

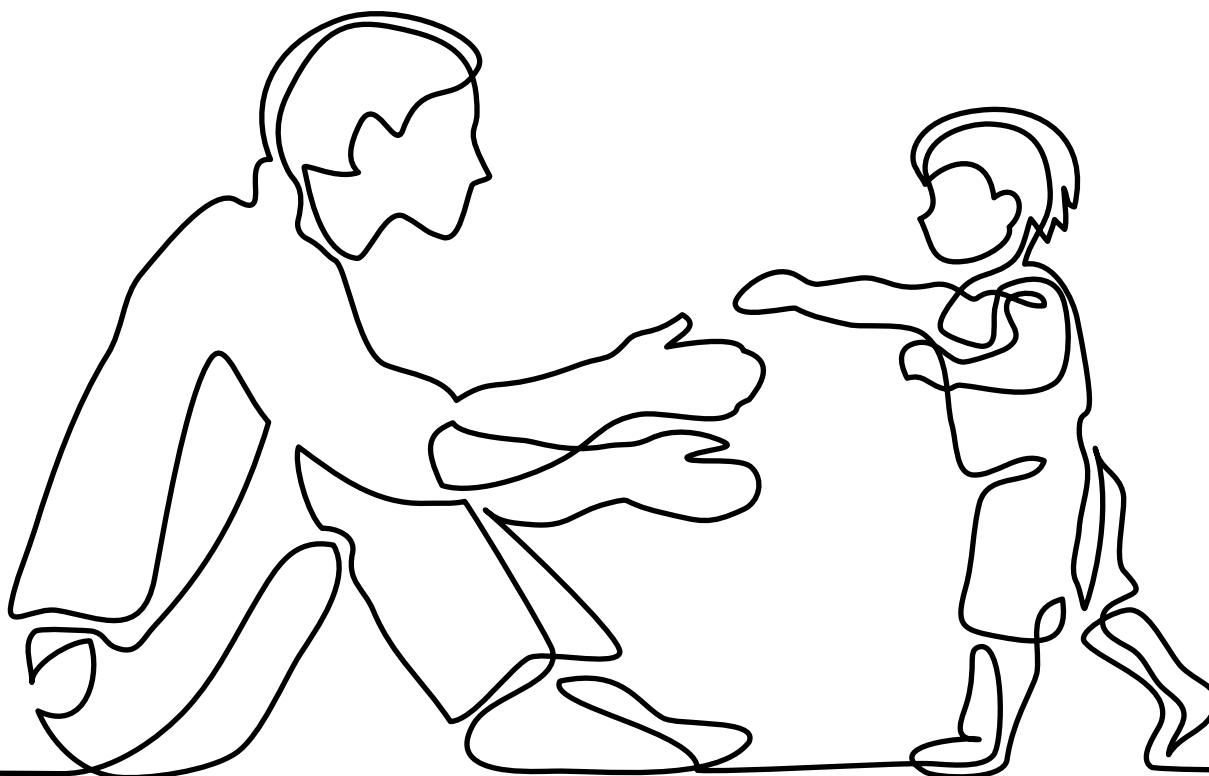
THE Parenting

Toolbox



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5 Steps to Staying Calm

You feel tired, stressed and spread thin. You feel triggered by your child in some way. Maybe they're not listening, maybe they're screaming and crying, maybe they're pushing back. You feel the anger and tension begin to rise in your body. Eventually, you snap and lose it. You yell and threaten and possibly say things you don't mean. And after, you feel guilt, regret, and shame.

Does this cycle sound familiar?

Yes, without question, one of the top concerns I hear about from parents is that they have a hard time staying calm. They really want to remain calm and patient with their children yet find it nearly impossible to do so.

I want you to know that if you find it challenging to keep your composure all the time, **you are not alone**. Yes, staying calm, composed and in control of your emotions is the ultimate goal. HOWEVER, I want you to know that no one, truly no one, is able to stay calm 100% of the time. Of course not. After all, you are human, you have feelings, you have triggers, parenting is hard and this is real life.



So, while yes, you should actively and continuously work towards the goal of remaining calm, confident and composed for your children, don't forget to be patient with yourself in the process. **Because it is a process.** Show yourself empathy and above all, **don't give up.**

STEP**01****Understand
Your Triggers**

The very first step to being able to stay calm is understanding your triggers. Not the surface triggers, but the deep, underlying triggers.

