



HOW PARENTS CAN HAVE A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

Every mother knows what it is like, your youngest is stomping her feet, giving you a defiant glare and not budging, refusing to put her shoes on, and you have this important meeting to go to. Another time her slightly older brother is in the frozen food section of the supermarket throwing a hissy fit and the floor is covered with bags of frozen peas. You feel annoyed, very annoyed, your blood is boiling up, then you feel guilty, you should not be feeling this way, after all, they are only little kids. Young children's behaviour can be very frustrating for the mother (and let's not forget the father), but it can leave them feeling bad about themselves.

Are the children bad? Probably not. Is the mother (who usually takes most of the responsibility for looking after the children) bad? No, probably not, but it is how we often perceive ourselves. Kevin Ryan, a Life Coach and NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) practitioner has come across many mothers with limiting beliefs about themselves. *'These feelings are common for all mothers with young children. Parenthood can sometimes be a lonely place, with no one to turn to. Mothers should understand that there is nothing wrong with such feelings, all parents have them. I worked with a young mother a while ago who had feelings of guilt about getting annoyed and telling her child off, yet she was one of the most peaceful mothers I knew. A large number of parents believe they are worse than they really are and that is where guilt comes in.'*

'Children themselves are not bad or naughty, it is a label we give their actions,' says Isabel Condeco, a qualified early years specialist and assistant manager at Teddies Nurseries. 'Remember, naughty is how we see them, not what they are. If you explain to them and involve them in your plans, children can feel that they are contributing and being helpful. For example: when you go to the supermarket explain why you are going and how your child can help you. All it involves is a little planning ahead.'

'Children,' adds Kevin, 'are past masters at pushing all the wrong buttons. That's their job and they do it very well, but it is how you react to them that is important.' He suggests a few simple exercises that could help if you find yourself getting worked up. *'They're very easy to do but they can change your beliefs about yourself,'* he says.

Imagine a scale from one to 10, one is when you are at your most calm and relaxed and 10 is when you find your little one has just smeared her breakfast all over your best clothes. When your children are being naughty and you are getting frustrated with them, where do

WEB: WWW.MOVINGONCOACHING.CO.UK

PHONE: 020 8400 9045

E-MAIL: MOVING-ON@BLUEYONDER.CO.UK

you fall on that scale? What score did you give yourself? Now imagine your friend has just walked through the door, what do they see? Imagine looking through their eyes. You can see yourself and your child, you are now viewing it from the outside. If you were your friend, what score would you give yourself on the scale of one to 10? It is probably less, things are not as bad when seen from another point of view and you are never as bad as you believe yourself to be. Ask yourself, 'What is my attitude now?'

There is another useful technique that can stop you from boiling over. It is called the Circle of Relaxation and is the mental equivalent of going downstairs and making yourself a soothing cup of tea when your child is upstairs throwing their clothes all over the room.

You need to be calm and relaxed to do this exercise, so find a comfortable chair and then ask yourself, '*What state of calmness do I wish to hold there?*' Think of a time when you really felt relaxed and calm.

The next step is to imagine a circle or another shape in front of you. Can you see it, what does it look like? Can you hear it, what does it sound like? Can you feel it, what does it feel like? Now hold that image in front of you.

Go back to that feeling of deep calm that you conjured up earlier and put it into the circle in front of you. In your mind's eye see the ring with the feeling of calm within it. Now mentally (or physically) step into the ring and let the feeling of calmness wash over you. Stay within this mental space until you feel deeply and utterly relaxed.

Now step out of it, you should be feeling much calmer. Hold that image of calmness in your mind and step into it whenever you need to. You can also add to this Circle of Relaxation when you have a moment or memory of feeling very calm, and just drop it into the circle. Practice using this technique so it is always there when you need it. You could write a note to yourself and stick it on the fringe to remind you it is there.

Next time there is trouble upstairs, instead of letting your emotions rush over you, just step back and step into the Circle of Relaxation. Techniques like these give you a choice of actions. You can ask yourself 'Do I now allow myself to get frustrated and annoyed, or can I step back?'

'You now have the power of choice,' says Kevin. *'Your child does not make you feel annoyed and frustrated, only you can make yourself feel those feelings. So if you can change those feelings, you can alter the relationship with your child at that moment. You can be mentally down in the kitchen having a relaxing cup of tea, letting your negative feelings flow somewhere else.'*

'It will make you feel better about yourself,' he says, *'and that changes everything. The situation does not change, but your attitude towards it does.'*