

## Break the Cycle

Most of the hangs up we have as adults can be traced back to the programming we received as children. We learnt from everything and everyone around us, both through our direct experiences and by observation of the interactions between others. Judgements and beliefs were presented to us as facts by parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and teachers and we unquestioningly accepted them because we didn't have the skills to question them. We established our sense of self-worth based on how others treated us and our personality traits developed to reflect this. Our perceptions and expectations of the world were formed.

Understanding that these issues were deeply embedded into your subconscious as a child is not an excuse to blame your past for your failings today or to hold resentment against those who have hurt you. Your parents, grandparents etc. did not consciously act to cause you damage but merely continued a cycle of unconscious behaviour based on their own experiences. You have a choice to allow this conditioning to continue to define you or to increase your self-awareness, recognise these unconscious influences and release them. Perhaps even more importantly you have a choice whether to repeat this cycle with your children or take responsibility for breaking it.

Many of us will have experienced from both sides the misbehaving child who is labelled as a bad child rather than the behaviour being labelled as bad. From the adult perspective it's easy enough to do: a fed up and frustrated adult reacts to bad behaviour without thinking, "*Stop that right now you bad boy/girl*". It probably happened to you on more than one occasion when you were a child which is likely part of the reason you do it now – it is a learned behaviour. But you have a choice; you don't have to continue the cycle. You can save your children from developing the kinds of issues that you have had to face by being more conscious in your dealings with them. That doesn't mean you should never tell them off - an important part of your role as a parent is to teach your children boundaries and discipline - but it does mean being more conscious of the boundaries you are setting and being more conscious in the way you manage those boundaries.

When you find yourself becoming angry or frustrated with your child for something he or she is doing (or not doing) recognise that feeling and ask yourself where it is coming from. What is the emotional trigger in your subconscious that this behaviour is eliciting a response from? Is what they are doing really bad or is it just annoying you? Is your reaction being driven by your own conditioning - are you angry with your child because they are doing something you were told off for when you were young?

If possible remove yourself from the situation to give yourself time and space to reflect on what you are feeling. If that is not possible at the time then make an opportunity to do it later. Don't judge yourself for what you are feeling, just be still and let yourself experience the feelings. Don't engage your mind to actively think about the situation; just observe what you are feeling. Over time through this process you will gain insights into the experiences or beliefs that underlie these feelings which will help you to manage and release them.

If the behaviour really is an unacceptable one that needs to be addressed then ensure that it is the behaviour that is criticised, not the child. Don't react out of frustration or anxiety. Ensure that you are feeling and projecting love and compassion for the child as you explain to them why the behaviour is unacceptable.

Remember that you won't get it right all the time. That is OK; that is human. What matters is that you are trying and always seeking to improve. It is never too late to start. If you are just beginning your journey of self-discovery when your children are already school age or even young adults you can still positively impact their self-images by changing your behaviour now. If you do slip up and react in anger to your child have the courage to apologise to them and talk to them about it later when everyone has calmed down. You can never change the past but you can always make better choices now to positively impact the future.

There are two great opportunities that we have to change the world. The first, and our primary responsibility, is to change ourselves. But the second powerful opportunity we have is to raise the next generation more consciously. To use our increased self-awareness to break the cycle and give them a better start in life. To raise a generation of highly conscious individuals who have healthy self-images and respect for themselves and others. This is what the world is waiting for.

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