Here's what I mean:



Think about what your triggers are. What is it that your child does that triggers you to feel upset, frustrated, embarrassed, angry? You might be thinking to yourself something like: “I get angry when my child doesn’t listen to me.” Or “I feel anxious when my child acts out in public.” Or “I feel overwhelmed when my child is crying.”

These are all surface triggers. They are very real and valid, but they are surface triggers. You want to continue to ask yourself, “why” and search for the deeper underlying trigger beneath the surface trigger.



“I get angry when my child doesn’t listen to me.”

surface
trigger

Why? (dig deeper)

Because things are not going my way and I want to be in control.

Because I was raised to believe that not listening is disrespectful and I feel offended.

Because I’m not getting what I want and it doesn’t feel good.

These are possible underlying triggers



“I feel anxious when my child acts out in public”

surface
trigger

Why? (dig deeper)

Because I’m concerned about what others are thinking of me and my child.

Because it’s important for me to be perceived as a good parent.

Because I’m worried something may be “wrong” with my child or with my parenting.

These are possible underlying triggers



“I feel overwhelmed when my child is crying.”

surface
trigger

Why? (dig deeper)

Because it makes me feel out of control.

Because “negative” emotions scare me.

Because I was not allowed to openly express my emotions as a child.

These are possible underlying triggers

Do you see the difference between a surface trigger and an underlying trigger?

Notice how many of the surface triggers put blame on your child, while the underlying triggers are more focused on you and understanding your reaction.

It's the true, underlying triggers you want to work to identify.

And only when you can really understand your underlying triggers, can you then work to manage them.



Continue to ask yourself these types of questions to better understand your triggers:

- > Why am I feeling angry (overwhelmed, frustrated etc) right now? But really... why?
- > The last time I got very upset with my child, what was going on with me? What was I feeling?
- > Why did I react that way? Where/how did I learn to react that way?
- > What was getting triggered in me?
- > How would I prefer to respond when this happens again? (when, not if)
- > Is this how I always react, or was there something else going on?
- > Are my needs being met? Am I looking for others to help me manage my emotions?
- > Is this actually about my child, or is this really about me?

Here's some help. These are some of the most common parenting triggers:

CONTROL: The need to feel in control. You feel overwhelmed when things are out of your control: too loud, too much, too messy, not listening and so on.

DOUBT Doubt about your parenting abilities or doubt about your child's capabilities.

FEAR In some way, all triggers are tied to fear.

STEP

02

Slow Down & Breathe



What happens when you practice sloooooowing down?

> **When you slow down you are able to listen to your body's signals.**

You know what it feels like when you're becoming frustrated and triggered. Your chest tightens, maybe your breath changes... you know how that feels. Slow down in order to notice these feelings and once you do, slow down again and breathe through them. If you're not able to first slow down, you will miss these signals your body is giving you.

> **When you slow down you are giving yourself room to think.**

When you can think, you can thoughtfully respond instead of emotionally react. What's the difference between reacting and responding? Reacting is immediate, emotionally charged and oftentimes out of control. Meanwhile, responding is thoughtful, reflective and focused on guidance. Slow down in order to give yourself the room you need to think, breathe and respond to your child.

> **When you slow down your child will also slow down.**

Children are immediate and intense. That's their nature. Oftentimes, parents feel they must respond to their child with the same level of intensity and immediacy. They don't. You don't. Take your time to respond to your child and make your decisions. Let your child know you "have to think about it and get back" to them. Model patience and mindfulness. Work to delay gratification.

Slowing down is tied to breathing. Don't underestimate the power of breathing.

Deep breathing (belly breathing) is an excellent way to help yourself stay calm and connected. And it's something you can do anytime, anywhere.

When you feel yourself starting to get frustrated, overwhelmed or angry, stop what you're doing or saying and right there and then, slow down and begin some deep breathing. It's perfectly ok to do this in front of your children. In fact, it's a great technique to model for them.

You can literally stop in place and tell yourself out loud: "Slow down and breathe."

Deep breathing is slow, steady and deliberate.



Pick calm moments and practice breathing this way often so that when the tough moments come, you and your body already know what to do.

TIP:

STEP

03

Look Inward & Validate

You know how you're going about your day and seemingly within an instant your nice family dinner turns into a screaming match. Or after school pick up starts off ok and then suddenly you and your child are yelling at each other.



You think to yourself “What just happened!? Things were going so well.”

