

CENTER ON FATHERING

Fathering is For Life

1675 Garden of the Gods
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
Phone: 719-634-7797
Email: DHSCenteronFathering@elpasoco.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fatheringisforlife/>
<https://humanservices.elpasoco.com/center-on-fathering/>



Center on Fathering Monthly Newsletter---

What to Do After You Lose It by Sheena Hill of Parenting Works



It's 4:30 in the afternoon; so far, today had been a success. The weather was finally nice enough for you to spend most of the morning playing and laughing in the yard together. Both kids napped for over an hour and dinner is waiting in the crockpot. But a meltdown is looming, and your child is not its host. Now, your 2-year-old is desperately pulling at your clothing as you sit down to feed your baby. The toddler scales your right side, narrowly missing the baby's head with a stray kick. You attempt to coax her down, but she insists on climbing all over you. Beyond touched out, you scream, "Get off me," immediately regretting it as your sleeping baby startles in your arms and your

toddler sulks away in tears. I've been there; I've lost my cool and reacted in ways that hurt my family. Being touched out is definitely my biggest trigger, but sometimes the toughest part of being pushed to my limit is managing my instant regret and guilt. Intellectually, I know that my goal should be to focus on the children's feelings and our relationship, but in the moment, it can be really hard to get past my own strong emotions.

Although we're not proud of it, there are times when we snap and simply lose it—spanking, shaming, or yelling at our kids—acting in ways that divide instead of connecting us. These moments often occur when we are tired, stressed, or overwhelmed. When I teach emotional intelligence, I remind parents that children experience big emotions in small bodies, often leading to eruptions when the emotions get to be too much to handle. Adults are not exempt from these tantrums. Because they are incited by our intense emotions, knowledge of their potential harm alone fails to help us secure consistent emotional self-control. That's one reason why these mistakes can be so distressing for those of us who strive to be the best parents we can be—the kind of parents our kids deserve. Losing it can feel like a failure and leave us scrambling to recover our relationships with our children. Though we may understand the many reasons we make mistakes, knowing how to actually bounce back from the guilt and stress they cause us can remain allusive.

Viewing mistakes as opportunities is the first step in getting beyond the guilt that results from losing it. Instead of letting our emotions keep us from connecting, we can remember that mistakes provide real opportunities for closeness. Addressing them offers us the chance to be honest and authentic with our children, modeling appropriate reactions to imperfection. Treating ourselves with kindness in the face of mistakes reinforces our capacity for unconditional love and growth (teaching our kids they don't have to be perfect to be worthy of our love, either). Do-overs cultivate an environment which allows for mistakes. So, offer second chances (and third and fourth chances) to your kids as well as yourself. When you lose it, acknowledge it, shake it off and move on.

However, gaining a healthy perspective on mistakes is about more than simply valuing them. It also requires us to consider getting back to normal as an essential part of healing because it allows us to have the energy to try again, learn key lessons and make progress. Daniel Siegel has been quoted as saying, "To continually chastise ourselves for our "errors" with our children keeps us involved in our own emotional issues and out of relationship with our children." In other words, losing it is disconnecting enough, you don't want to exacerbate that disconnection by failing to go back to normal. If we get caught up in our own emotions about losing it, we miss out on the family time which is affords us positive interactions.

Aside from feeling guilty or hoping it magically won't happen again, what can we do to get past those unfortunate moments when our own emotions and stressors disrupt our vision and hard work as a parent? Should we act awkward after we lose it or pretend it didn't happen? Should we distance ourselves and wait for the child to reach out to us? Should we be extra snuggly and

overcompensate for our lack of self-control? The answer, like all things parenting, is to find the balance between the two extremes by focusing on recovery through connection.

Recovering from lashing out is not just about making it up to our kids. It is about modeling self-discipline and resiliency. We don't to be weird and uncomfortable, but we don't to be fake either. When we lose it, the best thing for everyone is to try to recognize and repair the rift through reconnection. Our objective is to focus on our children, helping them manage their own emotions and needs while we care for our own needs. Because this is quite a balancing act, repairing our relationships and connecting with our children is the most effective way for us to reset ourselves and get past our own big emotions. Without a reset, our day could be ruined, leaving everyone in a funk and minimizing the chance for reconnection later. It paves the way for us to have continue to have smooth interactions for the rest of the day and be open to connection the following day.

