



# Helping Parents Feel Empowered

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Adapted from: Parenting a Child who has Intense Emotions by Pat Harvey & Jeannine Penzo

## ***Your child is doing the best they can in this moment***

In this particular moment in time, your child is doing the best they can. There may have been times in the past where your child was able to manage better and there will be times in the future when your child will do better. Now, in this moment, they are doing their best. This assumption helps you feel less angry, less disappointed, and less frustrated with your child. In turn, your child is less angry, less frustrated, and more able to hear what you say.

## ***Your child needs to do better***

This needs to be partnered with the above in order to have any benefit. Accepting your child has to make changes does not mean that they are bad or a troublemaker. They are not to blame for what has occurred in the past. If your child does not feel blamed or judged, they will be more willing to accept feedback and guidance. Balance the ideas of accepting your child in this moment with helping him to do things better in the future.

## ***Your child wants to do better***

No child likes to constantly be at odds with their parents. The intense behaviors you see are ways your child has learned to manage their feelings. It does not mean they like behaving this way – only that this is the most effective way they know how to manage their feelings. Change may be difficult but given the opportunity, they would want things to be different.

## ***Family members should not assume the worst***

Family members should take things in a well-meaning way and not assume the worst. Negative assumptions (your child is acting out to get your attention, they believe you are mean) often cause unnecessary anger, disappointment, and confusion within the family.

The intent of a behavior (which is often unknown) is often confused with the impact of the behavior (which is experienced by others).

## ***There is no absolute truth***

Calmly agreeing to disagree can prevent fights, arguments, and parent-child power struggles. Your child tells you “you never let me do anything fun”. You now have a choice – you can dispute what your child said and argue about whose truth is right or you can choose not to respond. As a parent, you are the one who will be able to understand that there can be more than one truth. This is why it is important to remember that your child has their own point of view that feels very real to them. It takes two to engage in a power struggle. You can walk away without feeling like you are giving in. You can enforce limits without arguing about them. Your child does not have to agree that you are right, nor do you have to prove he is wrong.

## ***It's not essential that you can have absolute control of your child. No parent does.***

Choose your battles so you can have a more positive relationship with him and over time this will enable you to make behavior changes. Self-care is essential: you cannot take care of your child and remain calm in their chaos if you do not take care of yourself. Just as you don't expect perfection from your child, don't expect it from yourself. Be realistic about what you can do and what you can't. Forgive yourself.

## ***You are doing the best you can in this moment***