These moments feel like they go from zero to full blown meltdown in an instant, but in actuality, there were signals along the way that you may not have noticed.

That's why it's incredibly important to take a moment to pause and look inward throughout the day. Looking inward means to check in with yourself and ask yourself: “How am I feeling right now?” It's as if you're stopping for a split second and taking inventory of your own emotions.

Practice doing this throughout your day, during all types of moments: calm moments, anxious moments, angry moments. Start by asking yourself 2 or 3 times a day: “How am I feeling right now?” And build up from there.

You'd be shocked to find how common it is to walk around and interact with the world without having a clear picture of how you're feeling.

The more you practice looking inward, the more you'll be able to instinctually do this during triggered moments. **And that's your goal: awareness. You want to get to a place where the moment you begin to feel triggered (or feel anything), you notice it.** Once you're aware of what you're feeling, you're then able to validate and manage those feelings.

There is a lot of talk about validating your child's feelings. Don't forget to also validate YOUR OWN.

Validation is acknowledging that it's ok to feel how you feel.

HERE'S HOW IT CAN WORK:

You look inward and check in with yourself throughout the day. You notice that you're feeling a little extra sensitive and on edge. You validate to yourself: "I'm feeling a little on edge today... it's ok for me to feel this way sometimes. I won't feel like this all the time, but right now that's how I feel."

Later in the day you look inward and feel yourself starting to get angry and overwhelmed with your child, you pause and validate these feelings: "I can feel myself starting to get angry... it's ok, I can feel this way sometimes... I'm in control of my emotions and I can do this."

Realization of your own feelings in the moment helps to reduce your reactivity. When your own emotions are recognized and validated, you are able to be a more grounded and responsive parent.

STEP

04

Encourage yourself with a mantra

A mantra is a personal affirmation that you say to yourself during tough moments. It's a way to encourage yourself and cheer yourself on.

You can create one for yourself or use one of the below

Here are some of my favorite mantras, including the one I use.

- > "It's ok. We are ok."
- > "Breathe. I've got this."
- > "This is hard. I can still do this."
- > "I can stay calm... I can stay calm."
- > "I believe in myself and I know what to do."
- > "I am the lighthouse and my child is the storm... I am the lighthouse..."
- > "This too shall pass."
- > "I am my child's mentor."
- > "Slow down... slow down."

In moments of frustration, you want to use a personal mantra that really encourages you and you want to really believe in what you're saying.

Let's put all these steps together and see how this can work out in real life scenario.

You've really thought deeply about your triggers and you've come to recognize that a messy house really gets to you. You like things done your way, you like to feel in control and it makes you feel out of control and overwhelmed when your house is messy. You're working to continually understand and manage your triggers.

You wanted to clean up a bit but didn't have the time. You've checked in with yourself a handful of times throughout the day and you recognize you're feeling stressed because you weren't able to achieve what you planned to.

Your kids come home from school and there are immediately shoes, socks and bags thrown about. You look inward once again and feel a tightening in your chest and a shot of anxiety. Instead of immediately reacting, you slow down and again, check in with how you're feeling:



“I really don't like messes. They make me feel out of control... I also wanted to clean up earlier and wasn't able to and it's been bothering me all day... this is about me and not about my kids.... breathe... breathe... slow down... breathe.... ok, I can do this... I'm ok, I've got this.”

You walk over to your kids and let them know, calmly and confidently: “Time to pick up your shoes and socks and put them in your room. Yes, right now... I know you don’t want to... I know it feels hard... still, that’s what we’re doing right now. Go ahead, you can do it. I’ll get your socks and you get your shoes. There you go.”

And throughout your conversation with your children you’re breathing, looking inward and checking in and encouraging yourself with your mantra:

“I can do this... we’re ok... they are the kids and I am their mentor.”

Do you see how easily and quickly this scenario could have taken a different turn... and ended in yelling and threatening.

I know that this may feel like a lot of steps. That’s why I use this example to illustrate how the steps are happening simultaneously, alongside one other. The more you practice, the more this becomes a habit for you and you’re moving through these steps in mere seconds.



**BONUS
STEP**

Knowledge is power

Many moments of parental frustration come from unmet expectations.

Here's what I mean. If you expect your young child to sit still for long periods of time, then you may feel upset and frustrated when they can't. If you expect your teenager to always listen on command... then, of course, you're going to feel angry when they don't. If you are unaware that it's perfectly healthy for a toddler to have tantrums, then you may feel especially frustrated and overwhelmed when your toddler has a tantrum.



