

Navigating Emotions for Parents



Practical Alternatives to Blowing Up and Shutting Down

Amy Phoenix

Would you like to choose how you respond when parenting feels intense?

I have been asking myself this question for many years (my oldest is currently 15) and the answer I always have for myself is an unequivocal – YES!

For the past several years I have been digging deeply into the how's, what's and why's of reaction. How do I react so quickly when my child does this certain thing? Why do I respond just this way when I feel so irritated? What can I do to respond differently in the future? The answers are always interesting, even when I initially find them to be as irritating as the situation that begs them in the first place.

Along the way I am discovering, as importantly as anything else, that I have a choice about how I view and respond in any given situation. We all do, except that we may feel absolutely choice-less at times. When we feel choice-less we respond from default. We don't feel like there is any other option because we can't see one.

Navigating Emotions for Parents offers choices for the moments when we feel like we have none. As a mom and a writer I thoroughly enjoy the process of writing through a problem to find a solution. The scenarios that follow are a collection of in-the-moment practices to help you choose how you respond when parenting feels hard.

I invite you to print and read through them to the end – they are relatively short – and apply one today when you feel frustrated. Pick any one, whatever works for you. Tomorrow, or later this week, choose another one that requires just a bit of preparation. I've left some space for you to write notes in between exercises or on the margins so you can add your own insights and note what works for you.

When you're ready, maybe throughout the next couple of weeks, spend a few minutes each day pondering how you will apply more choices to your parenting experience. Then, let me know how it's going and if you have questions. I'd love to hear how you transformed a blow up into a sit down – or something else that brings about a refreshing experience in your family.

Until then,



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SAFE – A Tool to Feel Fully and Safely

How safe do you feel when you get upset? Do you feel like you have it all under control or is there an edge to what you feel that is a slight bit scary, maybe even unpredictable?

Recall a time as a child when an adult around you was upset in a way that felt scary and unsafe. Notice how you feel in your body when you remember that experience. This is part of how we become uncomfortable with feelings – we have experiences in childhood that send the message that it's bad or not okay to feel what we feel. Maybe it's because of our inner experience of what we feel or maybe it is more about another person's way of being when they feel upset. Regardless, we can learn to feel what we feel in a way that honors the feeling while we **only take actions that are safe for ourselves and others**. Instead of blowing up, we learn to look within and heed the deeper message of our feelings.

Feelings are signals from the spirit of truth at the base of our being that carry important messages. Our feelings are also energetic motivators and often we are not fully aware of how feelings are fueling our actions. We may know what we think caused the feeling, but the feelings can be so tangled and repressed that we are not fully sure what to do with what we are feeling so we react from a conditioned place inside of ourselves.

SAFE offers an alternative. It also offers the space to simply feel what we feel – good or bad, pretty or ugly, soft or intense. We need this space so we can learn from what we are feeling and bring about any changes our feelings are asking for within and without. When we do not feel safe with what we feel, or experiencing it fully, we end up resisting it in our body which can lead to repression or more intense explosions.

SAFE is a very essential first step, and when we commit to embracing this step, the rest will become apparent and the ripple of our willingness to feel fully and safely will definitely shift everything. Test it to see how this may be true for you.

S – Stop and notice. Regardless of what you are feeling – whether it is something simple in the moment like the joy of your child's smile or something more intense like rage that she is again doing that thing you most dislike – stop outwardly acting on the feeling (talking/touching/grabbing/spanking/yelling/whatever) and notice what is going on in your mind and body.

If you feel inclined to touch someone forcefully, bring your hands (and/or feet) close to your own body. I will say the important part again: **stop and notice what is going on within your own mind and body**. We can do this, and we are the only ones who can.

What thoughts are present? How does your body feel? Where in your body do you feel what you feel? Notice your breath and bring your attention deeply into your breath as you gradually feel the inside of your body from head to toe. It can help to practice this when you are not feeling intensely so you have a base to work from.

A – Accept and acknowledge. Welcome the feeling as a friend you have trusted your whole life. If you have never trusted anyone, this is an exercise in learning to trust yourself. You can transition how you feel what you feel.

Accept how you feel from the inside, with the same gentle attention you bring to notice your breath and body. So this goes deeply into how you are not only thinking, but feeling in your body. In your own words, silently or out loud, say to the feeling in your body something like I hear you. It's safe to feel what I am feeling. It is safe for others to feel what they are feeling. I am cultivating the safe space to feel while not acting harshly on any feelings I have – from anger to lust and beyond.

As you accept and acknowledge, begin to notice what message the feeling is bringing forth. If what you are feeling doesn't feel so good this may look like many thoughts about what you do not like or want or even how awful you are. Allow your focus to transition to what you do want. What do you want instead? How do you want to think and feel about yourself and this situation? Later, you can reflect on these messages and bring about more of what you want in your life.

F – Feel fully. As you address the mental and physical aspects of what you are feeling, feel it fully in your body with your inner attention. Bring your attention to the action of breathing as you deeply feel how it feels to breathe. Notice how your breath goes to every cell in your body, and the rhythm of inhale-exhale-slight space in between. Allow the focus of your attention on your breath to touch and free the emotion you feel from the inside. Notice the space around and inside of what you feel.

It's energy so it might feel like a wave, a knot, intensity, a pleasure. Whatever, allow it to cycle through you as if you are the ocean and it is a wave or ripple in the current of you. You may cry, want to shout, squeeze your muscles, feel inclined to harm, or something else. Allow yourself to **feel fully without verbally or physically acting on those feelings** other than to open your mouth and breathe deeply and fully as tears roll or sounds come from within.

Bring your attention deeply within and allow yourself to feel what you feel.

Stay with this and notice what happens. You do not roll away with the wave; it does not crash on you. You are the wave, you are the ocean. You are the awareness of what you are feeling. You are the space around the story, around the feeling. Your attention to the space of breath that is continually cycling through your body allows you to feel fully as you acknowledge all components of what you feel so you can listen to and heed the message, bringing about powerful change for yourself – and the world.

One moment at a time.

E – Exit if necessary. You may be wondering how you can do any of the above if you don't feel safe or comfortable feeling what you feel while not acting on it as you usually would. At first you may feel very resistant to feeling what you feel or it may intensify as you bring attention to it. This is okay.

