

How to Stop Yelling at Your Kids



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With Your Host

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Hi there. Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life* podcast. My name is Natalie Bacon, and I'm an advanced certified mindfulness life coach as well as a wife and mom. If you're here to do the inner work and grow, I can help. Let's get started.

What's happening my friend? I'm so happy to be here with you today for this really highly requested episode on how to stop yelling at your kids. I coach a lot on this. Even if you don't have kids, I want you to stick around and listen because you can apply this to any relationship where you find yourself snapping, yelling, or overreacting. It's all the same. It's the action of yelling, and that has to do with what's going on internally for you. It has much less to do with what is happening in your circumstances.

Typically, how this comes up is someone will say to me, "I've read all the books. I've tried to stop yelling." What they mean is I've tried to use willpower. "And nothing seems to work. I still yell." If you notice that yelling, it does work in the moment. What happens there is that conditioned your brain to know that hey, this works. That's your lower brain.

So if you think of your lower brain as like the efficiency brain, sometimes I call it your toddler brain, and your higher brain is like the parent brain. Your lower brain is the brain that wants to keep you safe and alive. It's your survival brain. It is the part of your brain that seeks pleasure and avoids pain. It wants to eat the cookies. Your higher brain says, "Hey, maybe we should limit the cookies to one a day for, you know, our long term health."

We need our lower brain. It keeps us safe. It keeps us surviving. It is very efficient. It memorizes the directions from your house to the school, and all of the other things that you do kind of on default. So I like to think of your lower brain as your default brain and your higher brain as that brain where you're acting from your highest self, and you're making decisions very thoughtfully.

So for most of you, if I asked you when you're out of the moment, when you're not with your kids, "Hey, do you want to yell at your kids?" You'll say no. You're answering the question from your higher brain. You're thinking

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about it. You're reflecting on the type of parent you want to be. You're deciding, "Hey, I don't want to yell at my kids." So why is it that when you're in the moment it's nearly impossible to not yell?

Well, I will tell you. The reason is because your lower brain has memorized patterns of thinking and feeling. It's also memorized past times when you've yelled and take that action, and it's worked. So your brain says, "Hey, we did this thing in the past. It worked really well. So we should just do it again." Even though your higher brain says, "No, no, no, no, no. That's not the type of parent we want to be."

It's really hard to overcome that. It has nothing to do with the type of kids that you have. It's not going to be harder or easier if you have more obedient or easier kids versus more challenging kids. It has to do with your mindset and your emotions and what's going on internally for you. It's also not because you are impatient.

So I'll coach a lot of you who say, "Well, I'm just a really impatient mom, or I'm just quick to overreact. I really think I'm sort of this angry mom." You may be a mom who experiences impatience and anger, but those are the feelings. That's not your identity. So you are not an angry mom. You're not an impatient mom. The reason that you yell is because your thoughts and your feelings mixed together create your action of yelling. So yelling is an action.

This is why when you look up and you read about how to stop yelling, and something that you read says to go take different actions. So it says leave the room, leave the environment. When you try to change your behavior by taking more action, so when you try to stop yelling by leaving the room, it may work momentarily, but it's sort of like putting an ace bandage or a sling on your arm that you injured without going to the doctor for the doctor to reset it. It's a temporary fix, but it doesn't solve the problem at the root cause.

The root cause is what you're thinking and feeling. What you're thinking and feeling that drives you to yell is a pattern that you are very practiced in.

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It could be from your childhood, and you had parents who yelled. It could be from any other environmental factors that you picked up on to create those highways. So you have highways of thoughts and feelings that your lower brain has memorized. It's like that drive to school. You don't really have to think about it, but if you move to a new neighborhood, you might have to GPS it and use your higher brain to get there.

But we love that our lower brain memorizes things like directions. Well, it also memorizes thoughts and feelings. So if you have memorized the thinking pattern that leads to you feeling angry or irritated or impatient or frustrated, then you will likely continue to take the action of yelling or snapping or overreacting.

So I was on Instagram. I asked you all what are the reasons why you yell at your kids. I want to read to you what the community said. I'm running late was a big one. You know, similarly, "I've asked them a million times to do something, and they don't do it, and we're in a rush to leave." Another one was, "I have to repeat myself over and over. They don't listen to me."

