



## TREASURE KEEPERS

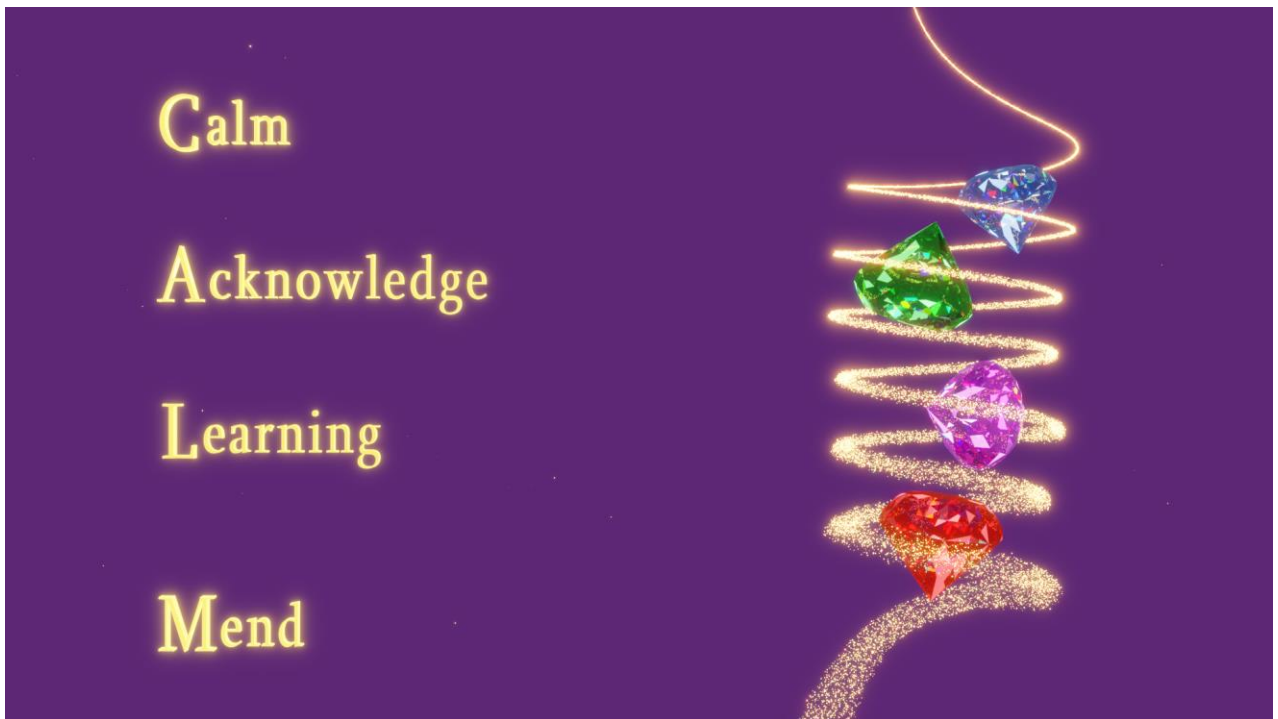
# “CALM PARENTING”: CREATING CALM AND KIND BEHAVIOUR

The key to managing difficult behaviour lies in a meaningful parenting approach:

**Remember:** You are a compassionate and nurturing guide for your child. You are on their side and you are trying to teach them how to be respond in healthier ways.

**Remember:** Discipline means to *teach*. You are calmly and kindly interrupting their ‘difficult’ behaviour, identifying the need that drives it, calming the nervous system and showing them how to achieve their goal in a healthier way. You are leading by example and Teaching and showing them how you would like them to be.

**Remember:** You are not accepting hurtful behaviour but we are not punishing, bribing or rejecting them as these strategies do not work in the long term. Consider how you could actually be triggering old traumas by using punishing or harming methods.