If you need space to feel fully or be safe while you feel (not harm yourself or another), **get that space**. Leave the room, have a sit down, find a friend who can provide that space, exit the conversation, and/or get some other help. This is your responsibility to yourself and others and you can do this.

If you feel like you're ready and it is helpful to **express how you are feeling and/or what you need** in the situation, start by owning your emotional experience with "I" messages such as "I feel angry and I need some space so I'm leaving the room for a little while". It can initially feel difficult to communicate meaningfully when feeling strong emotion, which is why it's important to make sure you are both ready and it is actually helpful to express. Learning effective communication skills takes time and practice.

Be gentle with yourself along the way. This is not about perfection. It is about willingness, determination, and action. If you forget to feel safely, don't give up – keep practicing. It will become second nature eventually.

Feel what you feel, fully and safely.

The Sit Down

When today's parents were kids, or when our parents were kids, children might have been told occasionally to sit down (and maybe even shut up). The idea that children are to be seen and not heard is one that still creeps into families even when parents try their hardest to respect their children.

There may also be a tendency on the adult's part to say things we'd later regret, take actions that are not in line with our values, or in some other way blow up.

Here's a new and refreshing look at the idea of sitting down (and blowing up).

Scene set up: The house is a mess (or on its way to a mess), the children are having way too much fun doing things that you find irritating, you have too much to do, you're tired – maybe even not feeling well, and maybe you have company coming over.

The usual action: Yell, complain, get angry, cry, feel hopeless, say something you'd feel bad about later, etc.

The replacement action: Sit down. In the middle of the room. And just sit there. Breathe deeply and if you need to cry go ahead. Follow your breath and allow it to cleanse you of the moment's overwhelm. Welcome your children to examine and crawl on you as you simply sit down. Keep breathing. When you decide you can move past this moment and return to doing what you need to do ask yourself, the Creator, or the Universe silently what your next step should be. Listen to the answer – it's likely to be very simple and something you can follow that will help you maintain the release and peace you just created for yourself and your child(ren).

What you're doing: Making a powerful choice to change a potential nasty situation into an exercise in patience, love, and presence.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Thinking about what other people think and thinking that you don't have enough time. To those thoughts you can simply say – what other people think doesn't matter – this is my life I'm living and there actually is plenty of time and my time is much better spent this way than all stressed out.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... have a sit down.

The Sensation Balloon

What does a balloon do as it is being blown up? It expands and accepts the air as part of itself so it can be enjoyed – until it pops.

The sensation balloon is a way to meet the feelings you have in your body with gentle yet direct attention so you pop how and when you're ready. Instead of letting frustration and anger fester inside, you seize the opportunity to address them as they arise.

Scene set up: It's been a good day, until the kids started doing those things you do that get underneath your skin such that you just want to climb out of your own body. Or maybe it hasn't been a good day and you can feel a low level of irritation rising steadily.

The usual action: Pop your cork, start complaining, yelling or otherwise putting how you feel on the family for them to deal with, feel bad about how you have handled yourself.

The replacement action: As soon as you notice that you are feeling irritated or tense, bring your attention to your breathing and where you feel tension in your body. Imagine a balloon at about chest level (or where you feel tension) and allow each breath to fill the balloon. Your breath acknowledges the feeling while you notice what you are thinking. Label the balloon with the name of a feeling such as anger, sadness or despair and notice what color it is if you find that helpful. Allow the metaphorical balloon to fill until you feel a release in tension then imagine it popping or letting it go to whiz around the room and deflate. You can also use the balloon to feel joy fully when things are going well and tie the feeling balloon around your wrist to carry with you for a while.

What you're doing: You are honoring what you feel in your body, learning about your tendencies when you feel upset, transitioning a potential (certain) blow up into an opportunity for awareness and growth and practicing a skill you can share with your kids.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling like it's silly or childish, thinking you don't have time, it won't work or it can't be so simple. To such thoughts you can tell yourself, I won't know if I don't try, maybe this can help me and childish smildish – if it helps, it helps.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... choose how you blow up your balloon.

The Simple Inquiry

How often do you inquire into the roots of your reactions?

One of the most direct ways to address parenting issues is through asking ourselves some simple questions. Inquiry is not a new process; people have always asked questions of themselves and others. The key to inquiring in a way that is helpful is in your own willingness to open your mind and see truth beyond what you currently comprehend. Much like a child who asks a question about why the sky is blue, questioning our own beliefs and ways of being can be a naturally curious process.

Since duality is the nature of our universe, there are always at least two questions we have answers for in any moment. What don't I want to be experiencing? What do I want to be experiencing? And here's a third – can I be here in this moment with whatever I am experiencing? It's often easy to know what we don't want and many parents find themselves in a continual state of resisting what they are experiencing.

Preparation: Start by looking for the opposite of what you don't want then expand from there. For example, I don't want my kids to fight transforms into I do want my kids to learn how to problem solve. I don't want to always feel tired transforms into I do want to get rest and feel like I can make it through the day. I don't want to argue with my partner transforms into I do want to be able to handle relationship issues with ease. I don't want to listen to my baby/toddler/child crying/whining transforms into I do want to feel okay regardless of how my child feels. I don't want to yell or be yelled at transforms into I do want to talk and be talked to in a respectful manner and tone. I don't want to hate parenting transforms into I do want to appreciate being a parent, even when it's tough.

It becomes easier to determine what you really do want with practice. Take a few moments now to draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper, label the column on the left "What I DON'T want in parenting and life", label the column on the right "What I DO want in parenting and life", and answer these questions about your current parenting experience.

Allow yourself to be open and honest, leave nothing out, and revise the answers as you grow. They will provide valuable perspective and information for you to begin focusing on what you do want while you bring it about. Repeat this exercise every few weeks.

Scene set up: The kids are asking you one million questions and you are so tired of answering them repeatedly. You look at them with disbelief and wonder why you ever committed to this (even though deep inside you know you love them). The weather's been funky, everyone feels cooped up or worn out and it's not bedtime yet. What gives?

The usual action: Fall out and pretend you don't have kids (oh, wait – that won't work for more than 1/8th of a second), yell, cry, throw something around or stomp your feet in protest. Yeah, setting a prime example of how to handle one's self when upset for sure.

The replacement action: Sense the irritation building and find a space to rest or decide to do so while you are tending to the family. Choosing a chore, activity or rest you bring your attention into your body and breath. You decide to start asking yourself the questions.