These are examples of where you may have to reset your expectations of what your child is able to do, based on having a better understanding of what they are developmentally and emotionally capable of.

This is why it's incredibly important to seek out information and knowledge about your child's stage of development, what's considered typical and how best to handle it.

(Guess what?! That's what you're doing right now! Give yourself some credit.)

Knowledge is power, it really is.

The more you know and understand about your child's development, the more confident and relaxed you are able to feel in your parenting.

Above all else, it's so important to know that you're human and this takes tons of practice and patience. Growth is a life-long journey. Don't give up on yourself and know that you won't always be able to control your emotions in the way you want to... and that's ok.

When you react to your child in a way that you don't feel good about, know you can and should repair. Repairing means to approach your child, apologize modeling true ownership and normalize mistake making and personal growth. You can find out more about repairing with your child [here](#) and [here](#).

Want more info on how to:

- > Stay calm and grounded
- > Connect with your child
- > Feel less guilty
- > Help your child “listen” and cooperate
- > Set boundaries that work
- > Eliminate power struggles

Check out my online parenting courses.

[FIND YOUR PARENTING COURSE →](#)



6 Things to Say to Your Child, Now and Always

I KNOW YOU ARE TELLING YOUR CHILD THAT YOU LOVE THEM, AND THAT'S A WONDERFUL THING. WHAT ELSE DOES YOUR CHILD NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU?

1

“

What you think and feel is important to me.

2

“

We can both do hard things.

3

“

Sometimes we do what we want to do. Sometimes we do what we have to do.

4

“

I want to hear what you have to say. I'm listening.

5

“

My feelings are mine. I am in charge of them and it's up to me to manage them.

6

“

Sometimes I am angry with you, and sometimes you are angry with me. And that's ok.

What Are Your Parenting “Tools”

Successful parenting requires you to have many "tools" in your parenting "toolbox" and here I will discuss 3 BIG ones. These aren't your only tools, but they're essential:



Validating Emotions



Setting Boundaries



Encouraging Coping Skills

VALIDATING EMOTIONS:

Validation is one of the best forms of emotional support you can offer your child (or anyone).

Validating your child's feelings IS NOT:

- > Trying to change, fix or undo how they feel.
- > Minimizing how they feel.

Validating your child's feelings IS:

- > Naming and acknowledging your child's feelings.
- > Reflecting back to them how they feel (almost as if you were a mirror).
- > Normalizing that it's ok to feel emotions.

Let's look at EXAMPLES!

"Hmm... ok, I hear you..."

Instead of... "Why would you say that!?"

"What I'm hearing is that you were feeling really disappointed."

Instead of... "Oh, don't be disappointed! It's not a big deal."

"Yeah, that does sound hard... I get that..."

Instead of... "Don't worry! I'll take care of it and fix this."

“Yeah, that does sound hard... I get that...”

Instead of... “Don’t worry! I’ll take care of it and fix this.”

“I understand...”

Instead of... “Enough crying already.”

Here’s one more example:

“Sounds like you’re feeling really frustrated that you didn’t get what you wanted... I know what that feels like... it doesn’t feel good.”

Notice in these examples you're not trying to change how your child is feeling and you're not asking a lot of questions. You ARE reflecting back to your child how they feel in an effort to encourage emotional awareness and eventual emotional ownership and regulation... big, big life skills :) You can and should start this early with your young toddlers.

Have a toddler
and not sure
where to start?

No problem! Get started here. →



WHAT ELSE: — Validation is not your only tool, but it's often the 1st tool you can use when responding to your child's emotions. It's a way to connect and begin to calm things down so that you can then start to employ your other tools.

You know that feeling when YOU are having a hard time and you vent or confide in someone and then feel really heard and seen by them... feels so good, right? You begin to let your guard down, feel a little more relaxed and become more open to communication and input... **that's the power of validation.**

THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Validating your child's feelings does not mean you agree with how they feel... it just means you are RECOGNIZING how they feel. Your child spilled their drink and they're now crying... you know this is "not a big deal" based on your knowledge, perspective and life experience. Validating your child in this scenario can sound something like: "Yeah, I see you're upset, sweetie." Notice that you're acknowledging that THEY are upset because THEIR drink spilled... you're validating your child's subjective experience, even if you don't necessarily agree with it.