1. **C**alm:

- Take a moment for yourself to cool off and pause.
- Use whatever works for you to give you the opportunity to 'cool' before you continue....
- Soothe your young person
- Regulate your young person (calm them 'down' or activate them 'up')
- You know your young person.
- Use what is most effective in the moment to regulate their nervous system and calm them down

2. **A**cknowledge

- Physically be with the young person
- Name their feelings
- Confirm that you are right there with them and you are there to help

### 3. Learn

- Identify the trauma triggers
- What happened? Do you need to consider to **PLANT** them?:
  - Physically hurt/unwell? (often traumatised children don't easily show this. Notice their hurts and soothe them)
  - Lonely and needing connection?
  - Aroused (need help to be calm)
  - Nutrition/Needing food (traumatised people are often more sensitive to drops in blood sugar)
  - Tired



- Talk through the situation (if appropriate)
- Plan a different way forward for next time

### 4. Mend

- Mend & 'Fix' the problem together
- Make sure that the mend/fix is connected to where it went wrong (i.e. if you break a table you repair it together, if you punch your sister you show her an act of body kindness)

## CALM

- ♥ **Cool yourself first.** Do what works for you. Long exhale, a cup of tea, a game of candy crush, a brisk walk around the garden...
- ♥ **Use the calm harm app** if you need quickly generated ideas on how to cool for 60 seconds (choose the 'random>5 minutes>random' setting and this will present an option for 60 seconds at a time)
- ♥ **Contain and withdraw your child in a kind way.** If you can see they are starting to get heightened then go over and kindly suggest some time away from what they are doing (or who they are playing with) in a kind and playful way. You might say something like, '*Could you come and spend just 5 minutes with me and then you can go back and play please. I would just like to sit with you and check in with you.*' You might then put them onto your lap or play a short silly game together to help them calm down a bit so that they can return

to their play in a way that doesn't escalate.

- ♥ **Monitor your child's state of body/nervous system tension and try to reduce it (or upregulate if they are 'frozen')**
- ♥ **Use the body calming techniques that work for your child** (hanging upside down, gymnastics, walking, punching a pillow, punching through some newspaper, heart coherence, breathing together, bubble gum, jokes, playing a game together on your phone (ideally turn off the blue wave light))  
  
You are the expert on your child, use whatever you know works for them to help them calm down.
- ♥ **NOT NOW! Just Calm...** When their behaviour begins to become difficult try not to get drawn into changing it right then. The child is likely to be in a heightened state and actually you will get a much better result if you help them to calm down first.

## ACKNOWLEDGE

- ♥ **Withdraw your child to a cooling place and be with them.** Make sure you have calmed yourself first. Use the heart coherence technique, deep breathing or another parent-regulation technique
- ♥ **As soon as any conflict is resolved engage in playful and positive interaction with your child.** Holding no grudge at all
- ♥ **Name their feelings.** If you name them you can 'tame them'
- ♥ **Remind them that you are there to help.** Not to punish or judge them.
- ♥ **Clearly use your words to say that you are not angry with him but that you will always stay with him and help him through such hard times to help him calm his body and brain.**

## LEARN

- ♥ **Trauma triggers.** Did a smell/place/person/flashback set their behaviour off?? Can you help them to identify this?
- ♥ **What happened?** Could you quickly have helped to ground and 'PLANT' your young person?  
Were they..  
Physically hurt/unwell? (often traumatised children don't easily show this)  
Lonely and needing connection?

Aroused (need help to be calm)

Needing food (traumatised people are often more sensitive to drops in blood sugar)

Tired

- ♥ **Talk** through the situation (if appropriate)
- ♥ **Plan** a different way forward for next time
- ♥ **Connect the words.** When your child is calmed: Ask them if they are ready to use their words yet. This may take more than one day. Allow at least one night to sleep on it before you attempt this conversation. Take them to a quiet space.
- ♥ **'Name it to tame it'**. Using their words to express/connect their feelings with what happened .

# MEND

*The Mend/fix has to be connected to what went wrong...*

- ♥ **Connect the fix.** Figure out together how you can create a connected fix:
  - ♥ If you broke it fix it
  - ♥ If you hurt bodies, be kind to bodies
  - ♥ If you took someone's stuff, replace their stuff;
  - ♥ If you were unkind, be kind....