What am I feeling? What thoughts are fueling these feelings? What do I want to stop right now? Is it something outside of me or inside of me? If it is something I am feeling can I simply welcome and acknowledge the feeling while I inquire into what this feeling is communicating? What do I need? Space, love, patience, understanding? Maybe my children need the same. Can I be here with myself and them at the same time? Wait, I am doing that right now. Maybe this experience can carry me forward to the next moment, and the next.

Pull out a piece of paper and list everything that you feel resistant about then list what you want instead. Keep it real, something possible even though it may not be achievable in this instant. Such as, I want the kids to go to sleep. Okay, they will eventually. Notice how it feels to consider rest when you are whipped and experience the solace of that thought while you continue being present with what's coming up right here and now.

Allow your mind to focus on what you do want and are working toward.

What you're doing: Choosing to acknowledge what you don't want while honoring what you feel and still move toward the future. We are always on a precipice with the option to choose what comes next. We can't control everything (thank goodness) but we influence a whole lot. You are also modeling a powerful process for being responsible with emotions.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Being too busy or feeling like it won't have any effect on your life, not understanding the power of your mind or the ability to change your life through questioning and gradually adjusting your thoughts. That's okay, doubt is an attendant of truth. Honor your doubts and give it a try anyway. See what happens.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... ask yourself some simple questions.

The Satisfying Shout

Many parents don't want to shout – ever. This is a tall order for a habitual yeller. Maybe you can simply change the way you shout for different results (at least initially).

Scene set up: You are tired, the bills haven't been paid yet or you aren't sure how they will be paid (or maybe you're so well off that bills are not even on your mind), the house is on its way to complete disorder in one form or another or maybe you just haven't let off any steam in a while and shouting is the first response that comes.

The usual action: Shout, yell, scream, belittle, feel justified in your anger and shouting because if people would just not do what they do you would not need to yell, etc.

The replacement action: Breathe deeply, open your throat, neck and chest, and direct your voice toward the ceiling. Shout honest gibberish at first while you observe what you are truly experiencing from the inside. My friend Grace always says that if we're yelling the only thing we need to be yelling is, "I am yelling!" That's a good place to start.

As you observe what you are really feeling (instead of the belittling or fear-inducing shouting that you are inclined to engage in), begin to shout about what you feel – your experience. For example, begin shouting something like, "I am feeling very angry that my day went sour, the house feels chaotic, and the only thing I feel I can control is the volume of my voice! Also, I am not trying to scare anyone as I am yelling I just need to hear myself so I feel powerful right now. As soon as I am done I will lower my voice. Please feel free to join me if you also want to hear your voice at a loud volume."

Notice the satisfaction in simply allowing yourself to shout without throwing how you feel at those around you. If children are scared, sit down while you shout and invite them to participate or prepare them in advance by practicing when things are calm.

What you're doing: Switching up a power play that creates fear and guilt as you make a powerful choice to own your voice and ability to navigate frustration in parenting and life.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Claiming power in belittling or shaming others, feeling like you can't control yourself (if you can't, who can?), feeling silly, not knowing what to shout (practice in a mirror for a few days first), or worrying about what others think.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... have a satisfying shout.

The Special Notebook

We are our own best resource; sometimes we just need a reminder.

Preparation: Purchase and/or designate a special notebook to record important insights and quotes that you collect to inspire your parenting journey. Write a few special thoughts or inspiring words from another parent you admire in the notebook.

Scene set up: It's been a long day, or maybe you're still in bed and really don't want to meet your parenting duties today, the kids may seem extra needy or grumpy, and possibly you aren't getting along with your partner or someone else close to you. Life feels like a roller coaster and you're suspended at the top about to tip on the down swing.

The usual action: Curl back up in bed and hide under the covers, shout, numb out, worry endlessly, plod your way through miserably or revel in guilt that will get you nowhere.

The replacement action: Pull out your special notebook and begin to read some of the words while allowing yourself to think of a few more. Now, this may be difficult if you are feeling low, but reaching for appreciation and looking toward what we really want can help us pull ourselves up from low feelings and experiences.

If you are around other people or parents, ask them what their favorite aspects of parenting are. Write down anything that moves you. Call a friend and ask for words of wisdom. Pull out your favorite parenting books and add some words in the notebook. Turn on the computer and search for positive parenting quotes, parenting affirmations or meditations for parents. Add some more to the notebook. Notice how you feel now.

What you're doing: You are creating a resource you can turn to anytime that is actually you talking to yourself. You can even write in the form of letters to yourself if you like. You are affirming that you want a different parenting experience and you are willing to make a record of what you want so you can write, read and watch it come about in your life.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling like you don't have time, it's not worth it, you don't like writing or reading, or notebooks aren't your thing. How do you think you came to react the way you do as a parent? One piece of changing our responses is training our brains to think new thoughts. The action of writing down inspiring words etches something new in our brains. When we choose to recall those words we are reinforcing that etch. When we choose to act on the words we change from the inside out.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... create a special notebook.

The Silent Treatment

How many times have you received the silent treatment from someone who feels cross with you? How did it feel to be on the receiving end? Or maybe you're the one who prefers to go silent when things get crazy.

Although the standard silent treatment can provide some much needed space, it can also lead to a larger rift between the people involved. Children on the receiving end of silence from their parents for an extended period can feel confused, and abandoned.

There is an alternative. Changing how we use silence can contribute to feelings of calm, centering and understanding for everyone in the family.

Preparation: Consider this Cherokee prayer... Oh Great Spirit, help me always to speak the truth quietly, listen with an open mind when others speak and to remember the peace found in silence.

How you can find peace in silence? What can you do to transform the usual silent treatment into a treat of silence that benefits everyone involved?

Some people pray, [meditate](#), [stretch](#), recite [affirmative statements](#) or participate in some other activity that is relaxing and releasing. Some people close their eyes and breathe deeply, allowing strong emotions to pass through.

Let your child know you are experimenting with silence and that you may choose silence when you feel upset so you can change the way you respond. Describe how you will let your child know that you are choosing silence and what you would like your child to do while you are silent. Choose an amount of time to start with like five or ten minutes. Put this in words your child can understand to keep it simple.

