

9 Mindful Parenting Tips For When You're About To Lose Your Cool



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Parenting is hard, and it's anything but perfect. Our new series [Raising Consciousness](#) is all about real parenting in the wellness world and what happens outside the frame as we try and raise kind and conscious kids.

Please write to me at editor@mindbodygreen.com and share your stories to be featured as part of this ongoing series. Let's have this conversation!

My son was fussing around at the counter where we sit to eat breakfast and spilled all his juice everywhere—onto his plate, on the seat, and the floor. I yelled, "How many times do I have to tell you to stop messing around when we're eating?" I yelled so loudly that I noticed it startled him. Suddenly, I looked at him in dismay and realized I had just frightened my son. After working all day, cooking, and cleaning, the last thing I wanted to do was clean up yet another mess that in my mind could have been avoided. But, against my better judgment, I continued on with my rant as I was quite frustrated. What he said next is what slapped me back into reality. He turned to me with his big, teary, beautiful brown eyes and said very softly, "Mom, but you said that sometimes accidents happen, and it's OK," which totally melted my heart and broke it simultaneously. I realized I needed to be more mindful. Mindful in the way I reacted, mindful in the way I approached things, mindful in being really present with my son when I am with him.

So what was it that had me so frustrated anyway?

Was it the point that I told him what seemed to be like a millionth time to stop playing around? Was it that I had other things on my mind at the time? Perhaps my workday didn't go as planned or I didn't get enough errands sorted out as I had wanted. I had a sudden realization; it was like everything was presented right before my eyes: I watched and saw my son's reactions to things that happen daily and it was like watching myself. He was being hard on himself. He wasn't giving himself enough time to explain things or get his thoughts cleared, he was rushing. He would be utterly disappointed and sad with himself if something didn't work out or if he spilled chocolate on his shirt. And I thought, *OMG, he's me. My 5-year-old is victimizing himself. He's feeling less than, not good enough, and all over what? He's me.* I knew instantly that my behavior had to change if I wanted to be a better parent to

my son. I knew right then I needed to be more mindful as a parent.

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It's scary to live in the present.

It seems scary when you think about it, to have to be in the now, in the present. Our minds are always fixated on something other than the now. Who wants to face their own reality—their own truth? It's a hard thing to wrap your mind around, I know. I'm not a perfect parent, and I'm not a perfect human, but I do know I have choices and can make decisions. I know that I can either positively affect my child or negatively affect him. We as parents don't want to make mistakes, we don't want to see how we may be failing, but it's OK to see and realize these things that we can change about ourselves to make these positive changes. The same way we learn from trying, failing, making mistakes—is the same way our kids will learn. I think it's safe to say we all want them to give life a try. So what we have to do is evolve and grow, which we can only do by facing our truths and dealing with them in healthy, mindful ways.

Awareness is our friend, like fear.

Fear can either make us courageous or shut us down completely. Awareness can either prompt us to make changes or push us back into denial. But just by being aware, you notice change is needed, and I truly believe that makes all the difference. Think back to a time when you were completely oblivious to the situation. Looking back you'd have done so much differently, right? Once you're aware, there's no going back. You will make better choices, you will handle things differently, you will take care of and view things through the eyes of love. Especially when we are trying to raise good people to attribute to the loving nature of this world so we can minimize all the wrong parts of it.

Here's what I do now to stay mindful with myself, son, husband, and even my dog. Hopefully after reading these you can think about how they apply to you, too.

1. Leave work at work and unplug from technology.

For example: We make the dinner table a no phone/tablet zone. Spend that time as a family talking and really connecting. Tell funny jokes. Ask what was the best part of the day for each family member.

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2. Teach your kids how to take deep breaths.

Taking breathing breaks together to collect your thoughts and ground yourselves will be fundamental in helping kids learn how to cope and have understanding of their feelings. Kids love doing this especially when you tell them they're grounding themselves strong just like a tree! You can take five minutes to sit on the floor with your child/children. Have them close their eyes, palms down on their legs, and show them how to inhale deeply. The younger ones may

keep getting up, but keep practicing, and you'll see them soon sitting for the full five or even doing it on their own.

