

How to Stop Yelling at Your Kids

Objective

To eliminate yelling and increase your emotional regulation.

What to Know

You might believe the only way to get your child's attention is yelling or shouting. Perhaps you want to stop yelling, but how else can you get your child to listen?

Yelling frightens children, and they go into fight, flight, or freeze mode. When you yell, you train your child not to listen to you until you shout. It also teaches them to tune you out, have an attitude, roll their eyes, or yell back.

In addition, your anger pushes your child away. They harden themselves to you, and you lose your influence with them as they look to their friends.

Certainly, you do not want a permissive household where your child does whatever they want. But you can create a space where you set limits calmly and clearly. You might still get angry, but you become aware of your emotions and manage them before you explode.

One way to become the patient, calm parent you want to be is self-compassion. You can learn to coach yourself through your emotions. Here are eleven suggestions to do just that.

1. Providing a safe space includes managing your emotions. When you remain calm, your child feels safe and is less likely to become disrespectful and defensive. When you model emotional regulation, your child learns how to manage their own emotions. If you are too stressed and upset to calm down and treat your child with respect, you probably need some self-care.

2. Commit to using a respectful tone. Let your family know you are going to try to stop yelling. Let them know you are learning, and you will make mistakes, but over time you will get better at remaining calm. Identify what support you need to follow through with this commitment.

3. Take responsibility. You will get irritable sometimes, but that does not make it OK to project your distress on to others. Monitor your moods, and when you are stressed or frustrated, avoid lashing out and take responsibility for yourself.

4. Kids will be kids. Your child is learning how things work in the world. They will test limits, and their emotions will sometimes overtake them. Kids are childish! Offering respect will increase cooperation. As the adult, you should be able to self-regulate even if they cannot.

5. Offer empathy. When your child acts in a childish way or expresses challenging emotions, show understanding. This will help your child begin to acknowledge and accept their feelings – the first step to learning to manage them. Once your child can manage their feelings, they will better manage their behavior.

6. Set limits and stay connected. Show your child you are on their side – even if you say no or set a limit. Connect, then correct. Until your child feels understood and connected with you,

they cannot receive your guidance. Once your child has calmed down you can point out the lesson.

7. Stop, drop, and breathe. When you are angry, STOP yourself from saying anything or making any decisions. DROP your agenda until you calm down. BREATHE deeply and shake out your hands. Avoid doing anything until you calm down.

8. Take a time-out. Turn away from your child physically, take a deep breath, and leave the room, if possible. Splash some water on your face if you can. Acknowledge that maybe hiding behind your anger is fear, sadness, or disappointment. Allow those feelings to come up and just breathe. Cry if you need to and be kind to yourself. You will find that your anger will begin to dissipate.

9. Look to your own wisdom. When you are calm, imagine there is a guide next to you that observes things objectively. Your guide wants what is best for everyone in this situation. What does your guide suggest you say? Perhaps it is something like the following:

I don't have to "win" in this situation.

She's acting childish because she IS a child.

He's behaving this way because he's upset. He's just asking for my help.

I don't have to be right. I can choose love.

10. Only share the lesson when you are calm. If you try to teach a lesson when you are upset, you might shame or humiliate your child. A teachable moment is most appropriate when everyone is calm and connected.

11. Apologize. If you make a mistake or raise your voice, sincerely apologize.

Following the above steps is not easy, and it takes a great deal of self-control and practice. This worksheet will help you eliminate yelling and increase your ability to regulate your emotions. Even if you blow up, avoid giving up. Over time it will get easier to stop yourself from yelling. What is exciting is you will notice a difference in your child. They will exhibit more self-control and cooperation – and learn emotional regulation.

What to Do

Describe a situation where you yelled at your child. What happened? What did you say? How did your child respond? Be as detailed as possible.

What could you have done differently in this situation?

Are you willing to commit to replacing yelling with a calm and respectful tone? Why or why not?

Would you benefit from outside support (from a parenting coach, for example)? Who can help you?

What can you do to reduce your stress or practice self-care?

For two weeks use the following chart to record what you do to reduce yelling and manage your emotions. Use the above eleven tips (especially Stop, Drop, and Breathe, or Take a Time-out). Any time something happens where you are upset with your child and you are tempted to yell, note the date, the action you take to manage your emotions, what happened, and how you felt afterward. Write down if you were successful at avoiding yelling.

Date	What happened?	Action	How did you feel after?	Were you successful? Y / N

Did this exercise help you reduce yelling? Why or why not?

What else can you do to manage your emotions when you are upset with your child? Be specific.

Reflections on This Exercise

What was the hardest part about doing this exercise?

What was the easiest part?

What are your feelings about practicing these skills in real-life situations?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful).

What did you learn from this exercise?