For example, you could say, "You know how I get very upset and yell sometimes? I am working to do something different. Sometimes I will sit down and be silent while I work through what I am feeling. If you see me do that, please find something quite to do like looking at books, playing with your toys or getting some quiet space yourself. Thanks."

Scene set up: The kids are hungry, the baby just bumped her head or your teenager is mouthing off like never before and you have had it (whatever it is). You want to crawl in a hole, you've either said too much already or you don't want to say anything at all. Maybe your tendency is to shut down and not speak for days or possibly you talk too much. Either way, it is nuts at your house and you see little hope for resolution any time soon.

The usual action: Become silent while brooding negative thoughts about your child(ren), self, others, life and anything that you feel unlucky about lately. Or

maybe you yell, complain, get angry, cry, feel hopeless, say something you'd feel bad about later, etc.

The replacement action: Choose silence on purpose. Communicate that you are choosing silence and that you will be focusing within for a few minutes. If you have young children, set a timer so they (and you) will hear it and know it's time to communicate again. Find a spot to rest and allow your attention to come into the action of breathing, then deepen your attention and notice how your body feels. Where do you feel tense? Bring your attention there and gently welcome what you feel from the inside. Allow it to be there without pushing it away. Take no outward action, just rest.

What does the silence say? If angry thoughts are spewing about, notice them. If you have a piece of paper, draw a line down the middle and on the left side write down what you do not want or like about the situation you are experiencing. On the right hand side write down what you do want. What outcome do you really want? Do you want to work out the problem? How can you be part of the solution? How can you focus briefly on what you really appreciate about your child and yourself? Can that be part of your silent treatment?

Sometimes a few moments of silence and quiet contemplation can open a huge amount of space for solutions to come and for you to recognize you can do this parenting thing, for sure you already are. You choose what you make of the challenges and the silence.

What you're doing: You are choosing to model a powerful way to stop a cycle of potentially harmful actions. You are also honoring your own need for rest and reflection. As you practice the silent treatment when it feels right to do so you are transforming the old way of abandoning our feelings (and others around us) into a beneficial experience of space and contemplation so you can bring about positive change in your family.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling stupid or silly for the need to stop yourself, worrying about what other people think about what you are choosing (including your children), feeling too fired up to stop (choosing anger over silence), feeling like it won't help or not knowing fully how to stop yourself (really, it's just a matter of stopping and re-committing if necessary – we're the only ones who can stop ourselves).

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling and connection.

So... find the treat in silence.

The Sensation Wave

Have you ever felt like there's a tsunami brewing inside of you? What happens when you resist or carry out waves of such intensity?

Emotions are sensations in the body. Sure, we have a mental narrative that accompanies what we are feeling. However, when we tend to the presentation of emotion in the body we have more space to work through the situation at hand and see the story with a wider lens.

The sensation wave is a way to meet the feelings you have in your body with gentle yet direct attention so you can choose how you roll with the waves.

Scene set up: Crying isn't something you feel comfortable doing, or you cry easily but don't feel relief. Anger may be an issue also, or possibly you feel in control most of the time. Regardless, you feel like you're riding an emotional roller coaster and parenting isn't making things any easier. You'd like to jump ship but the waves are looking pretty rough.

The usual action: Hold it in, stay controlled, bubble up and burst at the seams, save it for later and mope for the day, crash like gurgling gushes or demolish like a tsunami.

The replacement action: Notice your breath and what you feel in your body. Bringing gentle attention to the location of sensation in your body, start to notice the rhythm of your breath. It's kind of like a wave, the rise of your chest as your breath crests and lungs expand. The relaxing of your body as you exhale, much like the waves receding on a shore. As you inhale, allow the sensation to have life and crest like a wave. As you exhale allow the sensation to process through your body like a wave in water, receding from the shore. You are the water. You welcome the wave. You are choosing how you respond to what you feel.

What you're doing: Meeting emotion so it can resolve and move through the body unhindered, providing space and context for handling intense feelings even when parenting is tough and you're not sure what to do and seizing the opportunity to practice a skill you can share with your child or other people you know who may benefit.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Telling yourself you can't do it, that it is just a silly analogy or it's not important. A poignant response to thoughts of this nature may include something like I've been riding waves all of my life, metaphorical and otherwise. I am choosing my response now by first tending to what I feel inside.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up or shut down into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... ride the sensation wave.

The Secret Camera

Have you ever noticed how you might be more aware of how you are parenting when someone is watching? If you find yourself slipping into ineffective parenting habits when you are behind closed doors, consider the idea that nothing goes unnoticed – by you or your children. By pretending a secret camera is continuously recording your experience you can be more honest and accountable with yourself so you can make desired changes.

Scene set up: You're in your head about what needs to be done, how the kids need to behave or how you need to parent – but it's not happening. You can sense trepidation, frustration and sadness because you really want to respond lovingly to your kids.

The usual action: Buy into control tactics, manage the children in one way or another, yell, whine, crumple up some paper or find something you can demolish.

The replacement action: Notice your breath and body, feeling where the tension is so you can begin to acknowledge and allow some release. Remember that your secret camera is rolling, embrace gentleness and look into the lens as you say to yourself (and your kids) something like, "This is the moment I am choosing to change my actions. Keep rolling." Make the decision to utilize your ability to choose what comes next through doing what your heart tells you in the moment or implementing another helpful scenario if necessary.

What you're doing: You are standing in the boots of accountability so firmly that you can feel roots growing into the earth, you are modeling the ability to change and be honest about your mistakes which gives your child permission to do the same and you are cultivating a way of parenting that doesn't need closed doors.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Thinking you can hide anything from yourself and your children, that it really doesn't matter what you do or that children are resilient enough to take some of your frustration and not be affected. Nothing is really hidden, even in the privacy of our own minds, because people feel each other's nonverbal messages loud and clear. Children are resilient, but that doesn't mean they won't also appreciate our efforts to be honest, intentional and accountable for our actions.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... be grateful for your secret camera.

The Safe Friend

Do you ever feel completely alone in your parenting journey? Or maybe you have plenty of company, but it feels like something is missing – a trusted person you can talk to anytime. A safe friend can be an actual friend you know in person, someone you trust that you know from a distance (maybe an online parenting friend), a family member, pastor, therapist, [coach](#), your family pet, a crisis hotline – or even yourself.

