



Why Healing a Child
MEANS HEALING A FAMILY

**FAMILY SYSTEMS
THERAPY**

WHEN A CHILD EXPERIENCES TRAUMA, THE IMPACT RARELY STOPS WITH THEM.

Their caregivers, siblings, and extended family often carry unspoken wounds of their own.

THE GOOD NEWS?

Transformation becomes possible when the whole family begins to heal together.

This guide gives you a simple, practical framework rooted in biblical truth and evidence-based care —so you can support children and families in your ministry, home, classroom, or church.



**“BEAR ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS,
and so fulfil the law of Christ.”**
GALATIANS 6:2

HOW *Family Systems* WORK

FAMILIES FUNCTION LIKE A MOBILE

When you touch one piece of a mobile, everything else must readjust to find a new balance. Families work the same way. Every **person is connected**, and when one begins to change – even in healthy, hopeful ways – the entire system feels the shift.

Healing is beautiful, but it also disrupts what has been “normal,” even if that normal was unhealthy. That disruption can create tension, confusion, or resistance as **everyone tries to figure out their new footing.**

WHY THIS HAPPENS

Families, like mobiles, seek **stability**. When one piece changes, the rest instinctively rearrange themselves, even if it means returning to harmful patterns. These **reactions** are rarely intentional; they are simply the family’s way of maintaining balance in the only way they’ve ever known.



*These responses are not signs of failure
– they are signs that the system is shifting.*

HOW *Family Systems* WORK

COMMON FAMILY REACTIONS TO CHANGE

- A child begins to grow and heal – but **siblings may act up** as the family’s familiar roles no longer “fit.”
- A parent tries new trauma-informed strategies – but a grandparent may unintentionally undermine progress because **“that’s not how we did it.”**
- A **caregiver** starts healing from their own past wounds – but other family members may pull them back into old patterns because change feels unfamiliar and uncomfortable.
- The family starts experiencing **less chaos** – and someone steps into the “old chaos role” because systems naturally seek what feels predictable.

KEY INSIGHT: CHILDREN DON’T HEAL IN ISOLATION.

When only the child grows, but the family system stays the same, the child can get pulled back into old patterns. Healing becomes sustainable only when everyone in the family begins to move – even in small ways – toward safety, stability, and connection.

This is the beauty of whole-family work:

WHEN ONE PERSON HEALS, THE ENTIRE FAMILY HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAL WITH THEM.

5 Ways to Support Healing FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

1. CREATE SAFETY IN EVERYDAY LIFE, NOT JUST DURING CONVERSATIONS

Healing accelerates when support happens in the spaces where life actually unfolds –bedtime routines, sibling conflict, morning chaos.

Try this:

- Offer to observe a family’s natural rhythm
- Normalise the stress moments (“This is a hard time of day for everyone”)
- Provide one small, doable tool per week (“Try narrating feelings at bedtime”)

2. STRENGTHEN PARENTS WITHOUT SHAMING THEM

Many caregivers carry their own unresolved trauma. They may feel overwhelmed, inadequate, or stuck in old patterns.

Encourage with:

- “You’re not alone.”
- “Small changes make big impact.”
- “Your healing matters too.”



BIBLICAL ANCHOR:

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” – Psalm 147:3

3. DON'T OVERLOOK SIBLINGS IN THE HEALING PROCESS

Siblings may:

- Mimic trauma behaviours
- Take on adult responsibilities
- Become “invisible” to avoid conflict

Try:

- Hosting a sibling group activity
- Teaching cooperative play
- Naming strengths in each child

4. ACTIVATE THE EXTENDED FAMILY

This is one of ministry’s most overlooked assets. In many cultures, grandparents, aunts, and uncles make major decisions and offer daily support.

Equip them by:

- Casting vision for their role
- Offering simple trauma-informed tools
- Helping them understand the child’s new identity in Christ

BIBLICAL ANCHOR:

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” - Colossians 3:13



5. ADDRESS WHAT KEEPS FAMILIES STUCK BENEATH THE SURFACE

Families rarely resist healing because they're unwilling. Usually, they're overwhelmed by **practical realities**.

Support You Can Offer:

BARRIER A FAMILY FACES	PRACTICAL SUPPORT
Economic Stress	Connect them to job programmes, budgeting help, meal relief
Isolation	Link them to a church, prayer group, support family
School Challenges	Coordinate with teachers, help create consistency
Legal or Systemic Fears	Accompany them, advocate where appropriate

THE BIBLICAL + EVIDENCE-BASED IDENTITY FRAMEWORK FAMILIES NEED

A CHILD'S HEALING DEEPENS WHEN THEIR IDENTITY IS RESTORED

Trauma tells a child:

- “You’re unwanted.”
- “You’re dirty.”
- “You’re powerless.”
- “You’re alone.”
- “You’re not worth it.”

God tells them:

- I am God’s Child (John 1:12)
- I am Clean (Ephesians 2:13)
- I am Powerful (Philippians 4:13)
- I am Chosen with Purpose (Ephesians 1:4)
- I am Art – God’s masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10)

IDENTITY TRUTH	WHAT TRAUMA SAYS	WHAT HEALING LOOKS LIKE
God’s Child	“I don’t belong.”	Accepts love & connection
Clean	“It was my fault.”	Releases shame
Powerful	“I can’t change anything.”	Draws healthy boundaries
Chosen with Purpose	“My life doesn’t matter.”	Shows hope & direction
Art / Masterpiece	“I’m damaged.”	Sees beauty + God’s design

THE WHOLE FAMILY CIRCLE FRAMEWORK

USE THIS TO ASSESS WHERE SUPPORT IS NEEDED.

FAMILY MEMBER	WHAT THEY MAY CARRY	HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT
Child	Fear, shame, confusion	Trauma-informed discipleship + consistent safety
Parents	Exhaustion, guilt, past trauma	Coaching, encouragement, marriage support
Siblings	Misbehaviour, unhealthy roles	Group time, role reset, emotional tools
Extended Family	Influence, tradition, skepticism	Vision casting, inclusion, practical tools
School/Community	Lack of understanding	Communication + shared plans

HOW TO USE THIS FRAMEWORK

1. **Identify** who is in the child's "circle."
2. **Ask**: "What is one small step each person could take toward healing?"
3. **Support** the micro-steps, not perfection.
4. **Celebrate** every win – even tiny ones.

This is how generational cycles begin to break.

NOT THROUGH QUICK FIXES, BUT WHOLE-FAMILY TRANSFORMATION.

THE TRUTH THAT TRANSFORMS

You don't need a counselling degree to make an impact.

You simply need:

- A **willingness** to see the whole family
- A **heart** that believes God still restores
- **Tools** that help you walk with children through identity, safety, and belonging

Families flourish when someone stands with them.

Children heal when their family begins healing too.

Communities transform when families grow stronger.

*"He places the lonely in families."
— Psalm 68:6*



YOU CAN BE PART OF GOD'S RESTORING WORK
one family at a time.



WHAT IS KIDS ALIVE INTERNATIONAL?

Kids Alive empowers children in some of the hardest places who have been abused, neglected, or are vulnerable. Join us in creating thriving families and communities by sharing hope to children through restorative education, family strengthening, protective care, and justice advocacy.

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