

New Year's Resolution: Learning to Pause May Be Just the Trick

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It's the time of year for summing up, for taking stock of our lives and making resolutions for the coming year. Why not put on next year's to-do list a resolution that will not only strengthen your quads, or make more time to go to the beach, but make sure you increase your success — and peace of mind — as a parent. By LEARNING TO PAUSE, we can do just that.

Let's make LEARNING TO PAUSE a New Year's resolution we learn to do as parents, for the sake of our children.

If you've ever lost control over a threatened loss of connection to your kid, you know what it can mean to NOT be able to pause. The trigger could be your ex suddenly demanding an additional weekday that she

spends with your child. It could also be a request to increase your child support payments knowing the extra work hours will cut into your parenting. Aimed at you after a stressful workday, you lashed out, which unfortunately — again — cost you the chance to talk it out. And given your experience appearing in court of late, not being able to talk it out has made your stressful job seem easy!

Getting angry can give you relief in the moment but set you back as a parent. However normal and healthy it can be to express anger, when done unconstructively it can take your choices away to parent as you would like. And even if your ex gives you a heads-up before she gives you the news, venting your anger, undisciplined, can be quite difficult to avoid.

I've been there myself. Parenting two kids across three households the past 18 years, I've had those moments where my anger boiled over and the words flew out...or not. The difference has been my ability to pause — to NOT REACT when feeling provoked. Avoiding that reactive moment with my ex meant not only that she could talk freely, but I could buy the time needed to work out solutions that supported me as a parent.

Pausing may sound like simple but it's not easy. You have to notice the moment when you're ABOUT to fly off the handle, so you can do otherwise. Just when your brain is screaming to react, you have to catch yourself. Placing your attention elsewhere — a small but significant mental engineering feat — will do the trick. It will also become a resolution that will renew yearly, reaping multiple benefits!

Here are three things you can try as you set your intentions for the new year:

- Put your attention on sensations felt in your body — heat, tension, vibration, pain. Anger can be felt if you listen for it. Notice the physical sensations long enough for the anger to subside.

- Notice your breath. You can feel it as it enters you, where your abdomen rises and falls, or you can sense the entire flow. Stay aware of it for a few seconds or until the anger begins to dissolve.
- Affirm, speaking silently to yourself, that you are OK, that you are a good parent, that you listen well, or whatever positive statement will reduce the urge to retaliate.

Although these practices can seem difficult at first, a few rounds of practice can build the mental strength needed, and then come the benefits! Pausing is a worthwhile resolution to stick with. Buying yourself time before speaking by pausing, whether it's a few seconds, hours or days, can make a big difference!

May your new years resolution to PAUSE be one that will reap many years of happy parenting ahead!

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