

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**

© Kathy Whitham, RN Parenting Beyond Words



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 ever find yourself trying to reason with your child or threatening to give them a consequence when they're not behaving?

Then you know how frustrating this can be! Without meaning to, this mistake can actually make behavior worse! I know traditional advice says consequences work, and sometimes they do with some kids. But for stress-sensitive kids, not only do consequences not work, they can make things worse! As a result, you may have tried reasoning and consequences only to end up feeling like you're not doing a good job or like there is something wrong with you or your child.



Want to know why? Because when your kid is acting out, they're in a state of dysregulation. Their left brain - in charge of **logic, language and words** - is OFF LINE! They're in no state to be reasonable. It would be 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! Your child needs you to connect emotionally to help bring them back to a state of calm regulation.

QUICK TIP #1: Change the Brain Channel

This mistake can be remedied by understanding that your first job is to **stop reasoning and focus on YOU FIRST** becoming calmer and more regulated in order to de-escalate the situation and help your child regulate.

A simple, powerful, strategy for calming yourself first is to STOP TALKING. TAKE 3, SLOW BREATHS in and **especially all the way out**. (Not an easy practice when the s***t's hitting the fan!) What it does, though, is start to calm your nervous system, make you available for the emotional connection your child needs, and helps change your child's brain channel too. **You'll be more able to respond and think more clearly about what to do next**. For more about co-regulation, check out these [BLOG TOPICS](#).



Challenge #2 Taking It Personally

Do you ever take what your child does personally?



Of course you do! So do I. It's easy to feel hurt if you take your child's words and actions at face value. Sometimes what they do feels like a personal attack. It can also trigger some of your biggest fears about whether your child will be OK down the road.

Did you know behavior is the language your child uses to communicate their feelings of stress and overwhelm? Their brain is still immature and hasn't yet developed the complex wiring and executive functioning required to fully use their words. And, yes! This applies to your teenager too. (Remember in mistake #1 how the left brain, responsible for language, goes off line when your child is misbehaving?) So when

they're in the midst of challenging behaviors, stress and overwhelm is driving the behavior.

Think of it like this: In the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, the wizard appears like a big, scary, monster head, right? 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 uncertain. Behind your child's big, scary behavior is the "real" little child who is scared, stressed or overwhelmed.

That's why one of the principles here at Parenting Beyond Words is: **Your child's behavior is an S.O.S., not an attack.** Breathe and feel into that. I know it may be really different for you, but doesn't it feel less personal?

QUICK TIP #2: Open the Curtain

This mistake can be straightened out by remembering "O" for **OPEN THE CURTAIN**. When you do, you'll **see the child** who needs your help **behind the scary wizard head behavior**. Step #3 will show you what to do once you open the curtain.

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



Challenge #3 Getting Them to Act Their Age

Ever felt your child's emotional & chronological ages are out of sync?

It's true - especially when your child is being difficult behavior and you hear yourself saying, "you're old enough to know better!" Brain science tells us that **when we stress, we regress!** Think about the last time your child melted down in the middle of a store, or your teen stormed off and refused to talk to you. Did you feel helpless? Locked in a power struggle. I know just how that feels!

Now, imagine looking at your child in that same situation and ask yourself, "If it wasn't for the fact that I know he is 3 or 13 how old would he be?" What age came up for you? This is your child's emotional age in that moment of stress and overwhelm. Making the mistake of relating only to your child's chronological age leads to unrealistic expectations, frustration, anger and feelings of failure for both you and your child.

QUICK TIP #3: Respond to Emotional Age

This mistake can be turned around easily by responding to your child's emotional age when they're acting out. First, ask yourself how old your child seems in the moment, and respond to him or her based on that awareness. In other words, ask yourself what you would do if they were literally that age and do that!

It might seem strange at first, but with this powerful insight of "**E**" for **EMOTIONAL AGE**, you will feel more connected to your child and more empowered to give them what they need emotionally. This will build the resilience your child needs to become more, not less, able to act her age and make you feel really good as a parent.

For more about emotional age, check out these [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>