**DON'T
FORGET:**

—

Parents, don't forget to validate YOUR OWN emotions as well. Here's what that can sound like:

- > “Wow, this is challenging.”
- > “I’m really having a hard time right now... I feel pulled in so many directions.” “This is tough... I also know I can do it.”
- > “This feels like a lot...like it’s all on me...I know that’s not always true... but that’s how it feels right now.”

YOU are the foundation. Don’t forget to show yourself the same patience and understanding you show your child.



SETTING BOUNDARIES

What is a boundary?

Put simply, a boundary is a parameter or guideline for your child's behavior.

Here's an incredibly important distinction

You set boundaries to behaviors and not to emotions.

What exactly does that mean?

Behaviors are outward displays of emotions. Our internal and invisible emotions that we feel inside cause our external, visible behaviors. If your child is feeling mad (emotion) they may... hit or kick you (behavior). If your child is feeling disappointed (emotion) they may scream loudly (behavior). In the same way, if your child is feeling happy (emotion) they may jump around and laugh (behaviors).

You set boundaries to your child's behaviors (for example, kicking or screaming) and NOT to the underlying emotion that is causing the behavior (for example, feeling disappointed or angry).

Essentially, it's ok to feel mad... not ok to kick someone when you're mad.



More examples coming up, but here's what this can sound like:

“

"Whoa, you're angry... it's OK to feel angry, but you CANNOT kick me when you're angry. What can you do when you're angry? You can..."

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES ARE:

01

Respectful:

Boundaries are created and enforced for the emotional and physical wellbeing of your child. Trust in yourself as a parent. You have years of experience, insight and the ability to understand longterm consequences and you use those abilities to mentor your child. Respecting your child does not mean you accept all their behaviors OR they agree with all your boundaries. Respecting your child means you respect the person your child is, while guiding their behavior and holding your boundary, even in the face of their protest.

02

Reasonable:

Appropriate boundaries take into account your child's abilities, age and developmental stage. For example, it's not reasonable to expect a toddler to sit still for long periods of time... It's not reasonable to expect a young child to never feel frustrated when you say no to something... It's not reasonable to expect your tween to share every secret with you...

It's incredibly helpful to have a basic understanding of your child's development and what's considered typical. This enables you to have a balanced perspective and to create realistic boundaries your child will be able to respond to.

03

Consistent:

I'm sure you hear this a lot → Consistency is key... It's also the hardest part of maintaining boundaries for many parents. Unfortunately, there's no magic trick here and your consistency in holding boundaries truly is important. Try your best. You don't have to be perfect, you really don't. Still, you do need to try your best, even in the face of challenges.

More tips on consistency later in the section :)

04

Clear:

What's the use of a boundary that no one knows about or understands :) Once you have decided what your boundaries are going to be, have a calm conversation with your child/family about them. Communicate clearly and directly using precise and detailed language.

“

“I've been thinking... you know how recently you have been... saying/ doing... and then I have been saying/ doing... It hasn't really been working for us and we're going to be trying something different.

From now on, when you... I will respond like this...

And I will remind you and we will keep practicing, together :)”

05

Not About You:

I know it's hard, I really do... but don't add your own emotions to an already emotional situation. Your boundary is not meant to punish or make your child “feel bad” for what they have done. Your boundary is meant to guide your child. You can't be a guide and mentor to your child if you're not in control of your own emotions. Your child is impulsive, irrational, intense... you are not. Do your best to stay as calm as you can.

EXAMPLES!!

“

“You are sounding really frustrated. You can feel frustrated but you CANNOT talk to me like that when you’re frustrated. Take a breath if you need to and try again.”

“

“When we leave the house you will hold my hand. You might want to let go and run off, and I will not let that happen. You might cry... that’s ok. We will hold hands while we walk.”

“

“TV is turning off in 5 minutes... letting you know you may whine, get upset, not want to... that’s ok, sweetie. TV will still be turned off.”

“

“That was your last cookie. I have a feeling you’re thinking if you keep asking me I may change my mind... I won’t sweetie. No more cookies.”

“

“I know you want that toy... I hear you loud and clear. No, we’re not getting it. I’m sorry you’re disappointed.”

“Whoa, can't throw that truck. You are great at throwing! What can you throw? A ball, that's right. No throwing the truck.

“Looks like we can't use this truck right now. That's ok, we can try again later.”

“NO hitting ME. You're angry... that's ok. You CANNOT hit me when you are angry. You can tell me: I am SO ANGRY at you!

