

When Your Kids Push Your Buttons

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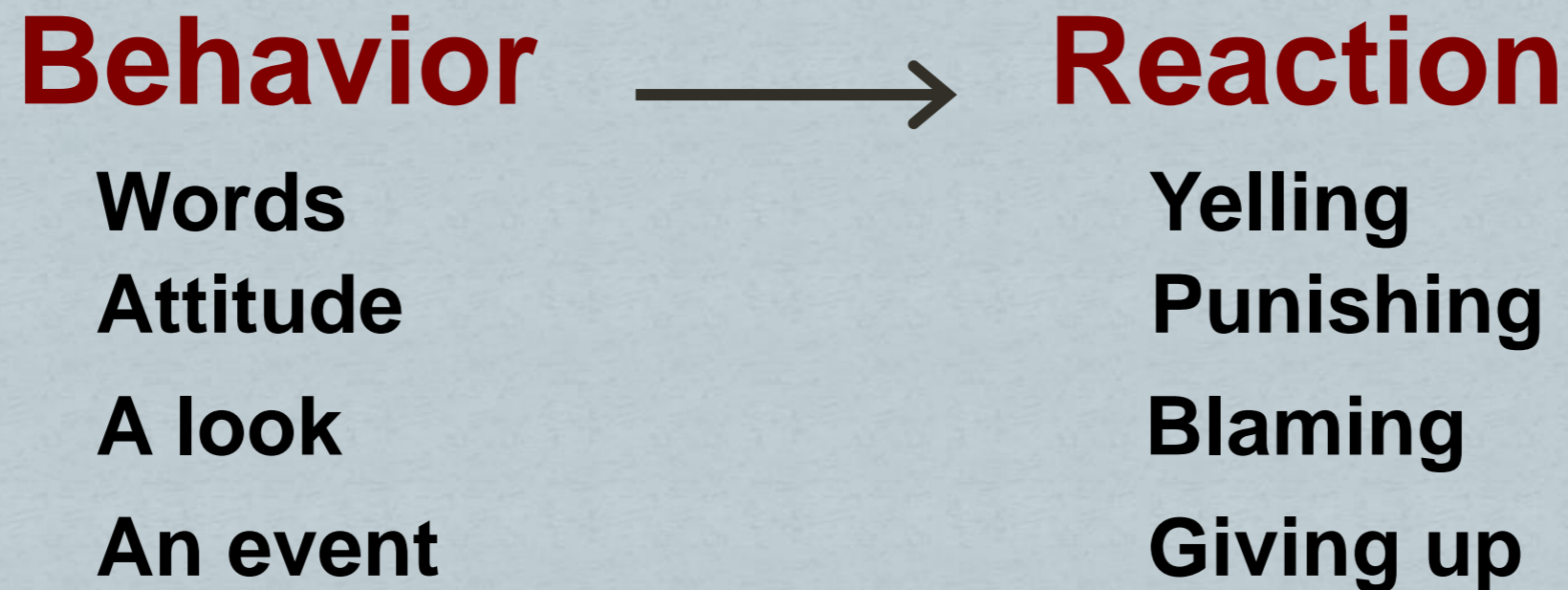
When our buttons get pushed:

- go on automatic
- feel angry, hopeless, resentful, guilty, etc.
- react in ways we regret
- blame child for our emotions and reactions
- catastrophize
- say what our parents said to us



Emotional Chain Reaction

What we think:



Your behavior causes me to REACT the way I do.

“Why do you always make me yell?”

Or we think:

