

The Heart of

REFLECTIVE SAFEGUARDING



The goal was never simply to **avoid** coercive control.

The goal was always this:



To become so deeply rooted in your **identity**,



dignity,



gifts,



discernment and



relationship with God

that anything asking you to abandon them becomes **immediately recognisable**.



You were never created to spend your life becoming smaller so someone else could feel bigger. 



BECAUSE **HEALTHY LOVE** NEVER ASKS YOU TO BECOME SMALLER.



HEALTHY LOVE GIVES YOU ROOM TO BECOME EVERYTHING GOD CREATED YOU TO BE.

Sharon Mackenzie 

www.spiritledcounselling.com

The Big Question

Am I becoming more myself, or less myself?

Healthy relationships, families, churches, workplaces and friendships help you become more fully yourself.

Control slowly asks you to become less.

The Heart of Reflective Safeguarding™

The goal was never simply to avoid coercive control.

The goal was always this:

To become so deeply rooted in your identity, dignity, gifts, discernment and relationship with God that anything asking you to abandon them becomes immediately recognisable.

Because healthy love never asks you to become smaller.

Healthy love gives you room to become everything God created you to be.

What is Coercive Control?

Coercive control is a repeated pattern of behaviour that slowly replaces your own thoughts, feelings, judgement and freedom with the expectations, fears and demands of another person or system.

It can happen in:

❤️ Dating relationships

👨👩 Families

🏛️ Churches

💼 Workplaces

👯 Friendships

🏫 Schools

🌐 Online communities

The setting changes.

The pattern stays the same.

The Slow Fade

Nobody wakes up one morning and decides,

"Today I will give away my voice, my dreams and my identity."

It happens slowly.

One compromise.

One apology.

One explanation.

One sacrifice.

One more chance.

Until the person you were slowly fades away.

The Reflective Safeguarding™ Practice

NOTICE

What actually happened?

Not what I hoped happened.

Not what they meant.

What actually happened?

LISTEN

What is my body telling me?

Do I feel:

Safe?

Free?

Calm?

Or

Small?

Confused?

Anxious?

Afraid?

NAME

What behaviour am I seeing?

Respect?

Kindness?

Pressure?

Guilt?

Control?

Isolation?

Manipulation?

Gaslighting?

PLACE RESPONSIBILITY

Who owns this?

Am I carrying responsibility that belongs to someone else?

RESPOND

What protects my dignity?

What boundary needs protecting?

Who is a safe person I can talk to?

RELEASE

I am not responsible for managing another person's behaviour.

Green Flags

Healthy people...

- ✓ Respect your "no."
- ✓ Celebrate your success.
- ✓ Encourage your friendships.
- ✓ Apologise.
- ✓ Tell the truth.
- ✓ Like seeing you grow.
- ✓ Want you to become more yourself.

Red Flags

You find yourself...

- ☐ Walking on eggshells.
- ☐ Apologising all the time.
- ☐ Losing friendships.
- ☐ Hiding parts of yourself.
- ☐ Feeling responsible for another person's emotions.
- ☐ Constantly second-guessing yourself.
- ☐ Becoming smaller to keep the peace.

A Special Reflection for Young Women

Ask yourself:

Are women respected here?

Can women ask questions?

Can women lead?

Can women think differently?

Can women use their gifts?

Can women disagree respectfully?

Can women be confident without being criticised?

Can I be as big, bold, creative, intelligent and powerful as God created me to be in this place?

Or am I quietly learning to shrink?

The First Relationship

Many young women don't learn self-abandonment in dating relationships.

They learn it in childhood.

If you were taught to:

keep everyone happy,

never disagree,

never say no,

ignore your feelings,

make yourself smaller,

then control may feel familiar rather than dangerous.

Reflective Safeguarding™ is the practice of returning to yourself.

Remember

You do not exist to manage another person's emotions.

You do not exist to carry another person's insecurity.

You do not exist to become invisible so someone else can feel important.

Your Safeguarding Questions

Before you join the church.

Before you take the job.

Before you start the relationship.

Before you stay in the friendship.

Ask:

Can I be fully myself here?

Will this place encourage my gifts?

Will it strengthen my relationship with God?

Will it celebrate my growth?

Will it protect my dignity?

Will it allow me to flourish?

The Reflective Safeguarding Declaration

I will know myself.

I will honour my body.

I will trust my discernment.

I will develop my gifts.

I will protect my peace.

I will choose relationships that expand my life rather than reduce it.

I will never confuse control with love.

I will never surrender my dignity for belonging.

I will never abandon the person God is forming within me.

Final Thought

You were never created to spend your life becoming smaller so someone else could feel bigger.

Healthy love.

Healthy families.

Healthy churches.

Healthy workplaces.

Healthy friendships.

Healthy leadership.

All have one thing in common:

They make room for the fullness of the person God created you to be.