So all of these reasons are based on the external circumstances. They're not based on what's happening internally. I want you to really imagine that your circumstances stay the same. Meaning you're running late to get out the door, and you've asked your kids a million times to do something and they don't do it. Now, when you're out of the moment right now and I'm asking you that, how do you want to respond? Probably not by yelling.

Did you know that you can discipline and parent without getting upset? You can have consequences, if that's your parenting style. You can decide to take whatever action you want, but you don't have to have your internal well being affected. But it takes practice because of that lower brain, because of what you've memorized.

So if you are in the habit of feeling really stressed and worried and in that scarcity mode where you're activated, and that's what you're used to every single morning. And every single morning, you are asking your kids to do something and they're not doing it and you're practicing the same routine,

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your brain is practicing the response that you don't want to take. So the automatic response is the yelling.

You're always yelling because of how you are feeling. Because your thoughts create your feelings, and that's the internal work. That's the inner work that I teach you how to manage. Once you manage your inner mind and body, that takes care of the rest.

Let me give you an example. I love this example so much. I was talking about it on a Grow You call recently, and it really resonated with a lot of the members. Imagine that you have a child who starts coloring on the wall. Okay.

If you're in the habit of feeling overwhelmed and stressed and rushed, and you turn around and see that your child colored on the wall, what's your reaction going to be? You're probably going to snap or yell or have some sort of action that comes from that already feeling of stress, right? So it's not going to be an action that you would take from your highest self.

Now imagine that the same thing happens except five minutes before you turn around, you just received a \$10,000 tax refund. You're going to have a different reaction to the coloring that you turn around and see on the wall because you are at a better feeling place. So if you are feeling good and you're really happy because you got this \$10,000 tax refund back then how you act, even though you're not going to be thrilled about the coloring on the wall, will be a better action because it's coming from a better feeling.

So what you can do as you kind of start this work of noticing when you're reacting and yelling and feeling really triggered is to just start to notice what you're feeling right before you yell, and also what you're thinking. You can have this example in your mind of the coloring on the wall, and how differently you would react to the exact same facts of kid colors on the wall.

You would react very differently based on if you're feeling really stressed and overwhelmed trying to get out the door or if you just received news of

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an unexpected windfall of money. So your feeling state is what drives your actions.

Now, you're not going to be happy and say, "Hey, keep coloring on the wall. That's great." But you're probably not going to yell out of that frustration. Instead, it might be something like, "Okay, now we have to solve the problem of the coloring on the wall. Let's grab the crayons. Let's redirect." But your emotional state isn't affected by it.

That's the biggest thing to see here is that your circumstances, like the facts of your life, kid coloring or not listening to you, even after you've repeated yourself. You're running late. They're not listening. You find yourself trying to get your kids to do something they don't want to do. That is how kids behave, but you get to decide how you want to react and act knowing that they're going to continue to be this way.

So it's never the circumstance, the fact, that is causing you to feel a certain way. It just seems that way because it's happening so quickly because your lower brain has memorized the patterns of thinking and feeling that certain way.

Do you know anyone in your life who is just always happy, or on the flip side, who is always frustrated or always sort of feeling apathetic? We know these people, right. It's because they've memorized how to feel happy. They've memorized how to feel apathetic, or whatever their default emotion is. The same is true for you when you are yelling.

So I think it's useful to remind yourself that your five year old is going to act how a five year old is going to act, and you don't want her to be in charge of how you feel. The same is true with a 15 year old or really any other person. You don't want other people to be in charge of how you feel.

So kind of the first step to changing your actions, which is to stop yelling, is to get really curious. The reason that this is important is because it gets you out of shaming yourself and judging yourself and beating yourself up. It gets you into exploring what's going on internally. From that place of

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exploration, you can then practice getting out of those highways. This is the work that we do inside Grow You where you're practicing changing your thinking and feeling.

So it starts with curiosity, which is just I wonder. I wonder what's going on for me. I wonder what I'm thinking and feeling when we're trying to get out the door and she's not listening? I know that seems obvious to you maybe, but I want you to slow it down. Like what are you really thinking? Are you thinking she should be listening to me, right? Just notice that thought. She should be listening to me. How does that feel? Probably very tense or frustrating because she's not listening to you.

