvagal theory). The dad does not teach calm with words. He teaches it by **being** calm in the storm.

*Siegel, [The Whole-Brain Child](#); Porges, polyvagal theory.*

So when your triggers run the house, your kid is not learning a lesson. He is learning your nervous system. The yelling, the silence, the love with strings on it, he is learning to wear all of it. That is how the line gets passed.

**YOU ARE NOT RAISING YOUR KIDS.  
YOUR CHILDHOOD IS.  
UNTIL YOU GO BACK AND CHANGE IT.**

**YOU WILL MESS UP. THAT IS NOT THE PROBLEM.**

Hear me, because this is the part that sets fathers free. You do not have to be a perfect, calm robot. You will lose it. Every parent does. What matters is what comes next.

## THE RESEARCH

Dr. Ed Tronick's famous **"still face" experiment** showed that the magic is not in never breaking connection with your child. It is in the **repair**, the going back, owning it, reconnecting. Kids whose parents repair grow up secure. The rupture is normal. The repair is the medicine.

Tronick, "still face" experiment; Bowlby & Ainsworth, attachment theory.

So when you snap, you go back. You get on his level and you say: *"That was me, not you. I was upset and I took it out on you. I'm sorry. I love you."* Five sentences. That one move, done over and over, rewires what your father never repaired. Your kid learns that love does not vanish when things get hard. That is the whole inheritance, right there.

## PART 3

# YOUR PARTNER IS NOT THE ENEMY. YOU'RE FIGHTING A GHOST.

Most fights at home are not about the dishes or the money or the tone. They are old wounds, wearing today's clothes.

You did not pick your partner by accident. Part of you picked the person who could press the exact bruise you have carried since you were a kid, so you could finally win the old fight. You will not win it with them. They were not there when it started.

### THE RESEARCH

**Attachment science** (Bowlby, Ainsworth, and 50 years after them) shows the blueprint we built for love as children runs our adult relationships on autopilot, until we make it conscious. We do not chase chemistry. We chase the familiar, even when familiar hurts.

Bowlby & Ainsworth, attachment theory; Johnson, *Hold Me Tight*.

When you do your own work, the fights change. You stop reacting like the cornered kid and start showing up like the man. You can hear her without it being an attack on you. You can say what you actually need instead of going cold and making her guess.

## YOU CAN'T BE PRESENT FOR YOUR FAMILY WHILE YOUR TRIGGERS RUN THE HOUSE.

And your kids are watching how you treat her. That is the first picture of love they ever get. Make it one you would be proud for them to copy.

## PART 4

# REAL STRENGTH IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF FEELING.

Most of us were handed a broken definition of being a man. Don't cry. Don't need. Don't flinch. Push it down and keep moving. We called it strength. It was just a cage with good marketing.

Here is the truth a strong man learns: stuffing your feelings does not make you tough. It makes you a time bomb. The stuff you push down does not leave. It leaks out as anger, as numbness, as the third drink, as a heart attack at 55.

### THE RESEARCH

Researchers have a name for what we did to boys: **normative male alexithymia**, a learned inability to name your own feelings (Dr. Ronald Levant). And Dr. Bessel van der Kolk's work, *The Body Keeps the Score*, proved the feelings you refuse to face do not disappear. The body stores them, in the gut, the back, the blood pressure, until you deal with them.

Levant, normative male alexithymia; van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*.

Real strength is being able to feel the hard thing, stay standing, and still choose how you act. That is a man who can be trusted with a wife and kids. Not the man with no feelings. The man who is the boss of his.

**YOU SURVIVED WHAT SHOULD HAVE BROKEN YOU.  
THAT GRIT WAS SO YOU COULD BE  
THE ONE WHO **STOPS IT.****

## THE SYSTEM

# FOUR WORDS. ONE WAY OUT.

This is the engine I run with the fathers I coach. Four words. You can walk yourself through it on any trigger, any fight, any bad night.

### **MASK**

What you show. "I'm fine." The calm face at work, the short fuse at home, the scroll at 1 AM. Name what you have been performing, and what it costs you.

### **ROOT**

What is really running you underneath. The old rule. "Not enough." "Earn love." "Don't need anyone." Find the one line you have been living by since you were a kid.

### **MATRIX**

The moment you see the program from the outside. "That is not me. That is the wiring." You stop being the wound and start being the man watching it.

### **CENTER**

You turn the attention inward and make one move from there, not from the old fear. One repair with your kid. One honest sentence to your partner. One thing for you, not for applause.

That is the whole map. Mask, Root, Matrix, Center. From hiding, to truth, to freedom, to power.

## STEP ONE

# THE 7-MINUTE MORNING ROOT CHECK.

Reading does not change a man. Reps do. So here is the one tool. Do it tomorrow morning before you touch your phone. Seven minutes. A notes app or a scrap of paper.

## 1 Name the weather (1 min)

Before you read anyone else's mood, read your own. "Right now I feel \_\_\_\_." That is it. Most men have never once checked their own gauge first.

## 2 Find the root, not the surface (2 min)

If there is a knot in you, ask: "How old does this feeling actually feel?" If the answer is young, it is the boy, not today. Write the one line he believed.

## 3 Step outside it (1 min)

Say it out loud: "That is the old program, not the truth." You are now the man watching the wiring, not the wiring.

## 4 Pick the one move (2 min)

Name one thing today you will do from center, not from fear. One repair with your kid. One real sentence to your partner. One promise to you.

## 5 Ask the 8-and-80 question (1 min)

"Why am I doing this, and what does it do for the people I love?" Do it for the 8-year-old who grew up too fast, and the 80-year-old who wants to look back in peace.

**BE PRESENT ABOUT YOUR WOUNDS.  
THAT IS THE REAL GIFT.**

WHEN YOU'RE READY TO GO ALL THE WAY IN

## ROOTED

This guide is the map. ROOTED is me walking it with you. Six weeks, one on one. We find the exact program running your house, and we rewrite it, so your parenting, your marriage, and your own peace shift at the same time.

**THE FIRST CALL IS FREE.  
DM THE WORD ROOTED.**

6 weeks 1-on-1 from \$3,500 · @joshua\_betancur on Instagram

You broke a sweat your whole life just surviving. Now use that grit to break the line. Your kids are watching which man you choose to be. Be the one the cycle never saw coming.

BREAK THE LINE · ROOTED · © Joshua Betancur · This guide is education, not medical or mental-health treatment. If you are in crisis, call or text 988 (US).