Childs

Behavior



Emotion



Reaction

Words

Anger

Yelling

Attitude

Frustration

Punishing

A look

Resentment

Blaming

An event

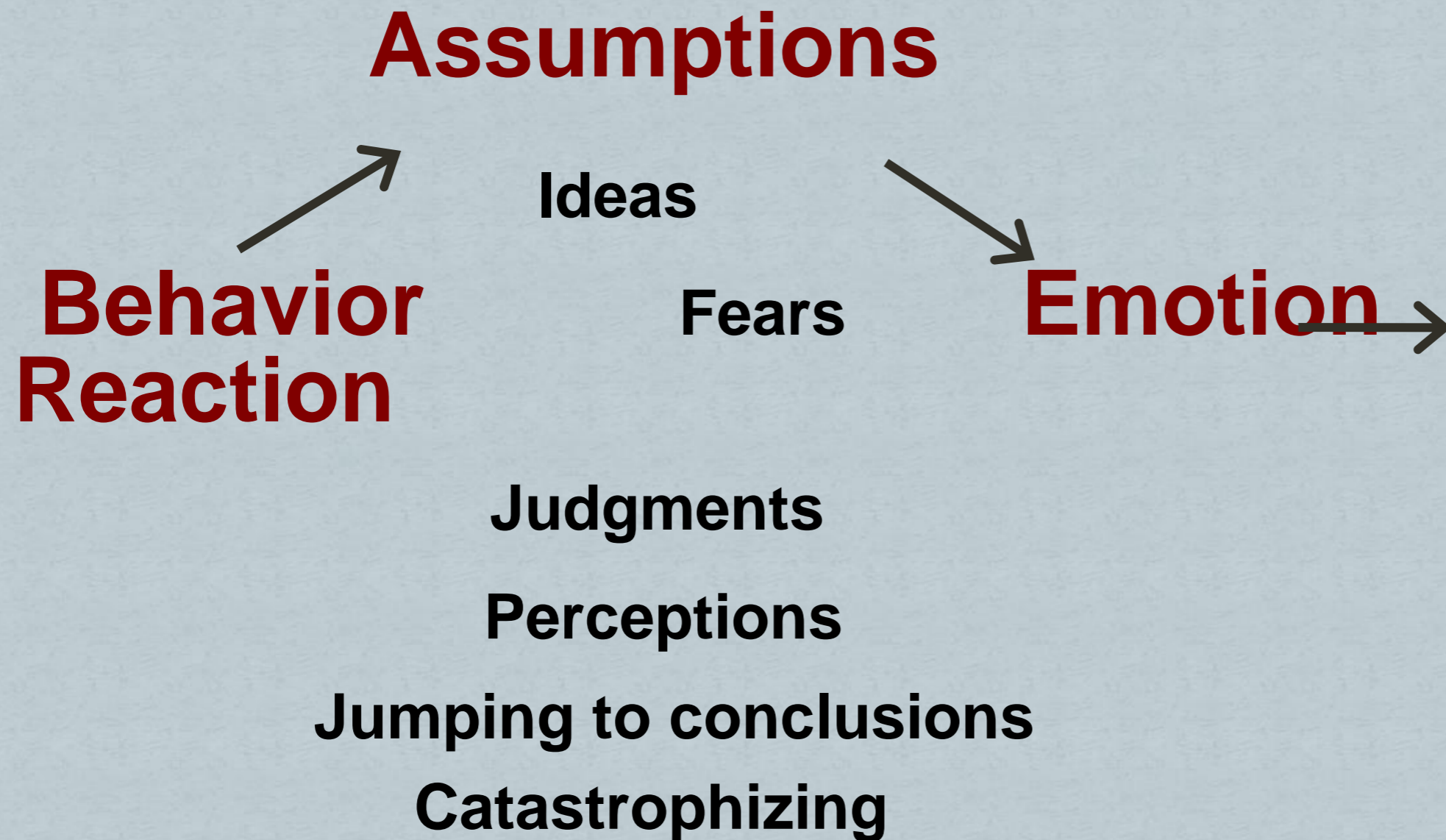
Exhaustion

Giving up

Your behavior causes me to FEEL the way I do.

“You make me so mad!”

But what really happens is:



When you behave this way, I make up IDEAS that provoke FEELINGS that cause me to REACT the way I do.

“I hate it when towels are left on the floor.”

“I’m feeling ignored.”

Assumptions We Make

(Judgments)

He never listens.

She's disrespectful.

