

The 3 Most Common Challenges When It Comes to Discipline



...and how to handle them
with confidence!

A **NO-YELL™** *Parenting Guide*
To Positive Discipline

by Kathy Whitham, RN
Parenting Beyond Words

Because connection matters more than perfection!



Congratulations!

By downloading this guide, you've taken the first step toward the change you want for your family to thrive.

Your child didn't come with a manual! And I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that you, like me, had unskilled parents (just like their parents.) You might have imagined the parent you wanted to be and then...

Every day can be so hard! The voices in your head and in our culture can be less than helpful. They tell you a story that you should know what to do. They tell you that maybe something is wrong with you or your child. They tell you, *Just try harder!* They also tell you that reaching out for help is failure. But they're wrong!

And, really - how would you know what to do?! You were never meant to do this parenting thing alone! We humans are biologically wired for community, not for isolation. And I believe, despite how hard you are on yourself (as was I,) you could not be trying harder! I also know you get it right more often than you realize!

If you have a stress-sensitive child who has outbursts and meltdowns that are more frequent, more intense and last longer than other kids, it can be even more confusing and overwhelming.

I feel you! I was you...

Parenting Beyond Words parenting coaching believes the missing piece of the parenting puzzle is understanding that BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION.

The following 7 principles provide an internal guidance system - *a Personal Parenting GPS* - to help you find your way through all different parenting challenges like: tantrums, not listening, sibling rivalry and struggles over homework, screen time, bedtime, etc.





7 Principles of Parent-Centric Parenting

- 1. Connection matters more than perfection**
- 2. Behavior is an SOS, not an attack**
- 3. The better you do, the better your child does**
- 4. Families are dynamic systems where all members affect each other**
- 5. Your child wants to please you**
- 6. Small changes lead to big results**
- 7. What you focus on increases**

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Here's the thing. When it comes to knowing what to do about discipline, it can be **just as important to know what NOT to do!** That's why in this guide I'll be sharing the three common challenges when it comes to discipline. Then, using the following three of my **NO-YELL™ Parenting Foundation steps**, I'll show you how to handle them with **confidence** - based on a new way to look at your child's behavior. **BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION.**

1. **Y - YOU FIRST** is a practice of self-care in order to be *available to help your child.*

*"I am happy to say that my yelling has decreased-- but that is not the most important part. When I do remember to stay calm and sink into myself, magic happens. Somehow I am getting the opportunity to **connect to my children and give them what I want to give them- love and soothing.** This is the parent I always dreamed I would be when the going got tough..."*

Barbara - NJ, Business owner and mom of 3

2. **O - OPEN** the curtain to see what's really behind the behavior so you can *connect with your child rather than try to control their behavior.*

"I think the best thing I learned from Kathy is to look beyond the behavior to try to understand what my child is really communicating...and what I get is a daughter who wants to talk to me more. And that's what I want. Connection matters more than perfection - it's true! The more I trust that, the more peaceful it is around here." Lois - CA, Physical Therapist, mom of tween girl

3. **E - EMOTIONAL AGE** is the key to *getting through to your child.*

"My 5 yr old had been going to the bathroom by herself before bed for a while, but she was going through a phase of feeling scared at night and begging me to carry her to the potty. Kathy encouraged me to meet her at her emotional age and carry her as if she were 2 or 3, even though it went against the grain of what I thought I should do. When I tried it and met her there, I put her down on the potty and she gave me the biggest smile! It felt amazing! I only had to do that a few times before she could go by herself again. Janet - MA, mom of 2

I invite you to use the Parent-Centric principle, "**Small changes lead to big results,**" to **practice just one strategy at a time from this guide.**

Practice the first one every day, starting today, for a week. Then practice the next strategy and then the next. Each one for a week.



Challenge #1 Trying to Reason With Them

Do you find yourself resorting to reasoning, bribing or consequences when your child is melting down because you don't know what else to do?