*Remember that you are trying to teach and give your child practice at being the kind, considerate, loving person you know they can be.*

*There is no learning gained if they have an unconnected punishment (i.e. you hit a friend so you lose your ipad for a week). What they are likely to learn is that they like you less!*

- ♥ **Connected fixing.** Where possible do the connected fix together (i.e. both fix broken things together, write a letter of apology together, bake a treat for someone they were unkind to together)

For example if your Son is hitting his brother, you immediately intervene and say something like *'that is not ok...friendly hands and feet only..people are not for hurting...if you continue I will not be able to let you play with your brother now...let me sit here and see you play nicely now like I know you can'*.

## Other tips

- ♥ **Don't force eye contact** Eye contact gives a very direct route to the nervous system and emotions. We tend to want to avoid eye contact with others when this feels overwhelming for us. Don't force your child to make eye contact with you when you are talking to them, especially if you are discussing behaviour. This will only make them feel more stressed and less likely to respond to what you are saying.
- ♥ **When you say no to a child immediately compliment them** by saying something like '*wow you did a great job of accepting no then*' do this immediately, before any tantrum can begin!
- ♥ **If your child is becoming dangerous then immediately take steps to keep him safe** this may be through cradling him in your lap, holding him so you can see his face. If he is provoked by eye contact then move him to face outwards. It is important to find a position that is safe for both of you but is also comforting. Reassure your child that you will stay with them until they feel better. This lets the child know that he is safe and that his behaviour does not make him 'bad'.
- ♥ **If you cannot physically contain your child because it is not safe** try to remain physically close but do not pursue your child. Make sure they are in a safe area of the room. If they crawl under a table or behind a sofa let them stay there whilst you sit quietly near. Try to convey with words some kind of message that you know this is hard for the child and you are there to keep her safe and help her through hard times. When there are signs she is calming then offer some form of reconnection immediately (offer a carton of juice with a straw, put your hand gently on her back etc). don't try to explore why this happened at this point.
- ♥ **Offer choice and compromise:** If your direction are not being listened to then say to your child '*It is not ok to ignore me...I want you to use your words now and tell me if you will do as I have asked or do you want a compromise?*' if they indicate a compromise give options such as '*ok your options are that we play together for 5 minutes and then put your toys away or your can put your toys away and then we will play a game for 5 minutes*'. Hold your fingers up to show the 2 options.

## Managing Limits

- ♥ **Create a good relationship with your child**, so that he responds to gentle guidance as opposed to threats and punishment. The most effective discipline strategy is having a close bond with your child. Kids who feel connected to their parents naturally want to please them.
- ♥ **Evaluate all teaching based on whether it strengthens or weakens your relationship with your child.** Think Loving Guidance, not punishment.

Punishment is destructive to your relationship with your child and ultimately creates more misbehaviour.

Loving guidance is setting limits and reinforcing expectations as necessary, but in an empathic way that helps the child focus on improving her behaviour rather than on being angry at you.

- ♥ **Reaffirm the connection.** Remember that children misbehave when they feel bad about themselves and disconnected from us.
- ♥ **Give warnings and a calm down period with directions** for example if your child is bouncing on their trampoline, give them a 5 minute warning they will need to finish, then a 1 minute warning, then stand beside them and tell them their time is up...would they like 3 more bounces. Then if a tantrum is brewing encourage them into a joint calming activity before you leave the trampoline (lets lie on the trampoline together and look at the clouds whilst we breath out with our mouths in the shape of an 'o').
- ♥ **Use mid-term rewards that involve **you both**.** i.e. *if you go to bed now, we will make pancakes together in the morning.*
- ♥ **Set limits and boundaries with empathy.** Of course, you need to enforce your rules. But you can also acknowledge her perspective. When kids feel understood, they're more able to accept our limits:
  - ♥ *"You're very very mad and hurt, but we don't bite. Let's use your words to tell your brother how you feel."*
  - ♥ *"You wish you could play longer, but it's bedtime. I know that makes you sad."*
  - ♥ *"You don't want Mommy to say No, but the answer is No. We don't say 'Shut Up' to each other, but it's ok to be sad and mad."*
  - ♥ *"You are scared, but we always tell the truth to each other."*
- ♥ **In any situation posing physical danger, intervene immediately to set limits, but simultaneously connect by empathizing.**

