

# How to INSPIRE your *best self* when you're with your Children

*By Lana Hall from Lana Hall Psychology*

No matter how many times we catch our child being sweet and can't believe how lucky we are to be a parent, there's going to be those times when it's impossible to keep from feeling frustrated: when you're late – again, when there's crayon all over the coffee table – again, when they hit their sister – again. If you let that frustration overwhelm you, you know the result: you end up feeling guilty and perhaps even wondering if you're a good enough parent. So how can you avoid becoming overwhelmed by negative feelings and thoughts?



Try out this simple but powerful idea: rather than seeing the situation through your own eyes, try adopting the mantra 'what would their teacher do in this situation?'

It might sound counter-intuitive: How can I be my best self by modelling someone else? Besides, child carers and teachers don't love our kids like we do, do they? But sometimes, that sense of distance from your child is just what you need to keep a clear head and to stop you from acting on big feelings in a way you may regret later.

So how do you do this?

## ***1. Realise you're helping, not responsible***

Your child's carer has the freedom of knowing this is just their job, not their life. Knowing this takes the pressure off, which actually makes it easier to be patient and respond effectively as you're less invested in the outcome of the situation.

As difficult as it is to fully embrace, how your child turns out is not solely up to you! A whole range of factors such as their genes, their other parent and their siblings, who they go to school with and their temperament all influence who they become. When you remember this, it's easier to relax. Parenting is a job you share, however temporarily, with every other person and experience your child comes into contact with. You do not have to feel fully responsible for managing who they become.

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## ***2. Decide you're teaching, not parenting***

When you view a situation from the role of teacher, then you're assuming a child is ignorant. When they do something wrong, you look for the rule about the world you need to teach them, rather than taking the behaviour to mean something about who they are as people, or about who you are as a parent.

As parents, we tend to over identify with our situation. We forget that when a child says 'I hate you' they don't really mean it. We take it to heart, and we react emotionally, rather than from our best self - which knows that of course our child doesn't hate us! Adopting the role of teacher, it's easier to remember we need to offer guidance and say something like 'I think you meant to say you hate this situation,' than to get emotionally attached and storm away to nurse hurt feelings.



### 3. *Be more confident in sticking to your values*

Childcare centres and schools have 'policies'. They ban nuts. They have rules for their staff around washing hands, boundaries around pick up times, and prohibitions against yelling. The staff stick to these rules because they help everything to run smoothly and to keep everyone involved safe (and sane).

When I'm around relatives or friends with different values from mine, there can be real pressure to bend my values for the sake of being polite or social. But you don't see teachers or carers doing this. They have boundaries and don't apologise for them, because they know they're in place to protect both their workers and the children. Embrace your inner teacher and say 'no' when either your child or your friends ask you to do something which goes against your values as a parent. After all, you're just enforcing your family 'policy' (while avoiding future guilt and frustration towards yourself).

### 4. *Know you're being watched*

No matter how tired a teacher gets, they know they can't lose their cool with their charges. Imagine you were being watched like this with your own children all the time. If you're anything like me, you're able to find reserves of patience and self-control where you thought there was none if you feel like someone is going to hold you accountable for your behaviour.

The fact is, our children are the ones who are always watching – and learning from what they see. They learn far more from what we do than what we tell them. They watch you to learn what you really think the best to act is. Keep this in mind by imagining there is a boss watching you can help you to express yourself in the best way possible when faced with a tough situation.

#### *A final tip*

While the above ideas and perspectives can help us to be our best selves, it's important to acknowledge that our best selves are not perfect selves. It's just as important to teach our children how to admit they're wrong and how to name and handle negative emotions as it is to teach them the positive stuff. If you always appear perfect and in control, then your children learn it's not okay to be human, and feel bad when they inevitably are. Use the above tips to improve your parenting, but keep in mind that stuff ups are inevitable, and happen to every parent.

Remember: you're human and you need to take care of you too! Make sure you're kind to yourself if you get overwhelmed. Give yourself a (tea) break and allow yourself to switch off from thinking about parenting when you're not being a parent to encourage the kind of self-care and rejuvenation that's also critical to helping you to be your best self with your children.



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Lana works as a Psychologist and coach in Australia. Her focus is the importance of knowing and living by your values as the key factor to success and mental and emotional well-being. She offers an online course in finding, living and enjoying a valued life as well as individual consultations. Lana

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