You're not alone. It can be so frustrating! Traditional advice says to use consequences to change your child's behavior. Sometimes this works with some kids. But **for stress-sensitive kids, this does not work well**, and often makes things worse!

As a result, you may have tried reasoning and consequences only to **end up in vicious cycles** - feeling like you're not doing it right or like there's something wrong with you or your child. Ugh!



Here's the thing. **When your kid is acting out, they're in a state of dys-regulation. Their left brain - in charge of logic, language and words - is OFF LINE! They can't access their executive function to be reasonable.** It's like broadcasting on one channel when your child is tuned to a different one. **It doesn't matter how loud you broadcast, you won't get through! Their emotional brain is running the show!**

Instead of trying to reason with a meltdown, you need to **become available to connect with your child's emotional brain.** This tip tells you how to do that.

QUICK TIP #1 "Y" You First!

Faced with a meltdown, your first job is to focus on YOU FIRST. (As long as everyone's safe) In the moment, this can go against every fiber of your being! Yet, when you change the channel in your own brain to one that's calmer and more regulated, it makes you available for the connection your child needs to change their brain channel too.

Try this simple, powerful **practice of self-regulation** to help you handle the next meltdown. (It's simple, but not easy when the s***t's hitting the fan!)

1 - STOP TALKING, reasoning, bargaining, pleading... **2 - TAKE 3, SLOW BREATHS** in and all the way out. **3 - FEEL YOUR FEET** on the ground.

What this does is start to calm your nervous system - literally! You'll then be more able to respond with confidence and think clearly about what to do next.

For more about co-regulation, check out these [BLOG TOPICS](#)



Challenge #2 Taking It Personally

You know how your child's words and actions can be hurtful?

I'm sure you do! The things they sometimes say can feel like a personal attack. Their behavior can also trigger some of your deepest concerns about whether your child will be OK down the road.

Here's the thing. **Behavior, (including cursing at you,) is your child's first language to communicate big feelings** of stress, overwhelm and anger. Their brain is still immature and hasn't yet developed the complex skills for **the executive function required to fully use their words**. They can resort to their first language - behavior - even into their teen years! When they stress, they regress. (Except now they have bigger words!)

When they're in the midst of big feelings, they're not OK. Stress and overwhelm are driving their negative behavior. Life lessons only have a chance later, when everyone is calm.

Think of it like this: In the movie, "The Wizard of Oz", the wizard appears like a big, scary, monster head. That's how your child's behavior can sometimes appear. When the dog, Toto, pulls the curtain open at the end of the movie, behind the curtain is the "real" wizard who is small and insecure. This shows how **behind your child's big, scary behavior is the "real" little one - scared, stressed or overwhelmed.**

One of my top Parent-Centric principles is:
Your child's behavior is an S.O.S., not an attack.
Feel that... Notice what changes.



QUICK TIP #2 "O" Open the Curtain

Loving connection can be maintained in the midst of difficult behavior if you **OPEN THE CURTAIN**. When you do that, you'll **see your child who needs your help behind their scary wizard head behavior**. This will help you reach for **your essential parenting skill of self-regulation**. Then you'll become able to connect with your child behind the curtain rather than getting hooked into another vicious cycle.

For more about listening to behavior as communication read these [BLOG TOPICS](#).



Challenge #3 They Won't Act Their Age!

Does your child's emotional & chronological age seem out of sync?

You know how when your child is acting out, you sometimes hear yourself saying, "you're old enough to know better!" Think about the last time your child threw a tantrum in the middle of a store, wouldn't get themselves dressed or your teen stormed off and slammed the door. Did you feel helpless? Hijacked? I get it! **Their inappropriate behavior can be so confusing and frustrating!**

Here's the thing. **When your child is stressed, anxious or overwhelmed, they can act emotionally younger. But it's not an act!** Brain science tells us that **when we stress, we regress!** Their behavior in that moment is driven by their emotional age.