Preparation: Ask your friend if you can call anytime (24/7 is best) to receive empathetic listening and support in your parenting goals. Share your goals and even record them for the person to refer to if you call. Record some inspiring words for yourself if you are going to be your own safe friend, or if you plan to call someone on a crisis line (or the family pet).

Scene set up: It's been a trying day (or few moments), you haven't had much meaningful contact with other adults and parenting feels stressful. You love your kids, you want the best for them, but you can feel the thread of frustration inside on the verge of snapping.

The usual action: Lose it, shut yourself in a room while you simultaneously wish you could run far, far away and just get it together already, or start barking orders.

The replacement action: Notice the thread of tension you feel inside. Find a spot to rest for a few minutes and begin to implement [SAFE](#). Make the choice to call on your safe friend. Dial the number or start listening to the recordings you've made for yourself. Ask your friend to start by listening, then reflecting what they are hearing and adding in any of your own insights you have previously shared. When you feel ready, identify the problem at hand and discuss a workable solution. For example, if you're exhausted and the kids are hungry, possibly you can eat sandwiches or leftovers and go to bed early with some books.

What you're doing: Utilizing the help available to you, allowing another person to give while you receive and modeling that it is okay to ask for help when needed. You're also cultivating trust, honesty and accountability with someone who cares about you (yes, even if it's a stranger on a help line).

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling too ashamed or proud to ask for help. We all need help sometimes. Help yourself by allowing others to help you when you need a supportive ear. Demonstrate for your child that you are willing to do what it takes and that help is available when needed.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up or shut down into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... call on a safe friend.

The Soft Whisper

Want to raise your voice to get control of your household? Do you think it's necessary to be firm and loud to get their attention? Think again. Whispering has its own unique power.

Scene set up: You can feel the fury brewing inside. You are trying to keep your cool, but your child is doing that thing again – or maybe it's a new thing and you haven't had time to get used to it or consider how to address it yet. Either way, there's a strong feeling in your gut and you are ready to blow.

The usual action: Flip your lid, yell, maybe even move some stuff around violently in your space (you know, throw or crush something), storm off, revert to your toddler years, avoid with some sort of vice or make it all someone else's fault.

The replacement action: Honor the need to express something and bring your voice to a soft whisper like the soft, soft whisper of a butterfly. Bring all of your attention into your breath and really allow the full expression of your voice through a whisper as you speak your feelings, owning your part. Try something like, "I feel so frustrated that the jam was left out, jam belongs in the fridge after it is used." Or you could speak more to what you are feeling in general, "I am so tired, I want more help around the house. I am going to rest."

It is quite likely that you may initially feel restricted while whispering. With practice, lowering your voice as soon as you notice the tendency to raise it will provide important perspective and awareness so you can feel confident in choosing the volume of your voice.

What you're doing: Instead of blowing off steam you are touching your inner personal power to choose how you express yourself and you are preventing the fear and guilt that often follows the experience of yelling. You are also modeling another way to communicate when you feel upset, which is powerful for children and adults alike.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling like it's silly to whisper, fearing that you won't be heard or respected, not feeling satisfied without raising your voice, being more concerned with what others think than how you and they feel when you yell. Whispering isn't just for libraries. It's for families, too, and can be very healing if you have previously been a yeller. Little (and big) ears appreciate softness every now and then.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... see how soft you can whisper.

The Smooth Exit

Do you stalk off and pout or brew in negative thoughts? Consider exiting smoothly instead.

Preparation: Let your child know you may leave the room at times to address feelings.

Scene set up: The challenges of life are getting to you and while you are trying to be patient with the behavior you find extremely annoying in your child, you can feel anger burning in your body. You don't want to spout off or ignore the situation at hand.

The usual action: Attempting to manage your emotions, you start controlling your child and try to hold in the anger until it pops out like a surprise tornado. Not good, for anyone.

The replacement action: Notice the sensation of anger rising and take it as your cue to smoothly exit the room or space. If you can't leave the room, go at least a couple of arm's reach away from others. Notice your breath and communicate that you are smoothly exiting now and will be back with the situation at hand when you feel a bit more grounded.

If you have already made a special notebook, pull it out while you implement SAFE. Notice how your body feels and bring attention to your breathing. Ask yourself, "What am I resisting right now? What don't I like about this situation?" Next, continue noticing how you feel and ask yourself what you do want the outcome of the situation to be. If you are finding your answer to be kind of narrow, such as wanting the child to just obey, see if you can open it up a bit more for something like, "I want to figure out a solution that works for me and my child, where we both feel respected." When you feel ready, re-enter the space and communicate what feels important to you.

What you're doing: You are modeling self-control and self-respect as you respect the experience of others. You are also preventing mayhem. For parents who are inclined to violence, a smooth exit may be necessary for quite a while when you feel pressure. Instead of rushing out in a rage, you communicate that you decide how to handle your feelings and that you will connect with the family again when you can respond intentionally.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling like you can't sense the split second movement from irritation to explosion (if you can't, practice in [meditation](#) and use blow ups as an opportunity for awareness – watch yourself blow up and gradually notice irritation rising before you blow so you can sense it earlier and exit earlier).

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... exit smoothly when helpful.

The Silly Signal

Do you think your kids know when you're about to lose it? What are we losing anyhow? The ability to choose how we respond to life, except this ability is never really lost – we just lose touch with it. Creating a silly signal for ourselves and our families can help us regain the sense that we really do get to choose how we navigate our lives – and our emotions.

Preparation: Choose and share a signal that is meaningful to you and will help you remember why you are changing the way you respond. I chose something that is, for me, corny as all get out – yodeling or sounding like a horse. If I yodel or whinny, I'm changing it up. Maybe you have a phrase, quote, silly voice or look that can signal your family that you are making a communication move and they can expect you to be silly for a few moments.

Scene set up: You just don't feel good, or maybe you did feel good, but something sets you off. You feel the pressure within, and like a pressure cooker gone wrong, you're ready to heat up in ways that might not be good for anyone. Feel what I'm talking about?

The usual action: Explode, yell, cry in distress with no direction or solution, ruin the evening over nothing (that warrants the negativity left by its residue), take your anger out on others through whatever means come by habit or deny your responsibilities.

