

Identifying Your Triggers

Understanding what sets off your frustration is a key part of handling those tough parenting moments before they escalate. Whether it's a chaotic morning, a tantrum, or just feeling stretched too thin, frustration can sneak up on you, making it harder to stay calm and patient with your kids. These triggers might come from the outside—like a stressful day or a disagreement with your child—or from inside, such as feeling overwhelmed, tired, or guilty.

By noticing when your frustration starts to build—paying attention to the thoughts, emotions, and physical signs that come with it—you can catch yourself before things spiral. This gives you the chance to manage your reactions in a healthier way, which helps you stay more grounded and respond to your kids with the calm and patience they need, even when parenting feels overwhelming.

PART 1: Identify Triggers

List a situation where you find yourself becoming frustrated at your child and describe the related physical sensations, thoughts, and emotions. (Example page.)

Situation Description	Location	People Involved
<i>Example: Sammy refuses to do his homework despite multiple reminders.</i>	Home	Myself and Sammy

Before

1 What were you feeling physically?

Tension in my chest, clenched jaw, tightness in my stomach.

2 What were you thinking about?

- "Why doesn't Sammy ever listen to me?"
- "I've asked him so many times, and he still not doing it!"

3 How did you feel emotionally?

Frustration, impatience, feeling overwhelmed and powerless.

After

1 What were you feeling physically?

My head is pounding, shoulders feel tense, and there's a knot in my stomach.

2 What thoughts did you have?

- "I shouldn't have yelled; I'm a terrible parent."
- "I keep messing this up; Sammy is going to hate me."

3 How did you feel emotionally?

I feel guilt, regret, and sadness for losing my temper.



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Situation Description	Location	People Involved
Before		After
1 What were you feeling physically?	1 What were you feeling physically?	
2 What were you thinking about?	2 What thoughts did you have?	
3 How did you feel emotionally?	3 How did you feel emotionally?	

Situation Description	Location	People Involved
Before		After
1 What were you feeling physically?	1 What were you feeling physically?	
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3 How did you feel emotionally?	3 How did you feel emotionally?	



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PART 2: Identify Patterns

Identifying patterns in the situations that lead to lashing out at your child can help you recognize these triggers more easily in the future.

What situations most often lead to you becoming upset with your kid(s)?

How do you feel physically and emotionally right before you become upset?

What types of thoughts do you often find yourself having right before you become upset?

What beliefs about yourself come up when you become upset at your kid(s)?



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What would you like to say to yourself when you notice you're about to become upset?

How could understanding your triggers help you respond differently in the future?

PART 3: Develop Coping Strategies

Identify coping strategies that can help you from lashing out at your child in these situations. To learn more about coping skills you can use, scan the QR code below.

- When you feel the urge to lash out, pause and ask yourself if your reaction is based on the present situation or if it's influenced by past frustrations or assumptions. Consider if lashing out will help or harm the situation and think about a more effective way to communicate.
- Treat yourself with the same compassion you would offer a friend who is struggling. Remind yourself that parenting is hard and that it's okay to make mistakes.
- Replace the urge to lash out with positive affirmations, like "I am capable of handling this calmly" or "I am learning and growing as a parent every day."
- Avoid comparing your parenting style or your child's behavior to others, especially on social media. Focus on your unique journey and the positive aspects of your relationship with your kids.

- Make a list of your parenting strengths, such as patience, creativity, or the ability to connect with your kids. Review this list when you feel frustrated to remind yourself that you have the skills to handle difficult moments without lashing out.
- Keep a journal to write down the situations that trigger your lashing out and analyze what led up to those moments. This practice can help you identify patterns and develop alternative strategies for managing these triggers in the future.
- Regularly reflect on the things you are grateful for in your parenting experience, like small moments of connection or the things you love about your kids. Focusing on gratitude can help shift your mindset from frustration to appreciation.
- Engage in self-care activities or hobbies you enjoy to help reduce stress and recharge. Taking care of yourself can help you stay calm and patient when challenges arise.