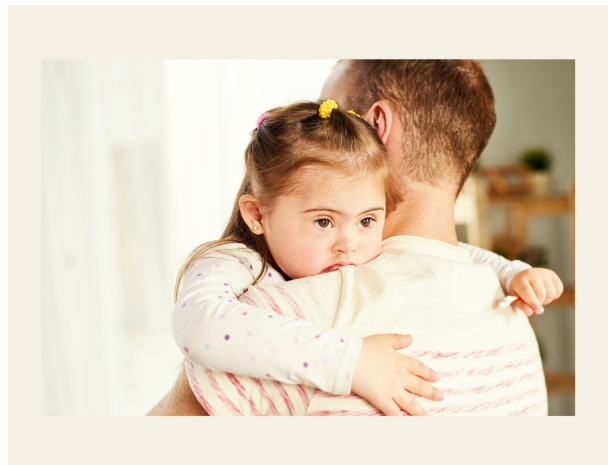
That's why, during an incident, you always want to **look for your child's emotional age. It's your point of connection. It's your way to get through.**

Responding only to your child's chronological age with what you think they *should* be able to do can lead to frustration, anger and feelings of failure for both of you.

QUICK TIP #3 "E" Emotional Age Rules

This challenge is an opportunity to **respond to your child in a way that puts you in control, bolsters loving connection and helps them develop resilience for life.** And it's based in brain science!

When faced with inappropriate, confusing behavior, **ask yourself, How old is my child acting?** What age came up? Trust that. This is your child's emotional age. **Then ask, What would I do if they were actually that age? Do that!**



This strategy can go against every "should" in your head, but you wouldn't be here if you weren't ready to try something different! Other parents, with the same challenges, have told me that when they tried this, **even when they were skeptical, it worked and they felt great seeing their child smile back at them.** Responding to emotional age can empower you to **confidently give your child or teen what they need so they become more, not less, able to act their age.**

More about emotional age here: [BLOG TOPICS](#).





Meet Kathy

As a child behavior specialist, **Kathy Whitham, RN** helps parents and caregivers who are at their wit's end to understand what's happening with their child or teen and **learn to respond rather than react** to button-pushing behaviors. **Her practical, systematic approach bolsters loving connection and peace at home.** She embraces blended and non-traditional families.

In 1993, Kathy became a single, divorced mom of three, the oldest of whom was only 12. The bumpy road that followed was often overwhelming. She struggled with behaviors which seemed to resist every parenting technique she tried and often blamed herself for not being consistent, patient or something else enough.

Somewhere inside herself, she knew these approaches weren't right for her child but she didn't know what else to do! The turning point came when, after years of struggle, she finally got the right support to start understanding behavior as communication of stress and overwhelm.

It happened in the middle of yet another distressing fight with her teen. Suddenly, like a lightbulb going on, she saw her overwhelmed, hurting child behind the overwhelming, impossible behavior. Her heart cracked open and hope began to replace fear and helplessness. Over the following months she practiced this new approach and felt more and more like she was becoming the parent she wanted to be. The difficult behaviors diminished and her relationship with her teen blossomed.

This family-altering experience inspired her to create Parenting Beyond Words in 2008 so other parents and caregivers wouldn't have to struggle the way she had.

Kathy's multifaceted coaching style draws from maternal-child nursing, holistic practices, trauma education, yoga and the arts, as well as having imperfectly raised her three children to happy, successful adulthood. Kathy also enjoys dancing and writing poetry. Her Parent-Centric approach lies at the intersection of brain science, attachment theory, inter-generational family dynamics and parents' inner wisdom.

According to Kathy, the key to being the best parent you can be is to always remember, ***Connection matters more than perfection!***





Parenting Beyond Words celebrates diversity and welcomes LGBTQ+ families



Parenting is hard! I invite you to reach out for a 60 minute one-on-one parenting support consultation. It's designed to give you the opportunity for the following:

1. To talk freely about the challenges you're having with your child(ren)
2. To receive some immediate help, empathy and relief
3. To learn about my philosophy and coaching approach
4. To see if we might click as allies to achieve your goals for your family

Find out more at <https://www.parentingbeyondwords.com/contact-us>

