

How to be less frustrated with your kids—4 tips

By Richard and Jennifer Jarman

Most parents will tell you that being a parent is the best job anyone could have. It's also the hardest, and most frustrating. Kids have an uncanny ability to bring out the worst in even the best parents.

Even people who work with children for a living find themselves frustrated when dealing with their own children. One former elementary school teacher told me of once being so angry with her own son that she threw a wooden spoon at him. (She missed, by the way.) Another teacher talks about how all of her years of university training seem to go out the window when she deals with her own children.

If these parents with years of training get flustered with their own children, what hope do other parents have? The fact is that it doesn't take a degree in child development to be a great parent. But it does take a lot of patience, and the ability to deal with frustration in a way that doesn't damage your relationship with your children.

But how do you do it? How do you lower your frustration level without blowing up at your kids? Here are 4 ways to thrive, even when your children are making you crazy:

1. Change their focus. Experts call it “redirecting,” and it works great, especially with infants and toddlers. Telling a child to stop what they're doing usually won't change their behavior, and it will likely raise your anger level. Instead, show them what you do want them to do. Get them started doing something constructive. And lavish praise on them.
2. Change your focus. No parent can be on duty 24/7. Don't be afraid to take a break, to ask for help when you need it. You and your spouse need to be open when each of you need a “kid break.” Single parents, ask friends and family to help you when you need time away. You will be a better mom or dad because of the rest you have away from your children.
3. Be realistic. Kids are learning about their world. While they're learning, they make lots of mistakes. Kids drop things, knock stuff over, and then sit in the middle of the mess and cry. Use these moments to teach them how to do it right, how to do better next time. And remember, many of us adults make mistakes too!
4. Practice forgiveness. Always be quick to forgive your children when they do something wrong. Just as important: be quick to forgive yourself. You won't always be the perfect parent. But you can model great lessons for your kids by the way you bounce back from your own mistakes.

There's no such thing as a perfect parent. Thankfully, our kids don't need perfection. They need love, understanding, and guidance. Use these tools to lower your frustration level, so you can see the most important part of parenting: giving your children the love and confidence they need to be happy, successful people.