Stop Reacting and Start Responding

Imagine...
• Correcting an issue with your child without reacting
• Your child listening without arguing
• Finding solutions in minutes.

Stop Reacting and Start Responding
Allows Kids to be Kids and Parents to Remain in Authority
When parents are stressed, their minds become flooded with emotions and they react. When parents respond, their minds remain clear enough to activate the learning needed for the situation.

Inside You’ll Find
• Immediate, transformative examples to help you switch from reacting to responding
• Short, clear solution-oriented tips so the new ideas can take place in minutes
• Sample conversations for children ages 1-10 to guide you

Praise for Stop Reacting and Start Responding
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—Michele Borba, Ed.D., author of The Big Book of Parenting Solutions: 101 Answers to Your Everyday Challenges and Wildest Worries

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Sharon Silver, Parent Educator

108 Ways to Discipline Consciously and Become the Parent You Want to Be

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Sharon Silver

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REVISED EDITION:
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108 Ways to Discipline Consciously and Become the Parent You Want to Be

Sharon Silver, Parent Educator
1. Battle of Wills ~ How It Begins

A battle of wills, normal as it is, is one of the hardest things a parent and child will deal with. Most parents believe that the battle is the child’s fault. When I look at a battle of wills, I see two sides, each one valid, yet destined to collide with the other. Let me explain.

Suppose you find a tip you want to try. It resonates with you because it’s gentle and firm at the same time. Halfway through using the new technique your child’s behavior seems to be getting worse. You wonder what could be making her react, especially since the method is calmer and more peaceful than the yelling she’s used to. You begin to wonder if the method is failing, and think about giving up.

The reason your child is reacting is because she wants the “old normal” to prevail. You know, the way it was yesterday and the day before, even though the old way involved yelling and punishing. To her, the old normal was familiar. The parent, on the other hand, is reaching for the “new normal,” the way he or she wants things to be from now on. Those two opposing points of view collide, creating the battle of wills.

The reason your child feels so uncomfortable is because you’re so calm. When parents yell, children tend to retreat emotionally in order to withstand the yelling. The yelling prevents your child from feeling how firm you really are because she’s busy protecting herself from the intensity of it. When you remove the yelling, your firmness takes center stage, and that’s powerful. Feeling your authority and the unmovable boundary causes her to feel unsettled and throw everything she has into a battle of wills hoping to make things return to what she perceives as normal.

After all of that, who wouldn’t wonder if the method is failing? The truth is the method is not failing; parent and child
are in the middle of the process. I call the middle of the process the *danger zone*. It’s the place just before change occurs, the place when a parent wants to give up.

You have to push past the feeling of wanting to give up or you’ll have to begin the method again at another time and endure the entire battle of wills all over again. You need to hang in there and remain calm so you can show your child that this is the way things are going to be from now on. If you lose your temper, or things get really out of hand, then stop, re-read the tip and begin again.

You can be supportive, too. Tell her you know she doesn’t like the new rule, but this is the way it’s going to be. Invite her to sit on your lap or give her a hug, if she’ll allow you to. Doing that helps her feel safe enough to make the shift to the new way of doing things.

So the next time you find yourself knee deep in a battle of wills and you want to give up because you think the method has failed, know that you’re in the *danger zone*, the middle of the process, and hang in there just a little while longer in order to create change.

**Quick View**

- Children create a battle of wills to try and get the “old normal” to return.
- Parents participate in the battle to push for the “new normal” to begin.
- This battle represents the middle of the process, the *danger zone*.
- Push past the feeling of wanting to give up to show a child that this is the way things will be from now on.
22. Control ~ A Yoga Ball Lesson

This tip deals with the control needed to manage unex-pressed feelings, both negative and positive, versus releasing feelings as they arise. You’ll need your imagination for this one. We’ve all seen the large yoga balls that people sit on. Imagine that you put one of those yoga balls into a swim-mining pool.

Think of what happens when you push down hard on a yoga ball and try to keep it still in the water. Not only will you have to use a great deal of pressure to keep the ball steady, but if there’s any movement in the water, the ball will most likely skirt out from under you because of the pressure you’re using to try to control it.

However, if you place one finger lightly on the yoga ball, and there’s movement in the water, you can easily remain in contact with the ball, making it much easier to control.

The yoga ball in this analogy represents your feelings, and the water represents life. The yoga ball shows you that it takes a lot of energy, control and pressure to stuff your feelings, and much less energy to deal with and release your feelings when issues come up.

Unexpressed feelings can easily cause you to become over-whelmed and overreact when your child misbehaves or life throws you a curve ball. But if you release feelings as they surface, you’ll find you can remain calmer. That’s because you don’t have a backlog of feelings that come pouring out all at once, which is one thing that can cause a forceful reaction.

Why do I bring this up? Because I know all parents want their children to have an easier time in life than they had. I believe that once you experience the difference between
keeping your feelings all tucked away, and releasing them when they surface, you may want to rethink how you address the expression of feelings with your child.

If you’re a parent who says, “Stop crying right now!” or “Suck it up and stop being a baby!” or “Babies cry, big girls don’t!” you need to be aware that those are the comments that teach a child to stuff, swallow, hold onto or ignore feelings.

If you use the methods in this book to release your feelings, you’ll be modeling how to do it in front of your child. She’ll grow up with a habit of releasing feelings that will last a lifetime.

**Quick View**

- All unexpressed feelings, negative and positive, can easily cause you to become overwhelmed and possibly react.
- You’ll find you can remain calmer, if you release your feelings when they surface.
- Changing how you address your feelings models, for your child, *how* to do it and gives her a better chance at growing up knowing how to release her feelings too.
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