To reconnect after a physical or emotional outburst: recognize your mistake and your triggers, reconcile with your children, and work to resolve the situation. These steps are rooted in open communication; to be effectively reparative, resolutions often include an apology and discussion. Reconciliations build intimacy and lay the foundational work of moving on. Though the key element involves finding resolutions. Though your emphasis should be on taking responsibility, discussion should consist of problem-solving with your child—offering choices and asking questions. This will help them gain understanding of your perspective and communicates respect; reinforcing that their voice is considered in the resolution. Problem-solving signifies our commitment to the relationship and marks progress by confirming our willingness to change. One crucial way to plan for future triggers is to repair ourselves in order to proactively prevent and minimize imminent cases. Since the ultimate goal of reconnection is relationship recovery, push past the guilt and focus on doing what you can to reboot yourself, so that things can go back to normal.

Trust me, I know this is no small feat! It is a process which requires practice, patience and time. But, with consistency, there are clear ways we can benefit from a healthy perspective on mistakes and seamlessly get back to normal after we lose it. While this list may not be exclusive, starting here will get us moving in the right direction:

Empathize, Prioritize, Connect, Move On

Empathize: First, focus on having empathy for yourself for being human, having emotions and making a mistake. Our goal as parents is to make progress, to be the parents we strive to be and to be the parents our kids deserve. This is not an overnight process. It is a role that you learn on the job every day. So, forgive yourself. I know that is easier said than done but the best way to be able to unconditionally love your children is to love yourself unconditionally. Then, try to see things from your child's perspective so that you can have empathy for the behavior or situation that pushed you over the edge. Remember that it is more likely that your own stress and big emotions caused you to lose it, not the actions of others.

Prioritize: What is your child communicating with you? How they are expressing themselves conveys many things. Start with your basic things: are they hungry, tired, over stimulated, or

bored? If all these things are addressed, think about their emotional state. What are you trying to communicate, convey or teach in this moment? What are you hoping your child will gain or change? By thinking about your priorities, you can reshape your perception of the situation and focus on your child instead of your mistake.

Connect: Go to your child, get on their level and make eye contact. Communicate your feelings and needs while encouraging them to discuss theirs. If both parties are comfortable, hug and re-connect through play and affection. At the very least, just sit quietly together until you are ready to talk or play. Simply being physically and emotionally present is an immeasurable aspect of maintaining relationships.

Move On: it is crucial to repair your relationship after you lose it with your child—to be honest and authentic about your feelings and what you learned from the experience. But it is also important not to dwell on the incident. We all make mistakes. But you can't waste time and energy holding onto them because you can't feel bad about something you've done, and simultaneously feel good enough to work hard to do better in the future. Once you can identify what triggered you, what your goals are and what you can do instead of losing it next time, move on and get back to enjoying your life with your children.

I find that cooking for my family helps maintain connection, even when I am angry or resistant to being connected. It allows me to care for them even if I'm not emotionally available. Some other important ways to connect after a mistake and reset your body and emotions: hug, get outside, dance or move around, shake or do sensory activities. Honestly, I can't feel disconnected when I'm reading aloud to my child. If you're going use this reconnection technique, try books which are fun to read aloud, like Dr. Seuss, or poetry, like Jack Prelutsky or Shel Silverstein. Alternatively, you can listen to your child read to you. These things will help you refocus on what matters to you and the good things about your relationship with your children. They help you "fall in love again" with your child and help your child feel the love from you so you can all recover.

While addressing the rift is crucial, the importance of moving on afterwards cannot be overstated. The only way we can move on is by repairing the situation—by working to be honest and share our feelings while allowing our children to share theirs. You can further mend your relationship by using affectionate touch (if both parties are comfortable). So don't hesitate to discuss and find solutions, but there is no need to go overboard. With time, each of us will grow more skilled at responding to emotional stressors, rather than reacting to them. Responding allows us to show restraint before we lose it but getting there is certainly a journey. Remember to get support and be realistic. While I never condone spanking and know there are always alternatives to physical punishment, I understand that some parents may still yell on occasion. In this way, we may not completely free ourselves from verbally losing it again. But we can greatly reduce the number and intensity of occurrences, mitigating the damage it causes to our relationships with your children.