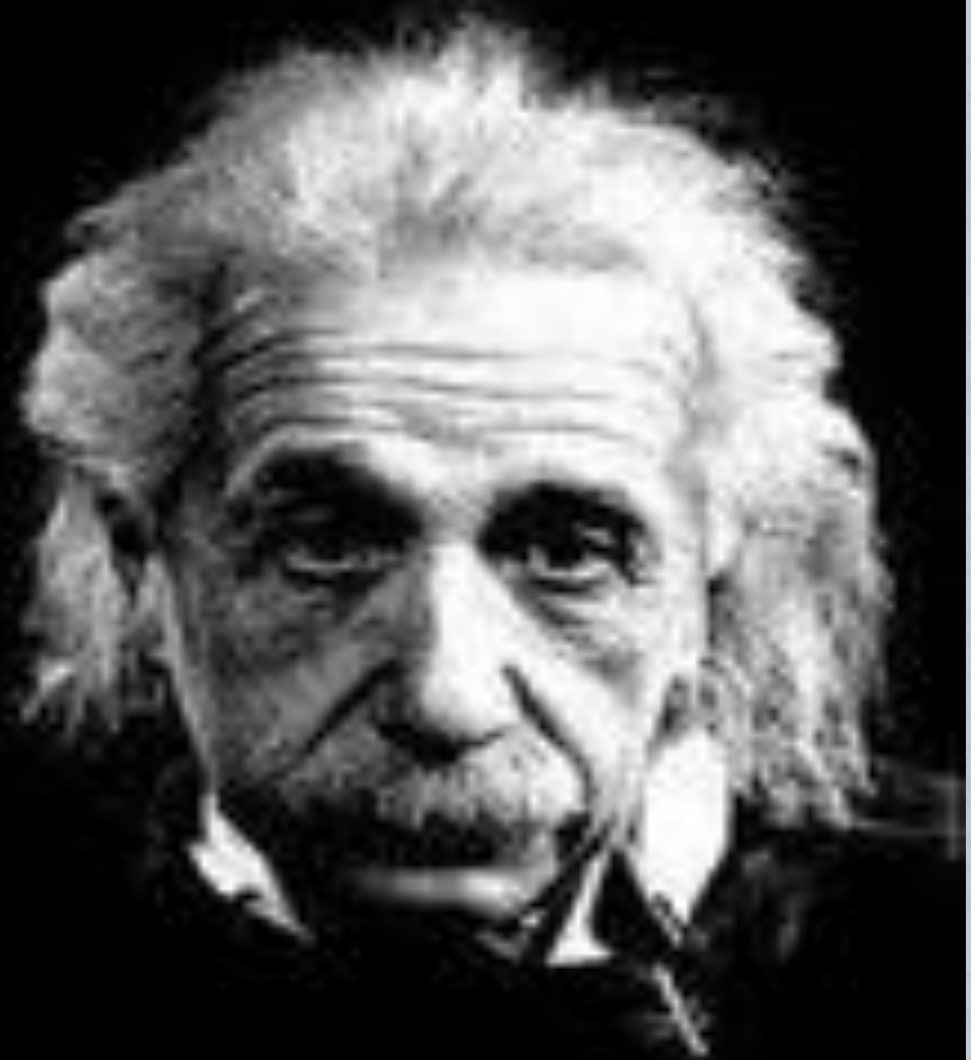
He's inconsiderate of others' feelings.

She's so mean.

He always blames someone else.

I'm a lousy parent.

“WE CANNOT
SOLVE OUR
PROBLEMS
WITH THE SAME
THINKING WE
USED WHEN WE
CREATED THEM”



Reframed Assumptions

(Observations)

He never listens:

He doesn't like what I'm saying.

She's disrespectful:

She has a hard time being told what to do. She's trying to tell me something.

He's inconsiderate of others' feelings:

He's egocentric – focused on himself.

Reframed Assumptions, cont.

She's so mean.

She has a hard time when other kids/her brother is around.

He always blames someone else.

He gets blamed a lot. He protects himself by blaming others.