The replacement action: Notice how you are feeling and choose to change it up. Use your silly signal, make it known that you are switching your response and look within for a few moments to see first what you don't want and then what you do want. What results are you really trying to bring about? Communicate them and allow yourself to just be silly!

What you're doing: You are choosing fun over frustration. Yes, you can do this. You are also showing your family that it is possible to change up an angry reaction for a heartfelt connection. Pretty much everyone appreciates silliness at one time or another, even the teenager who will roll her eyes as you yodel away.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling embarrassed or like you're not in the right environment to be silly. Okay, so what if people in the grocery store don't know how helpful it can be to stick your fingers in your ears and squeeze your eyes shut to reset yourself from going ape with anger. This is about you and what you are choosing for your family.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... allow yourself to just be silly.

The Serenade

Maybe you sing, maybe you don't – either way you can choose the serenade when you're ready to transition the way you are talking to your family into an experience of complete honor and adoration. This is guaranteed to shift the experience of everyone involved – there may even be some tears (and definitely some laughter and surprise).

Preparation: Start a daily list of what you appreciate about your family members (even yourself). Also, warm up your voice and start singing a little while doing household tasks.

Scene set up: It's been a while since you told your children or partner just how much you appreciate them. You are also feeling so far from appreciation that it is not even on the edge of your mind. Something feels upsetting, although you can't pinpoint it exactly.

The usual action: Pout, whine, mope and wish things were different. Maybe you amp it up and throw in some blame, yelling or criticism. Same old, same old.

The replacement action: Notice how you are feeling, especially that slight irritation that builds gradually then seems to just blow up. As you consider what's bothering you, begin to sing directly to your child or partner. Sing about how you feel frustrated, but that you are choosing to transition a usual blow up into something new and then lay on the appreciation – sing a true serenade. Honor your loved one through song, as if today is your last opportunity to share your heartfelt gratitude for this person being in your life. Your song can be brief or extensive, whatever works for you – just sing.

What you're doing: You are owning your voice and instead of using it to criticize or lessen the energy in the home, you are using it to honor and affirm your loved ones. Also, who doesn't appreciate being sung to? Even if your kids think you're a nut, they'll like it.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling silly, of course, or thinking that you can't sing well. This often happens if we haven't been using our voice fully. Just give it a whirl and use it as an alternative. It's definitely better than yelling your guts out.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... break into song.

The Speaking Notebook

Do you ever feel like a broken record or just wish your actions would speak for themselves? Do you sometimes have the right words and just forget that they are enough?

My Grandma Ruth used to say, "I love you too much to argue." She drew the line with love and used that love to transform the tendency to go on and on with a dead-end discussion. The Speaking Notebook can be an active part of your parenting practice in a similar way.

Preparation: Begin collecting pithy statements that support you as a parent while communicating something clearly and lovingly to your child in a notebook. Write only one statement on each page so you can open the book and allow it to speak. Some examples include: I appreciate honesty, I appreciate being spoken to respectfully, I am listening and I am choosing to remember the peace that may be found in silence right now.

Scene set up: You feel like you've said it 100 times and you don't want to go there this time. Yet, it just keeps either playing in your head or coming out of your mouth. You can feel your tone of voice change and your child has that look of feeling criticized or she's already begun tuning you out. You are on a precipice with an important decision to make.

The usual action: Say what you think repeatedly so it's ground into your child's head, leaving yet another impression that she isn't good enough (even if that's not what you mean, that's what she is absorbing from the interaction) or get flustered and react harshly.

The replacement action: Pull out your speaking notebook and open it to an appropriate statement. Lay it on a counter or table, point and smile. Now get back to what you were doing and just listen – within yourself and to your child. See what happens.

What you're doing: Choosing to focus very specifically on one way of responding to a frustrating situation and you won't know if this helps unless you try it. You are also creating space for you to relax a bit and modeling an alternative to blowing up,

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling like you must repeat yourself, your child doesn't get it or needs to hear it from you many times to get it or succumbing to control. If you notice yourself going there just take a deep breath, get the notebook and let it speak.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... let your notebook speak for you.

The Speaking Walls

What do you have on your walls? Decorations, pictures or maybe nothing – you like them blank? I love some space in our home where there is nothing, just open space.

The home is an extension of the self. As we move about in our home we soak up its condition and presence. Our walls affect us. Similar to The Speaking Notebook, the walls of our home can become a tool in our parenting – they can speak to our values.

Preparation: Notice what you have on your walls and if anything feels like it drags you down, let it go. Put it in the trash or give it away. Even sentimental stuff can be given away or put in storage (the basement or a closet work well). If it's not serving you, really consider its place in your home. Begin collecting and displaying posters or family created statements that support you as a parent while affirming your family's values. Use your computer to boldly print some of your favorite quotes, purchase some inexpensive 8.5 x 11 inch document frames and adorn your home with inspiration that you can refer to in moments of stress. Read the statements to yourself and reflect on the family inspired art often.

Scene set up: Laundry is piling up, you feel like there's not enough time to take care of yourself and the kids and maybe there's something else you feel worried about.

The usual action: Flip out, melt down or otherwise do something that contributes to the feeling that your home is not a safe and welcoming space.

The replacement action: Notice your body as you feel what you feel, bring your attention into your breath and walk around your house reading and reflecting on the creations you choose to display. Invite your child to come with you and read or reflect out loud. "Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that. This was said by Martin Luther King Jr. What do you think he meant when he said those words? This is what I feel when I read them..."

What you're doing: Changing a habit of looking for the negative into an opportunity for discussion, connection and learning for you and your child.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Not putting up stuff on the walls that you feel good about (go ahead, create and print something today), worrying about what others will think when they see what's on your walls (do you worry what they'd think if they saw you flip out on your kids? I can guarantee they'd prefer helpful wall decorations).

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... let the walls speak for your values.

The Solution Rehearsal

How many times do you reinforce the negative experiences you have, or negativity you feel toward your child, in your mind? Be honest with yourself. The human tendency is to perpetuate the negative by stewing about it – until we make another choice.

We can either be part of the problem, or part of the solution. As Albert Einstein said, “We cannot solve a problem at the level of thinking that created it.” We have to reach for something new and open to our own potential to change our responses to life.

Mental rehearsal is one way we can change the way we respond very intentionally. Sports enthusiasts use mental rehearsal, as do people in theater and other vocations. Mental rehearsal provides positive direction for our minds and is a very helpful parenting practice.