So noticing the thought, "She should be listening to me", and seeing how that thought isn't serving you. You can let go of the thought. You can come up with a different thought like, of course, she's not listening to me. She's five years old. I know she's not going to listen the next time and the next time, and we're going to work on it as a family. But for the time being as we're learning these lessons and as she's growing and evolving as am I, I'm going to take care of myself, which is my mind and my body. My thoughts and my feelings.

So as you do this work, you will see that your kids can be yelling and upset and not listening, and you can be late, and you don't have to yell. You don't have to overreact. You don't have to snap. Because you can calm yourself down. You can go through an entire morning of tantrums or kids not doing what they're supposed to do or whatever the case may be, and you can feel good.

I'm telling you. If you get this down, parenting and just life in general becomes so much easier because you know that you're responsible for how you're thinking and feeling. We don't need them to obey us in order to feel good. They're doing the best they can, and often that's having tantrums, not listening, not picking things up, not coming home on time, whatever it is that kids are doing. They're figuring it out for themselves.

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So what we can do for ourselves is decide on purpose from that higher brain, that prefrontal cortex, that adult brain, how do we want to think and feel when kids are doing XYZ? Right? If kids are bringing the tantrum to the interaction, what do I want to bring as the mom? Do I want to bring more anger and frustration and resistance? Or do I want to bring the calm? You probably want to bring the calm.

But again, this is something that you have to practice. So it's interesting. The more that I coach, the more that I see so many of you working on this, and what can happen is there's this kind of excitement at the realization that it's possible to change. But then in the process of changing there then is this disappointment and judgment that you're not getting it perfectly.

Remember, you have decades of memorizing the thinking and feeling that you've memorized. So you're trying to create new thinking and feeling patterns, which is 100% possible. It just takes longer than you think it's going to take. It's not going to feel as exciting as when you first learned that your thoughts create your feelings, and that you first learned that you can bring the calm and stay calm through whatever your kids are experiencing.

But if you do it, if you practice it, you can change. You can show up as the mom that you want to show up as. So its child is upset, and you get to think, "I'm their mom who is mature and loving and supportive. I can be calm and open. Nothing has gone wrong." That's an example of how you might think about it. You will probably need to practice this.

Again, this is the work that we do in Grow You. This is one example of how we do this work with how we're showing up, which is what it's always about. We think it's about getting our kids to be more well behaved, but really it's always about us being able to manage our minds and our bodies. Because if I could teach you how to control all of the people in your life, I 100% would do that. We wouldn't need any of this inner work. But that's not how it is.

The same is true for anyone else in your life. So if you have a spouse and you find yourself snapping at your spouse, the same thing is true. It's not

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because of what they're doing. It's because of what you are thinking and feeling. You get to decide if that's how you want to continue to think and feel. Most often the answer is no.

From there, it's okay, now what? Now it's let's go to curiosity. Let's see what I'm thinking and feeling so we can find the actual thought and the actual feeling. Then let's let go of that. Let's poke holes in it. Let's see how it's not the truth. Right? When I think the thought “she should listen to me”, it seems like such a good mom thought, right? Well, it probably feels terrible when she's not listening to you.

So what I go to is oh, yeah. Sometimes she should listen, and sometimes she shouldn't listen because that's what it means to be a kid. Sometimes they listen, sometimes they don't. Of course. So how do I want to show up in the moments when the kids are not listening, when they're not following the rules? What kind of mom do I want to be? Right? Frustration, anger, yelling, snapping not required.

Just know that as you practice this and you create those new neural pathways, those new highways of calm, it's not linear. There are ups and downs, and you'll find yourself reacting and snapping and yelling again even though you know this work now. That's okay. It just means that there's an opportunity for you to keep practicing it because you have a brain that's really practiced in the old way.

So I just don't want you to beat yourself up over it. I want you to take this as the best news ever. That you can change if you want to. If you really want to get a handle on it, come join us in Grow You. All right, my friends. Have an amazing rest of the week. I will talk with you next week. Bye.

If you loved this podcast, I invite you to check out Grow You, my mindfulness community for moms where we do the inner work together. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching to learn more.