MONTHLY ACTIVITIES (free)



STEAM Take & Make: Rainbow Gravity Spinner-Friday, March 10, 2023, all day. Explore Newton's 3rd Law of Motion by creating a spinner and letting it fly! For ages 5-12. Multiple Pikes Peak Library District locations. For more info go to: <https://ppld.org>



Museum Free Days-Museum Free Days are offered the second Saturday and third Friday of each month. The goal of Museum Free Days is to provide access to the FAC's general admission offerings to the widest possible audiences in the Pikes Peak region. Museum Free Days, as a part of the FAC's other free and reduced-fee programs (such as scholarship programs at Bemis, and special military discounts through the Blue Star Theatres and Blue Star Museums programs), make an important impact in our community. For more info go to: <https://fac.coloradocollege.edu/>



Lowes Cardinal Garden Ornament Workshop-March 18, 10:00 am. Gather your little builders to spread their DIY wings and craft a Cardinal Garden Ornament. Kids will learn basic building skills as they follow the steps to create a unique item for the garden. Bring your mini-DIYer into Lowe's at one of the select time slots. Workshops hosted by one our Red Vest experts are held from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm, in-store only. We look forward to building with you and your little ones! Don't forget – if you cannot attend during your selected timeslot, your kit may be given away to Walk-Ins starting at 1:00 pm, the day of the workshop. Go here to register: <https://www.lowes.com/events/register/cardinal-garden-ornament-workshop>

WHAT'S NEW?

Looking for Dads and Kids Who Want to Garden

The Center is going to purchase a nice 20' X 20' plot through the Bear Creek Garden Association. We are always looking for more dads who want to garden with their kids. Call Gary at (719) 649-5825 if interested.

Legacy Project Event Ideas Wanted

To develop relationships between fathers, the Center is connecting dads in free social activities to meet and participate in with their children. We plan to host regular events and we need your help! We value your input! What specific events would you like to see us host? Please respond by email to me: garygrambort@elpasoco.com

Center on Fathering Facebook Page



You can find us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/fatheringisforlife/> Stop by and check us out!

The Center on Fathering Bumper Stickers



Have you seen this bumper sticker around town? We have received calls from people all over the country who have seen it and we do our best to connect people in other

counties and states with resources in their area. Would you like to have one for yourself or know somebody who would? Give us a call at 719-634-7797 and we can make arrangements for you to grab one (or two). While you're on the phone, ask about our wide range of services for fathers.

DAD'S TIPS

7 Ways to Recover from Your Parenting Mistakes from All Pro Dad, 2013

Have you made some mistakes with your kids that still bother you to this day? Maybe you've said or done something that hurt your kids, your kids' mother, or damaged your relationship. You are not alone. As dads, as people, we all make mistakes. And sometimes we allow those mistakes to hold us hostage or kill the growth of our relationships. They don't have to. But what can you do? Move forward. Try these 7 ways to recover from your parenting mistakes:

- 1. Recognize it.** The first way is an obvious one. We have to recognize our mistakes. I joke with my kids and say, "Dads know everything," when honestly dads have a lot to learn. And because of this, we make mistakes. We can't move forward until we acknowledge this.
- 2. Determine why.** Once we recognize our mistakes, we must search ourselves and find out why we did what we did. This will help us to not repeat it in the future.
- 3. Apologize for it.** One of the biggest things we can do for our kids is to apologize and ask for forgiveness when we mess up. That will teach them to do the same and show them true humility.
- 4. Discuss it.** Once we apologize, we don't just move on. Now is the time to have a talk. Find out how it affected your kids, your wife, or your child's mother, and openly and honestly share your feelings. Be quick to listen to their responses.
- 5. Learn from it.** One of the greatest benefits of making mistakes is the opportunity to learn and grow from them. This provides a great learning opportunity for you as well as a teaching opportunity for your kids.
- 6. Take action.** Put the lesson you learned from your mistake into action. What will you do if faced with this situation again? Is there something that needs to be done now, above an apology, to fix or reconcile the situation or relationship? Give some thought to this question so you can be better prepared and not make this mistake again. If appropriate, ask your wife or kids to hold you accountable and point out if you start to repeat the same mistake again.
- 7. Move on.** Now it is time to move on. Don't let the guilt of your mistake hold you hostage. Don't replay it in your mind or bring it up at later dates in a negative way. Move on and do better the next time.