http://www.empoweringparents.com/article/4-steps-to-more-patience-as-a-parent/
This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only.
© 2019 EmpoweringParents.com, All Rights Reserved.

4 Steps to More Patience as a Parent

By Denise Rowden, Parent Coach

Patience. It's something many of us in the *Empowering Parents* community wish we had more of. In my coaching sessions, I often ask parents how they respond when their children act out. Most express the desire to develop more patience with their kids.

But what exactly is patience? For many people, including me, patience means remaining calm, even in the face of a child's extreme acting out behavior.

It means keeping your emotions in check so you can respond appropriately and effectively, rather than yelling, cursing, or saying things you will regret later.

Honestly, though, is being *that* patient even possible? I mean, it's possible some of the time, but is it an achievable goal?

> *We all have limits to how much we can tolerate. This doesn't make us "bad" parents. It makes us normal parents.*

Let's look at some typical situations when parents often wish they could be more patient:

- Your daughter asks you (for the umpteenth time) for something you've already said no to, causing you to bellow a "NO!" that resounds through the entire house.
- You ask your son to pick up his dirty dishes (also for the umpteenth time) and find yourself using a tone of voice that belies any sense of calm or composure.
- It's Monday morning, and you're frantically trying to get yourself and everyone else ready and out the door on time.
- You've just gotten home after a long day. You're trying to get dinner on the table while also refereeing a squabble between two of your kids and helping another with his homework.

Parenting is hard, and the situations above are inevitable. There will always be stresses with parenting. With that in mind, here are four steps you can take towards increasing your ability to be patient.

1. Identify Your Triggers as a Parent

As specifically as possible, try to identify when you are most likely to lose your patience. Where is it most likely to happen? With whom? For example, I tend to lose my patience early in the morning, late at night, or whenever there's a time constraint.

Being tired or hungry can also shorten my fuse considerably. I remember when my kids were younger, I would say as a pre-emptive warning: "Mom's getting tired and hungry, which means Mom's getting crabby. Remember what happens when Mom gets crabby."

Once you have a clear understanding of your triggers, you can move on to Step Two.

2. Observe How You Respond to Your Child's Behavior

Take some time to observe what goes on with you when you are triggered. What happens in your body? Increased heart rate? Sweaty palms? Hard time breathing? Do you feel yourself getting hot?

What thoughts do you have?

- *He never does what I ask him to do!*
- *She always pushes back when I say no!*
- *Why am I the only one who has to deal with this?*

And how do you respond when this happens? All of this information is like the pieces of a puzzle, and the picture it forms helps you determine your tipping point.

For me, my breathing gets shallow when I'm being triggered. And I start to feel my pulse racing as my anxiety level increases. My thoughts veer towards all-or-nothing thinking, a thought pattern where you think in extremes and exaggerate how good or bad things are. As an example, I may say something like this:

- *Why does she always do this when we're running late?*

All-or-nothing thinking is just one of the many ways we can drive ourselves crazy with our own thoughts. These are the signs that my patience is starting to wear thin. It's important to identify when we become impatient, and we can do that by recognizing our habits.

3. Develop a Plan to Manage Your Triggers

Now that you know your triggers, you can develop a game plan for when they occur. This plan can include:

- **Pre-planning strategy.** For example, plan for a transition time between work and home to allow you some downtime. Or, ahead of time, establish clear house rules and expectations, write them down, and have clear consequences if they aren't met.
- **In the moment strategy.** When it's happening, step away from the power struggle, take some space to calm down, do deep breathing exercises, and developing some calming self-talk.

- **Follow-up.** After things have calmed down, plan to review the situation. Sit down with your child and problem-solving his choices, or apologize if you do happen to lose your patience.

Don't underestimate the power of an apology. Contrary to popular wisdom, it doesn't lessen your authority with your child. It does role model how to take accountability when your response is less than stellar.

It took me a long time to be able to apologize because it can feel as if you're admitting fault, and your kid will somehow use it against you. There is always a chance this could happen, but, in my experience, it has made it much easier for my daughter and me to move past disputes.

4. Set Aside Time for Self-Care

Another important piece to maintaining patience is making sure you're taking care of *yourself* as much as you are taking care of everybody else.

We tend to put ourselves on the back burner far too often, to the detriment of ourselves and our children. It can be almost impossible to stay on an even keel when you're frazzled and running on empty.

Taking time to do things you enjoy—activities outside the home, a night out with friends or your significant other, or just taking time to put your feet up and relax—not only recharges your batteries, but also role models self-care for your kids.

I will admit that this one is still a struggle for me. I find it so difficult to put time aside for me to do the things I enjoy. I've gotten better, but it's still a work in progress.

Conclusion: You're Only Human

As odd as it may seem, losing your patience can be a positive experience. It can help you recognize when you're stretching your resources too far. If you think about times in the past when your patience has worn thin, you would probably recognize that it usually happens when you're feeling overwhelmed, overloaded, and possibly underappreciated. We all have limits to how much we can tolerate—we are only human after all! This doesn't make us bad parents—it makes us normal parents.

I came across a definition for patience the other day that I believe is much more suitable to what a parent does, day in and day out: *steady perseverance*. Coming back, time and again, trying to be more effective, trying to do our best to help our kids grow and develop into successful adults, that's steady perseverance. It's a different, more significant kind of patience: hanging in and doing the hard stuff, even when we feel like giving up.

Related Content:
Calm Parenting: How to Get Control When Your Child Makes You Angry
Stop Letting Your Child's Behavior Make You Crazy

About Denise Rowden, Parent Coach

Denise Rowden is a parent of two adult children and has been a parenting coach since 2010. She has worked in Special Education, Alternative Education and adolescent group homes. She has a BS in Psychology from the University of Southern Maine and is currently working on her Life Coach certification from the International Coach Federation.

http://www.empoweringparents.com/article/4-steps-to-more-patience-as-a-parent/
This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only.
© 2019 EmpoweringParents.com, All Rights Reserved.