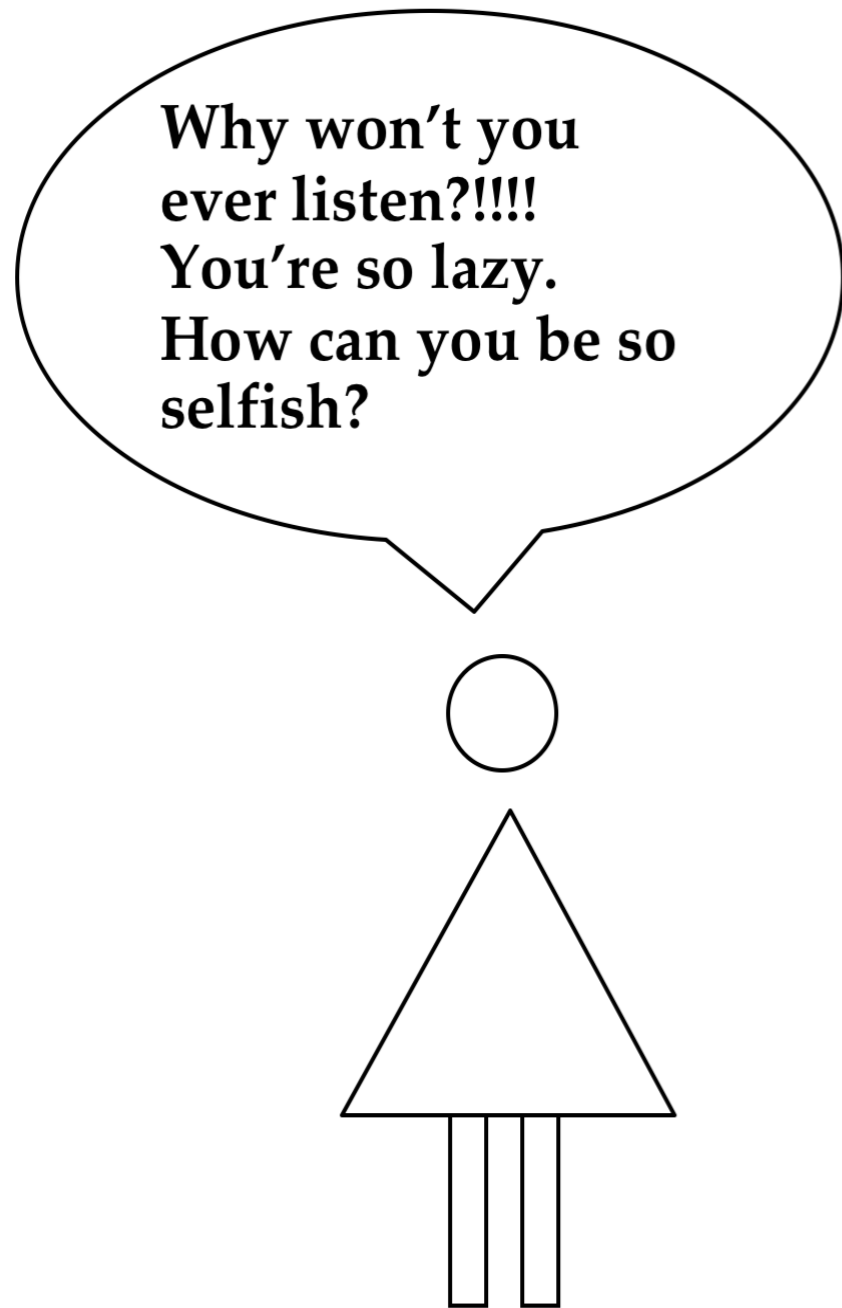
I'm a lousy parent:

I'm overwhelmed right now, and I'm not taking good care of myself.

The Gap is the space created between between the lesson the parent intends and the message the child receives.