And I will say: Ok, I understand... But, you cannot hit me.”

“Wow, you love splashing :) No splashing water outside the bathtub. Where can you splash? Yes... inside the tub, that's right. Like this!

Cannot splash outside the tub.”

Notice in all the examples, you're being very precise and direct. Statements like "Don't do that!" or "Stop!" are too general. Instead, provide exact guidance in your boundary for what behavior is not ok (and ideally an alternative for what IS ok.)

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT CONSISTENCY:

When I talk to parents about boundaries one of the main sources of frustration I hear about comes from consistency... or lack of consistency. It's very difficult to hold a boundary consistently all the time.

HERE'S A HELPFUL TIP:

Have a plan! During a calm moment (and not in the heat of the moment) come up with your plan. Decide what boundaries are most important for you to uphold, and decide how you want to respond to them. Memorize your "script", your response, even your body language and phrasing.

Having a thought through plan eliminates the guesswork in the heat of the moment and, therefore, really helps you respond consistently and calmly (and with much less guilt).

And if you're not 100% consistent every time... will all your hard work disappear? No, it absolutely won't :) Try your best, believe in yourself and have patience for your child and for yourself.

**BE
REALISTIC:**

Will you have to repeat your boundary more than once to your child? Of course! Possibly over and over again? Yes.

Remind yourself as many times as you need that your child is learning, growing, maturing, practicing their new skills, and most certainly... pushing back. That's ok... that's actually what they're supposed to do.

FINAL NOTE ON BOUNDARIES:

Your child doesn't have to agree with your boundaries. In fact, they likely won't. You determine the boundaries because you are the parent, you have knowledge and experience and you make decisions with your child's best interest in mind. Meanwhile, your child decides how they want to feel about your boundaries (angry/upset/frustrated) and that is totally ok. Expect a protest, and still, calmly hold your boundary, trusting in yourself.

COPING SKILLS

An essential "tool" in your parenting "toolbox" is encouraging your child to develop and trust in THEIR OWN natural ability to cope and manage for themselves.



This can often feel very challenging for parents because it involves you not jumping in to fix, solve, distract or take away your child's difficult emotions. That means you have to be ok with your child "sitting" in their uncomfortable feelings and managing through them... which, of course, can be hard for any parent.

Think about it this way: Your child cannot find their strength, build their resilience, learn to solve their own problems if you don't give them the opportunity to try.

Yes, it may feel uncomfortable in the moment, but the lifelong skills they're learning are worth it.

Ok, so if you're not fixing, then what are you doing...?

Let's look at some examples:

“

“I know sweetie, sometimes things don't work out how we want them to... (pause...) What would you like to do now?”

“

“I hear you... What do you think you can do to help yourself feel a little bit better? If you think I can help you, can you tell me what type of help you need?”

“

“You're right... this is hard! Let's breathe... maybe take a break. Then you can try again.”

“

“Take your time to be upset. When you're ready, let me know what you want to do next.”

“

“Do you think you will feel upset for a short time or a long time? It's up to you.”

“

“I know this doesn't feel good... Do you have any ideas for how you can help yourself feel a little better? I have some... and I'd love to hear yours.”

What you're doing is allowing the space for your child to sit with their feelings and begin to understand that their feelings are actually up TO THEM to solve, and not up to you to solve.

THEY have the ultimate choice in how they feel and THEY have the power to decide what they want to do about their feelings.

**CAN YOU
EVER OFFER
SUGGESTIONS?**

Yes, of course... :) Just recognize that it's helpful to first give your child the opportunity to help themselves before you jump in and solve. Think that with a lot of practice and trial and error, your ultimate goal is for your child to (eventually) be able to manage, cope and contain their emotions on their own, without relying on you.

I DON'T KNOW:

So, you ask your child what they want to do... or how they want to help themselves and they say: "I don't know."

