

## How to turn a Bad Day into a Good One

Do you ever have a day when things just become overwhelming?? Maybe the children were arguing about whose turn it was to use the tablet, the dog was running mud all around and you have been trying to get through to your energy supplier on the phone for an hour. It is easy to feel you are about to explode, and... BOOM! You are shouting at the children to stop, and then feeling guilty for setting a bad example.

At some point, everybody shouts at their children. Maybe when you have been home alone with them and they're being loud or they are not listening. Maybe it's when you have come home from a bad day and have little patience to deal with much else.

You might even think, *I know shouting is terrible, but it gets the job done. My children learn to behave when I shout.* At first glance, shouting does seem to work as it shocks children into submission. They know you "mean business."

**But at what cost?** Forcing children to obey through coercion and punishment leads to short-term results. You should raise kids who *want* to behave, and not because they are afraid of the consequences. You will tarnish your relationship from mutual respect to one with fear and anger.

### How to discipline a Child without Shouting

The good news is, **you can stop shouting**, it maybe not possible to stop entirely but definitely reduce doing so by a wide margin. Shouting is not the only way to discipline or get through to your children. You can respond calmly, even when you are having a bad day.

#### **How?**

 **Find your triggers:** When you shout you are reacting. Our children did something, and the culmination of a stressful day builds up and you explode. People do not tend to shout on purpose or wake up in the morning and say, "Today, I'm going to shout at my kids when they misbehave."

**You may shout because of habit:** Think about your daily habits, you get out of bed same side each day, use the same hand to turn the light switch on in the bathroom, you switch the kettle on before doing anything else. You do all this without thinking. They are habits.

Where do triggers fit in? You have picked up triggers that *lead* to these habits. The alarm is your trigger to wake up and get out of bed, going to the bathroom is your trigger to turn on the light. The same happens when you react to your children. Throughout the day, everyone is bombarded with triggers and some have a negative effect. Each person has their own set of triggers which can include:

- Whining
- Getting upset over petty things
- Fighting
- Spilling a cup of water all over the table
- Being loud
- Interrupting when you are doing something else
- Repeating yourself over and over

Once you have realized what your triggers are you can then take these steps to react in a more positive manner.



### **Be aware of your Triggers**

Think about the last time you lost your temper. What happened? What were the children doing that made you upset? Were there others circumstances surrounding the incident? If you can't think of any from the past, be aware of potential triggers moving forward. Maybe keep a record of these different factors to see if a pattern emerges.



### **What is your Typical Response?**

Once you have identified your triggers, define your typical response. How do you react when those triggers happen? Do you shout? Say something sarcastic? Drag their arm? Slam the door? These are the reactions to your triggers - the reactions that seem to happen out of nowhere, all on their own.



### **Pause between Trigger and Response**

Why is being aware of your triggers important? Only by being aware can you then choose to replace them. It allows you to insert a pause between the trigger and your habit.

A pause can be something as simple (even silly) as saying the trigger out loud so if you hear your child whining, say, "You're whining" or "You're fighting over the same toy." Some people pause by closing their eyes, holding their breath, or thinking of a motivational word or two like *stay calm* – whatever works for you to prevent you from reacting poorly and help you find a more positive alternative.



### **Find an Alternative Response**

The key is to replace those old habits and reactions with new ones. The triggers will always happen but instead of getting upset, you will stop and pause and then replace it with more productive behaviour.

You should decide ahead of time what you plan to do when triggers happen - having an emergency plan ready. You may decide that when you spot your triggers you will remove yourself from the room for 60 seconds to calm down, or maybe remember a fond memory. You must always tell your children why you were upset but in a calm way when the initial moment has passed.



### **Let's Start Over!**

Anger and annoyance can spiral people down into even more terrible habits. It can be that after losing your temper it puts doubts in place that the rest of day can get any better. But we can wipe the slate clean and start over, even after a terrible episode. One moment in the day doesn't have to colour the rest of it. That moment can even reset your day—use it as an opportunity to draw your child in, rather than push them out.

In fact, ask your children to "start over" as a way to change direction. It is never too late to turn a bad parenting day around.