Preparation: Notice when things are going well in your family and take [whole body pictures](#). Really sense how you feel in your body, noticing gratitude, simple joy, sounds, smells, smiles, whatever sticks out to you. Maybe your child is playing or working alone confidently or maybe you are interacting. Notice the times you feel confident, too.

Also, allow yourself to realistically day dream about how you would like things to go between you and your family members. What I mean by realistically day dream is to see yourself parenting in line with your values. If you want to be perfect, let that rest a bit and actually see yourself handling certain trigger situations in stride. I am not sure there’s a parent on the planet that has an immaculate home, endless patience and completely clean children at all times. Start where you are and with what is really important to you.

Next, spend a few minutes each day [centering yourself](#) and then mentally rehearse some activities and times with your children. If you are finding bedtime really stressful, consider how it could go well. Make mental (and written notes) if helpful, and allow yourself to experience bedtime going well with your imagination. What happens? How do you feel? What would you do differently than usual? Notice how your children respond.

Now, bring to mind something frustrating with the situation. Maybe a child starts whining or a teenager won’t turn down the music – whatever might set you off. Notice yourself choosing to tune in to your breath, honor the feeling in your body and choose your response. What do you do? How does that change the course of your evening?

Practice this with any situations that you find frustrating.

Scene set up: You’ve practiced a few of these potential solutions and you’re becoming skilled at meeting the moment as it arises (or maybe not, but let’s just say this for the sake of feeling confident when we still have doubts). Then your

child does that thing (or a new thing since they are often coming up with some new surprise we get to navigate). You feel the rage start to tingle and you feel afraid you're going to react in the same old way.

The usual action: Breathe deeply, then yell (at least you tried). For goodness sake, it's bedtime and you need some rest. Except now no one is resting and you all feel bad.

The replacement action: Feel what you feel while choosing not to act on it immediately. If you must address a behavior simply state what you don't want and then what you do want and then tell your child(ren) that you are going to spend a few moments checking in with yourself and that you'll be with them when you feel ready.

Sit down, or rest yourself against a wall if you prefer to stand, and allow your focus to be on your breath and body. Notice what's coming up for you and bring to mind the mental rehearsal experience. Start to allow your mind to day dream again. How can this situation be turned around? How can you transform it through opening up your mind and body just a bit through your gentle attention? What miracle can you facilitate right now?

See a different result and ask yourself, "What action do I need to take to bring this about?" Listen within and take an action that feels in line with the experience you want to have with your children. You might just get in bed or rest near their bed, lower the lights and start reading or telling a story. It might be enough to move the family forward toward rest and have a conversation about the behavior the next day when everyone is calm.

What you're doing: You are using your mind as the powerful tool that it is. While the mind may seem limited to what we put into it, this isn't exactly true. It's more like a navigation device and if we train ourselves to at least open it, we have a better chance of appreciating the results we get. In other words, changing the way we use our mind and imagination opens us to different results in our lives. The mind is sensitive to what we put in it and repeat with it. Mental rehearsal opens the space of potential in our minds and hearts.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Not believing in the power of your own mind. The mind is vast and we don't know our abilities until we explore, use and stretch them. Just because we don't know how powerful it is doesn't mean we can't test it to see what we can do (especially when it's for the benefit of ourselves and our families). If you were told as a child to stop day dreaming, this is likely to come up for you also. You get to decide what you do with your mind – you and you alone. Use it to your benefit.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... be a part of the solution.

The Struggle Surrender

Have you ever played tug of war? As parents, many of us are playing it without realizing what we are doing or the effect it is having on everyone in the family.

Each time we engage in a power struggle with our kids we pick up the end of a metaphorical rope and start tugging. Since we have more life experience and strength, at times we may appear to be the powerful one. But is this how we want to use our [power](#)? We could, at the least, make it into a game that serves our parenting aspirations.

Preparation: Notice when you are in a power struggle with your child and begin to see how you tug on the rope. How do you try to maintain power and control? What kinds of things do you say? How does it feel in your body when you do this? Just notice.

Scene set up: You may feel a bit of irritation already, maybe life is just feeling like a mix between a tornado and a train wreck. Or possibly you are feeling pretty calm, but something happens and it all changes. Like the snap of a finger, you can feel the tension rise inside of you as the old habit to be powerful over your child starts to surface.

The usual action: Raise your voice, maintain a sense of control through throwing around some words that you feel are powerful and non-negotiable, fail to listen to your child's point of view or consider a few punishments that you could hand out in a hurry.

The replacement action: Notice your breath and your own sense of inner power to collaborate with your child as you look your child straight in the eye and say, "Can you feel the invisible tug of war game we are playing? I am going to put my end of the rope down because we can learn to communicate in another way." Put down the metaphorical rope, see your child do the same and move forward with positive problem solving. (Start by listening within to yourself and as your child speaks; listening always helps).

What you're doing: You are surrendering false control while modeling an alternative to defeat. Instead of winning and losing, you choose to collaborate. Even if you don't know what to do next, you open yourself and your child to something new and beneficial.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Digging in your heels for the sensation of control. Collaboration feels better; you just have to get used to it. Start now.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... surrender the struggle.

The Smooth Pivot

Have you ever stood your ground, based on a certain perspective, then turned toward a new perspective quickly? If not, there's always an opportunity to try something new.

What might happen if you tried this in parenting? We respond as parents based on our perspectives – how we view ourselves, our children and the process of life. Choosing a new perspective in the moment can help us get unstuck and refresh our parenting approach.

Preparation: Imagine yourself standing face-to-face with your child as a negative thought pops to mind. You know, one of those thoughts that stop you from loving him completely. Next, notice another perspective you could consider that turns the negative into a positive (for example, a loud child may have the skill of persistence or a sassy child may have the gift of self-respect). Now, notice the pivot of your perspective and see how you feel.

Scene set up: The sensation you feel is grating. You've talked to your child about this before or this is just one of those situations that really grate on you. You want to scream.

The usual action: Hold your ground in a nasty way, feel like you don't have a choice so you'll just do what you've always done, think this will go on and last forever – even to the tune of you and your child never having the relationship you desire.

