

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Give the Gift of PAUSE



BY KIM DEMARCHI

Here's a scenario you've likely experienced: You're trying to thumb-type an email on your mobile, but your child is constantly grabbing your shirt, trying to get your attention. You try ignoring the behavior (which doesn't work), and then, you REACT: "Stop! Just a minute!! Can't you see I'm busy?!"

How are you feeling now? How does your child feel now? Odds are that neither of you is feeling very good.

Big reactions rarely get us what we want. That's why one of the best parenting tools I've ever learned is called the Power of PAUSE.

Try it: Whether your child is not listening, whining, dawdling, spilling something or drawing on the walls, if you begin to feel a negative reaction begin to surface, just pause. Literally don't say a word. Instead, you can close your eyes, count to 10, breathe, walk into another room, anything you need to do to first calm yourself. Your goal is to reset your emotions, so that you can respond to

the situation, instead of reacting.

Now, instead of Stimulus (irritation) = Reaction, it is Stimulus (irritation) + PAUSE = Ability to respond.

That sounds much easier than it is. Growing up, I wasn't ever aware that there was such thing as a pause: Our house was a volatile environment, where every irritation was accompanied by arguing, crying, loud voices, quick tempers, high emotions or consequences. When I learned about the power of pause, in a parenting course I signed up for when my twins were 18 months old, it was a revelation. But it took a lot of practice before it became a habit.

During my moments of PAUSE (and yes, I still have plenty of them), I first ask myself, "What is my real intention here?" It certainly isn't to hurt, intimidate, humiliate, punish, or control, etc. It is, however, usually to teach something to my children or to communicate with them effectively or to be helpful in some way. Pause does not squelch the feelings of irritation (we are all human after all), but helps us respond to those feelings in a productive way.



Choosing to Pause will make you feel more peaceful and less stressed, and your child will be happier and more cooperative, too. The icing on the cake is that you are modeling positive behavior for your children. Pause teaches patience, self discipline, emotional intelligence, and positive social interactions. Next time, when their initial instinct is to have that big reaction to something their sibling, friend, teacher, parent, coach, colleague, or boss did, they will have been given the gift of the PAUSE. Which is a gift they'll have for life.

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