3. Pay attention to how you react to situations.

Because, ultimately, your kids will mimic it in their own lives. Don't become aggravated or annoyed right away, tempting as it is. So if they spill something on the counter, don't go into an immediate rage; remember, accidents do happen, and spills are not the end of the world—annoying, yes, but not

debilitating. If you do find your blood boiling for any reason, remove yourself from the room for a few minutes to cool down.

4. Don't interrupt your kids while they're talking (even if it's taking them a long time to get it out).

If my son is having trouble getting the words out, I'll remind him to take a deep breath. This helps him with his thought process, and he knows he can take a break and think about it for a few minutes because we're in no rush. I've been really mindful about not brushing my son off when he wants to tell me something. A lot of the time as parents we can get so busy with work or other things if our kids come to us, we say, "Give me two minutes," or "Tell me later." I stop what I'm doing and give him my full attention. In turn, he does the same for me when I'm speaking to him.

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5. Ask engaging questions.

My son recently had a farmer bring in chicks to the class to hatch, so I asked him for that whole week how he took care of the chicks, how chicks are kept warm, what they ate, etc. I like to pinpoint specifics, so he doesn't feel like I'm just being repetitive with my questions and knows that I'm really interested.

6. Practice active listening.

When your children are talking to you, make eye contact, smile, be welcoming. Sometimes we don't have to say anything at all for our kids to know we are listening. Children do love to talk and tell stories, and it pulls at your heart strings to watch them speak of things we often can take for granted.

7. Allow them to express their emotions.

You are where they feel the most safe, and kids just like us will have not so good days and need to know it's OK and that you're there for them. If your son or daughter comes home from school grumpy, tell him/her that you're there to help or talk whenever they are ready. It's hard to get information out of my son when he gets out of school, but eventually, I can't keep him quiet about the day. I ask questions such as, "What did you do at school today that was different? Did you go outside for recess? Who did you play with today?" These questions will then lead you to why they may be grumped out, or they may just be tired, which is totally normal (raise your hand if you haven't felt tired after a long day at work or school)—see?

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8. Keep the radio off and talk about their day on the car ride home.

If you can, walk to pick them up (weather permitting), so you can have a nice stroll together. Go to the park, kick a ball around, ride your bikes, or go inline skating. My son likes to ride his scooter everywhere, so I'll bring that along.

9. Communication is key.

Be honest but not aggressive in your approach. Say things like "I understand you're frustrated" or ask "What is making you upset?" or "How can Mommy (or Daddy) help you?" Alternatively, be excited for them when they've reached a goal for themselves or moved up in rank in karate or dance class. Always tell your kids how much you love them. Tell them you love them no matter what—even when you're upset with them. It's crucial they know this.

Children are extremely mindful by nature. I watch how my son lives in the

moment. He's not worried about what's going to happen tomorrow, and he doesn't stress about yesterday. Mindful parenting isn't something that we can download or buy. It's something we have to learn all over again, and it will take practice. Will we be mindful every single minute of the day? Probably not, as life happens and situations take hold of us emotionally. I had such a huge realization by just watching my son spill his food. Watching him is like watching myself through a mirror: It's fascinating yet frightening at the same time. Awareness is profound. It's like turning on a switch that we'll never be able to shut off again because once you know something, it never leaves you. Since practicing these methods of mindfulness, I've become a little less neurotic and don't sweat the small stuff. I perceive things differently, with a different perspective—a lot less stress and a lot more appreciation. Since I'm mindful of this, it makes me grateful.

Each year, month, day, hour, minute, and second fly by as if in a dream. It's so important to look back on these times and not have a sense of regret—but more of a fulfillment inside your heart, knowing that you were fully present during each and every fleeting moment...spills, messy countertops, piles of laundry, and all. You won't regret it.

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