*The rule is no hitting, even though she made you really mad by teasing like that. Let's sit down together and get calm.'*
- ♥ **Do not attempt to talk about what happened until both of you are calm. You are wasting your time** otherwise as the area of the brain you need to be able to listen and understand another person is switched off when you are stressed.
- ♥ **Avoid Timeouts/Naughty Steps. They create more misbehaviour.** Timeouts, while infinitely better than hitting, are just another version of punishment by banishment, abandonment and humiliation. They leave kids alone to manage their tangled-up emotions, so they undermine emotional intelligence. They erode, rather than strengthening, your relationship with your child. They set up a power struggle. And they only work while you're bigger. They can actually trigger trauma reactions from the past.
- ♥ **Defiance is always a relationship problem.** If your child does not accept your direction (*"I don't care what you say, you can't make me!"*), it's always an indication that the relationship is not strong enough to support the teaching. This happens to all of us from time to time. At that point, stop and think about how to strengthen the relationship, not how to make the child "mind." Turning the situation into a power struggle will just deepen the rift between you. Defiance is often also rooted in fear so try to be honest about what your child might really be scared of in this situation (e.g. if they wont get off the x-box when asked is it because you are not clear about when they will be able to go on it again and therefore they are scared they will never get to play on it again?!)
- ♥ **Try to say YES!** Kids will do almost anything we request if we make the request with a loving heart. Find a way to say YES instead of NO even while you set your limit. *"YES, it's time to clean up, and YES I will help you and YES we can leave your tower up and YES you can growl about it and YES if we hurry we can read an extra*

story and YES we can make this fun and YES I adore you and YES how did I get so lucky to be your parent? YES!" Your child will respond with the generosity of spirit that matches yours.

- ♥ **How you treat your child is how she will learn to treat herself.** *If you're harsh with her, she'll be harsh with herself.* If you're loving with her while firm about setting appropriate limits, she'll develop the ability to set firm but loving limits on her own behaviour.
- ♥ **Harsh discipline and punishment interfere with the child's ability to develop self- discipline.** The problem with internalizing harshness isn't just that it makes for unhappy kids and, eventually, unhappy adults, it's that it doesn't work. Kids who are given discipline that is not loving never learn to manage themselves constructively.
- ♥ **We can be harsh with ourselves because of the way we were parented,** and we often respond to it by rebelling (how many times do we cheat on our diets?) or martyring ourselves (trying hard to be good girls and boys but building up resentment and lashing out at those we love, or not giving ourselves a break and ultimately breaking down.)
- ♥ **Use consequences appropriately** only ever state a consequence if you are truly prepared to carry it through. Do not ever use physical force, threats, shouting at the child or humiliation/shaming. Do not use consequences that involve abandonment. Suitable consequences might be assigning shared chores that they can do with you.

## Recommended reading

- **The A-Z of Therapeutic Parenting: Strategies and Solutions.** Sarah Naish. (2018).
- **The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Proven Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind** Paperback – 16 Aug 2012; by Dr Tina Payne Bryson (Author), Dr. Daniel Siegel (Author)
- **No-Drama Discipline: the whole-brain way to calm the chaos and nurture your child's developing mind (Mindful Parenting)** Paperback – 15 Jan 2015; by Daniel J. Siegel (Author), Tina Payne Bryson (Author)
- **The Yes Brain Child: Help Your Child be More Resilient, Independent and Creative** Jan 2018; by Dr. Daniel J Siegel and Ph.D. Tina Payne Bryson
- **Brainstorm: the power and purpose of the teenage brain** 13 Mar 2014 by Daniel J. Siegel
- **Parenting from the Inside Out 10th Anniversary Edition: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive** 26 Dec 2013 by Daniel J Siegel
- **The Connected Child: Bring hope and healing to your adoptive family** Paperback – 22 Apr 2007 by Karyn B. Purvis (Author)
- **Why Can't My Child Behave?: Empathic Parenting Strategies that Work for Adoptive and Foster Families** Paperback – 28 Aug 2013, by Amber Elliot (Author)