A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS

When You Lose Your Cool

Support for the moments you don't stay regulated with your child, and how to come back from them.

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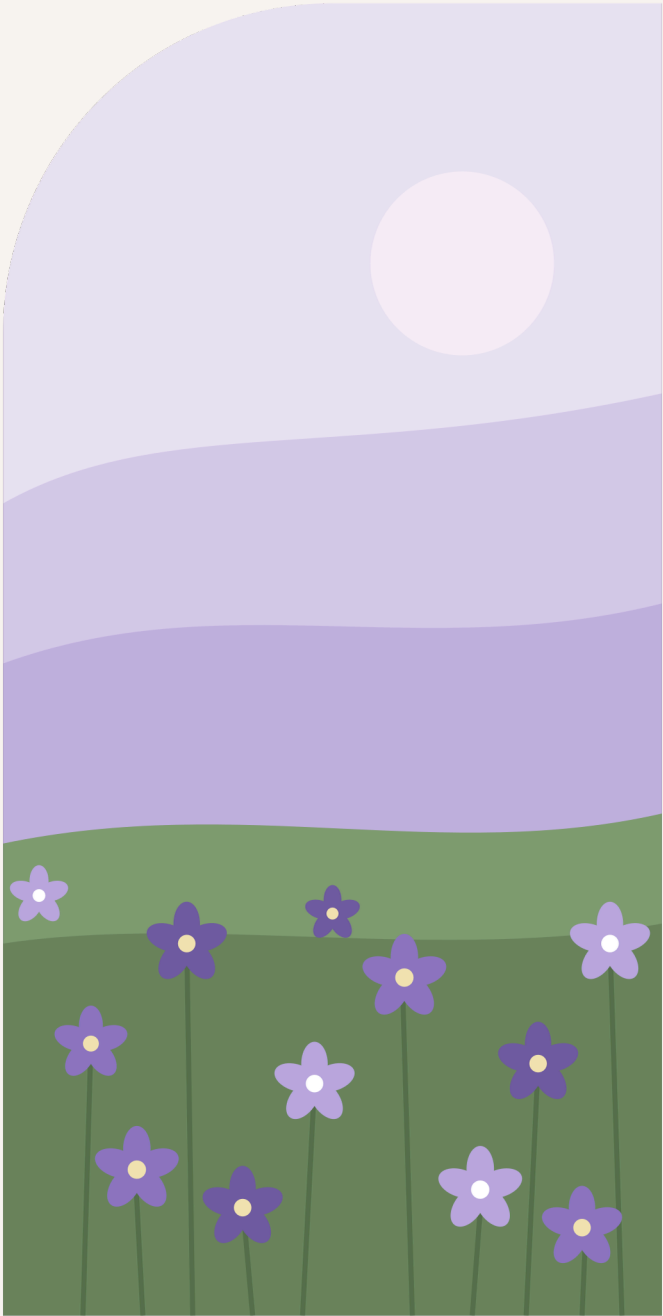


Because sometimes it takes 2villages:
one for the child, and one for the caregiver.

If you lose your cool with your kids, you're not a bad parent. You're a parent with a nervous system.

Your child reads your tone, your face, and your body before they hear a single word. That's why your calm matters so much, and why it's so hard to hold onto.

A regulated adult is the first intervention.

Why it happens: you **flipped your lid**

When stress climbs too high, the thinking brain goes offline and the survival brain takes over (as described by Dr. Dan Siegel). That's true for your child, and it's true for you. In that state, nobody can learn.

What pushes us to correct in the heat of the moment is usually fear:

"I can't let them get away with this."
"I'm not doing my job as a parent."
"If I don't stop this now, it will only get worse."

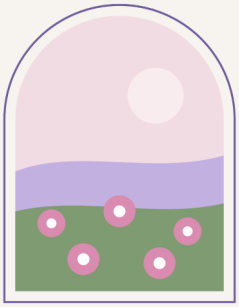
The lesson can wait. It lands better once everyone is calm.

Seeing it **coming**

The goal isn't to never flip your lid. It's to notice it sooner.

1. **Know your top card.** Which feeling do you most want to avoid: criticism, feeling unimportant, stress, or rejection? That's your trigger pattern, not a flaw.
2. **Check your stress load (N.U.T.S.).** Novelty, Unpredictability, Threat to the ego, and low Sense of control all shrink your patience (Sonia Lupien).
3. **Notice your hard hours.** Your window is smaller when you're hungry, tired, or rushed, just like your child's.

In **the moment**



You don't need to be perfect. Just more regulated than your child.

Your calm is something your child borrows until they can find their own.

1. **Name your own feeling first.** Annoyed? Angry? Hurt? Hopeless? Noticing it is the pause.
2. **Say it honestly.** Not "You're driving me crazy," but "I'm feeling frustrated. I need a minute."
3. **Take your break, out loud.** Go to your own cool-off place and tell your child that's what you're doing. You're modeling the skill you want them to learn.
4. **Say less.** Fewer words, a slower voice, slower breathing. Don't match their intensity.
5. **Hold the boundary, lose the lecture.** "I won't let you hurt anyone. We'll figure this out when we're both calm."

Be kind to **yourself, too**

Self-criticismdoesn'tmakeyou a calmer parent. Self-compassion does: it lowers stress and helps you recover faster. When it all feels like too much:

Pause. "This is really hard right now."

Supportive touch. A hand on your heart, or a self-hug.

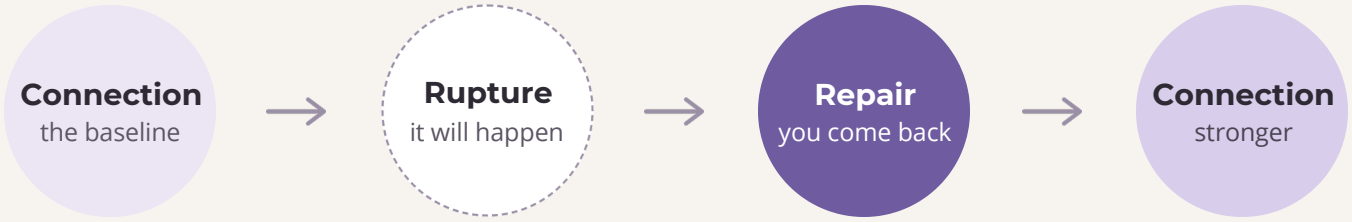
Speak like a friend. Say what you'd say to someone you love.

Remember. You're not failing. You're parenting. And parenting is hard.

Spend your energy where it can land. You can't control how your child's day went. You *can* control your response, and whether you repair afterward.

After: **repair** is what builds the bond

Secureattachmentisn'tbuiltbynevergettingitwrong.It'sbuiltina cycle (Donald Winnicott):



The repair is the part that makes your relationship stronger, because your child learns it can survive something hard. Children don't need perfect parents. They need *"good enough"* ones who are willing to come back.

The 4 Rs of Recovery (Positive Discipline)

R	R	R	R
Recognize Name your mistake plainly, without a speech.	**Reconnect** Repair the relationship before the problem.	**Reconcile** Apologize. "I'm sorry" is a complete sentence.	**Resolve** Once you're both calm, solve it together.

Try: *"I yelled at you earlier, and that wasn't okay. I'm sorry. I was frustrated, and I handled it badly. Can we figure out the homework together now?"*

TRY THIS WEEK

The next time you lose your cool, don't aim to fix it in the moment. Aim to come back. Once you're both calm, try one repair using the 4 Rs, and notice how your child responds.

Parenting is not about perfection.
It's about learning, repairing, and growing together.