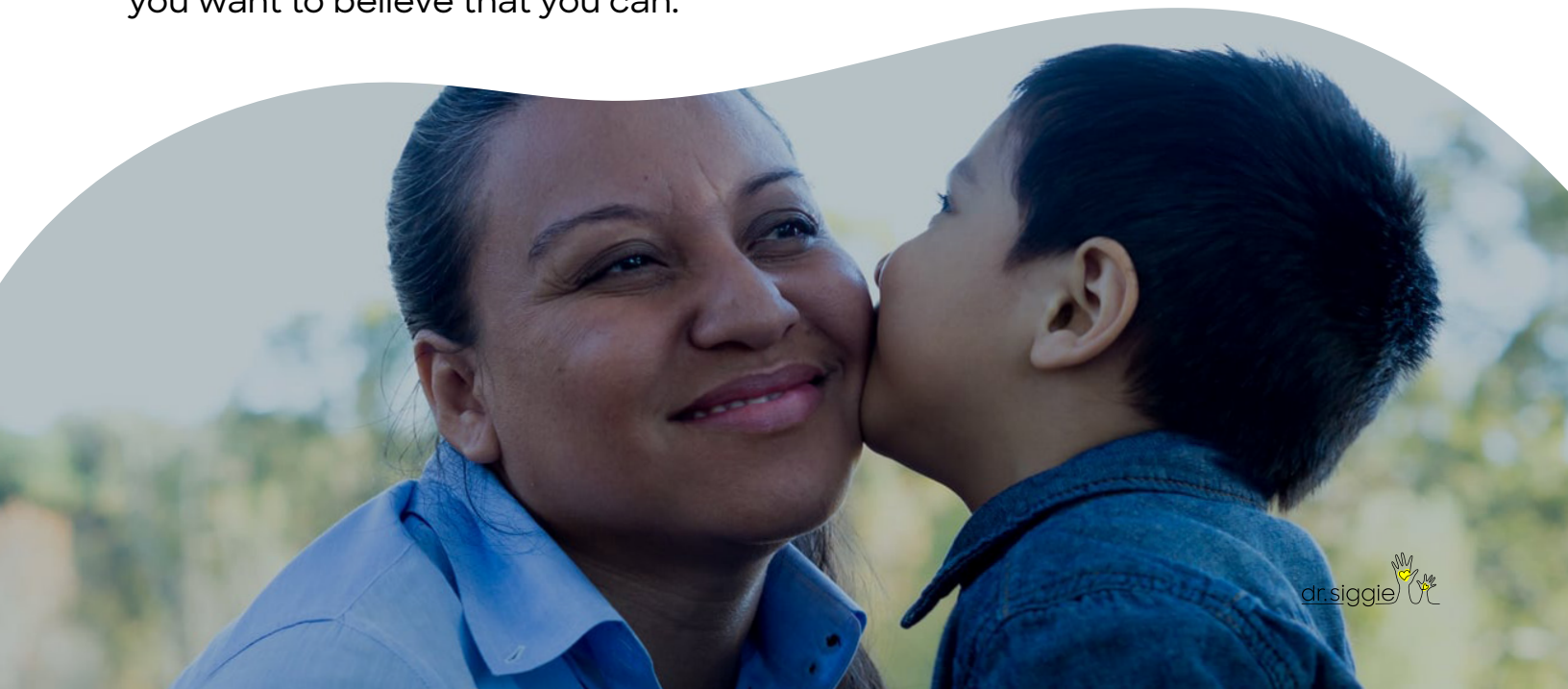
That's ok! It takes time to know what to do... and you can tell them that.

“That's ok, sweetie... take your time to think about it. It takes time to know what to do... We can talk about it again soon.”

And what if your child's idea is that you give them what they want... you solve their problem for them... you give them what you already said you wouldn't...

“Hmm... That's one idea... sometimes we can do that. Not right now. I bet you can think of another idea.”

This takes time, patience and practice, no doubt about that. You can do it! And you want to believe that you can.



The Role of a Parent

How do you view your role as a parent?



Your role is NOT to rule over your child.



Your role IS to guide your child.



Your role is NOT to scare your child into submission.



Your role IS to keep your child safe.



Your role is NOT to demand obedience.



Your role IS to encourage cooperation.



Your role is NOT to make your child happy.



Your role IS to accept all of your child's emotions.



Your role is NOT to shield your child from problems.



Your role IS to guide your child to problem-solve.

Parenting is not easy, no doubt about that. But that doesn't mean it has to feel so overwhelming!

My goal is to make your parenting journey:

- ✓ Less guilty
- ✓ Less stressful
- ✓ Less overwhelming

And, most of all, I want to help you increase the connection between you and your child. How?

With:

- > Precise scripts
- > Practical tools
- > Strategies that actually work
- > Real-life examples to model

Want more? Check out my online parenting courses.

[FIND YOUR PARENTING COURSE →](#)