Intention



The Gap

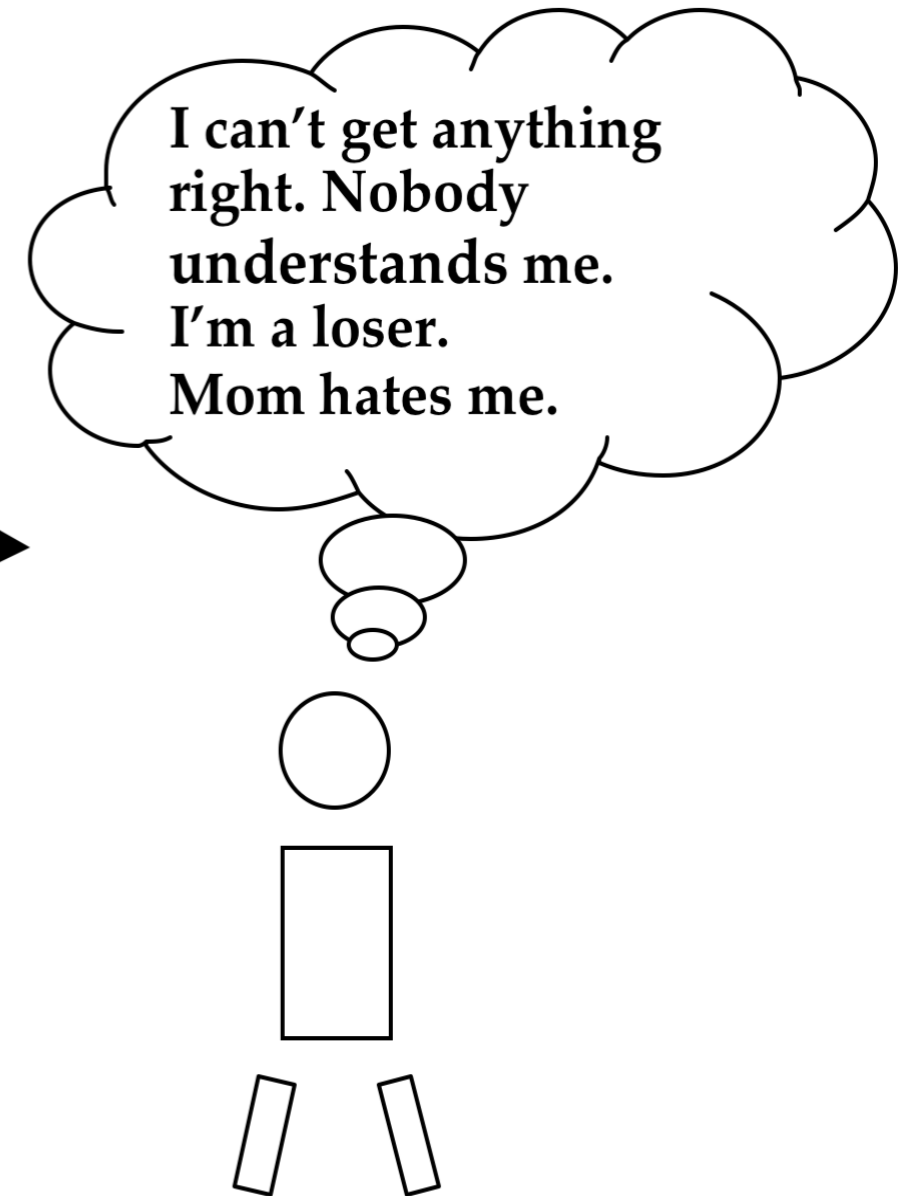
Reaction



Intention

The word "Intention" is written in a 3D, blocky font with a dark shadow, appearing to be on a surface.

Message received



Messages heard across the Gap:

- *I can't do it right*

- *I'm unlovable*

- *I'm a disappointment*

- *I'm stupid*

- *I'm bad/wrong*

- *I'm not good enough*

- *It's all my fault*

- *I'm invisible*

Behavior is your clue

- Behavior is all you have to tell you how your child is doing. *Be grateful for it!*
- Behavior is only the final expression of the internal, emotional state of your child.
- Unacceptable behavior is your clue that your child is *having* a problem.
- Punishing, blaming, threatening only increases the problem.

Behavior we see

**Hitting
Whining
Swearing**

Triggers

*Got a bad grade
Overheard parents fighting
Last cupcake gone
Favorite pants in laundry
Told to get off computer*

Emotions

**Powerless Unaccepted
Misunderstood Blamed
Not good enough Jealous
Disconnected Rejected
Disrespected Alone Helpless**

Instead of thinking:

***My child is being a
problem,***

Think instead:

***My child is having a
problem.***



Instead of asking:

How do I stop this behavior?

Ask instead:

What is this behavior trying to tell me?

What is under the iceberg?

*And
Connect*



***Your child's job
is to get
what she wants
when she wants it.***



Situation

Child's Behavior: Meltdown over not getting what she wants – going for pizza.

Assumption: *She is so ungrateful. She doesn't appreciate all the work I have put into her birthday.*

Expectation: *She should be able to bend, be more flexible, let it go. And be considerate of how tired I am.*

Parent's Emotion: frustrated, angry, resentful

Reaction: Yells, “*Why can't you appreciate everything else I am doing for you? Give me a break just once.*”

Reframed Situation

Child's Behavior: Meltdown over not getting what she wants – going for pizza.

Reframed assumption: *She had her heart set on pizza. I blew her plan. She's so disappointed.*

Adjusted expectation: *It was so important to her that she can't just let it go. It's about more than the pizza.*

Parent's Emotion: understanding, compassion

Response: *“Don't ever feel badly about pushing my buttons. It's me who allows my buttons to be pushed. You are teaching me. What a gift that is to me.” Hugs.*

Post Mortem

1. First, write down your emotions after the situation.
2. What reaction did your emotions provoke?
3. Ask yourself what you must have been thinking to make you feel that way?
4. Then, what was the problem your child was having? Draw the Iceberg.

Defusing Your Buttons

1. *Go limp, Wait, Breathe, Think*
2. Don't take it personally—it's about the problem your child is **having** (not **being**).
3. Reframe your assumptions/observation.
4. Adjust your expectations to be realistic.
5. Go back to it when all are calm.

The Do-Over



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