The replacement action: Notice your body and the feeling of stuck-ness. Bring your awareness to your breath and remember the possibility of the pivot. Feel where you are right now, notice what you are thinking and see what perspectives are fueling your frustration. What else can you think right now? What's on the other side of these thoughts? What is possible if you transition what you are thinking? Start with yourself and feel yourself pivot your mind toward a perspective that is more helpful.

What you're doing: You are paying attention to what you are experiencing so you can choose what you bring forward. You are modeling a change of mind and heart. If you do some of this out loud you can show your child how valuable thought transitioning can be.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Following a thought stream as if it is reality. Our thoughts are labels for our experience and although they have some relative truth, we have many perspectives to choose from. We can choose the ones we want to perpetuate. If what you're thinking isn't helping, open it up a bit and pivot to see what's available.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... pivot your perspectives when helpful.

The Stay and Listen

How many kids wish their parents would just listen? Every kid on the planet (especially the teens) wants to be deeply acknowledged and heard. For some parents, listening – truly listening – may take some continual practice. Listening isn't just about hearing and interpretation of what we think someone said. It is deep presence with who a person is and what a person is experiencing in any given moment, without any attachment to outcome or mutual understanding. True listening is one of the deepest and most profound ways we can communicate our love to our children.

Preparation: We can only listen to our children when we learn to listen to ourselves. Throughout your day, listen within to your thoughts, feelings and sensations. Use [SAFE](#) when you feel an intense emotion and listen with your whole body when others are talking.

Scene set up: The argument or frustration has hit the ceiling. You are ready to buckle or run for the hills and you can see in your child's eyes (or your own) that you need space. Yet, something is asking you to do it different this time, to make space for something new.

The usual action: Storm out of the room, slam a door, shut down or maybe even make a smooth exit. In some shape or form, you retreat and close yourself off from the world.

The replacement action: Choose to stay. Say to your child or your partner something like, "I am feeling what I am feeling. It's intense. You are feeling what you are feeling. It's intense. I want to go (or run) away. I feel like I might need to, but something is telling me inside that I must stay. I must stay and simply listen. The words that come to me may or may not be helpful, so I am going to just stay and listen. I love you. I am here and I am listening." Then, notice what happens. If you cry, let yourself cry. If the other person talks, simply listen and feel what you feel in response. Notice any tendency to retort, be right or be in control. Just notice and notice what happens in your body and mind as you listen fully.

What you're doing: You are being present with difficult emotions, you are demonstrating for your child that there is a progression from needing space to being able to be with intensity and still remain available to communicate through listening.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Feeling like you are not strong enough yet. If you're not, you're not – wait until you feel ready. At the same time, challenge yourself a bit and give it a try. The healing that comes with true presence and listening is immeasurable.

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... sense when you're ready to stay and listen.

The Sixty Second Shift

How could it be possible to shift your parenting experience in as little as sixty seconds? Simply by accessing the ability to choose while utilizing your imagination, you can open the door for change in the moment and in your relationship with your child (or yourself).

Preparation: Begin taking [whole body pictures](#) when things are going well for you and your family. Notice how your body feels when you are resting, the kids are content or the house is at ease. Take in the experience with all of your senses – touch your child gently, smile, smell the air, listen to the sounds of well-being and see what cooperation looks like.

Scene set up: You are trying to get out the door or into the car and no one seems to want to make this exit as much as you. The kids are arguing or the baby is fussing and doesn't want to be buckled. You can feel control infiltrating your posture as your breath quickens.

The usual action: Blame, shame, yell or move with an action to force your child(ren) to cooperate. Maybe you sit down and cry (by all means let it through if that helps).

The replacement action: Stop and let the kids know you are going to rest for at least one minute and will not be responding if anyone talks to you. Noticing your breath and body, you tune into the moment and notice what you don't want. I don't want to force. Next, you notice what you do want and you start to see it materialize in your mind. Feeling deeply into the presence of your being, the still, restful essence that is available in each moment, you allow your attention to remain on your breath and body as you imagine a harmonious outcome for everyone involved – and you hold this vision for at least sixty seconds. Notice what it feels like, how your body slows down as you rest, how possibilities open for you that you didn't see before and the space you have to choose your response.

What you're doing: Choosing to shift your experience through relaxed, focused intention, showing your children that it's possible to change a situation in as little as sixty seconds and proving to yourself that one minute well spent has the potential to change lives.

How you can stop yourself from trying this: Buying into the old argument that you do not have enough time, it will just make things worse for you to stop or that imagination is all fine and good except that it can't help you now. To these thoughts you can reply, "I can choose what I focus on and I choose to contribute to the future purposefully."

Potential results: You transform a potential blow up into an opportunity for reflection, relaxation, emotional responsibility, positive modeling, and connection.

So... see what you can shift in sixty seconds.

Sssss... Why all the S's?

Shifting the way we respond to situations is not always a linear, straight A to B type of process. More often it's like the curvature of a wave – or the letter S. When I first started coming up with the names for these exercise to transform reactivity they naturally started with the letter S for no apparent reason. In time it became clear that the beginning letter serves as a reminder about letting go, riding the waves and navigating, rather than controlling, emotions.

So Now What?

Thank you for considering these alternatives to reactivity in the parent-child relationship.

Changing habitual patterns generally doesn't happen overnight, although I wouldn't write off the transformational power of making a choice in the moment to do something different. Certainly, this is the only way we truly change any pattern.

Still, you may have questions or want more information and support after reading through Navigating Emotions. Below is a list of resources you will find at my personal site – amyphoenix.com.

- [Whole Body Camera](#) – experience and appreciate parenting with your senses
- [Simple Meditation](#) – experience relaxation in the moment by choice
- [Private Sessions](#) – develop clarity and confidence in your ability to parent
- [Simple Inquiry](#) – give direction to your parenting through asking questions
- [Diffusing Parent Anger](#) – a raw letter from me about transforming anger
- [Sane Parenting Challenge](#) – a six week journey to transform reactivity

I also invite you to contact me at any time with questions and for strength and affirmation. Parenting isn't easy and it is okay to reach out for support when you need it. I reach out to others in the field as needed and I am very grateful for the support and wisdom that is available. It is up to us to apply what we learn and when we get stuck, seek assistance. Thank you for your willingness to explore your options in parenting. Utilizing our ability to choose our thoughts and responses in life is a vital skill to integrate and pass on. 😊

Take gentle care,
Amy Phoenix
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