

When Your Kids Push Your Buttons

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Part Two:

V. It's Your Beliefs That Drive You
"Why do I react the way I do?"

VI. How Your Beliefs Serve You
"Why is it so hard to change?"

VII. Defusing Your Buttons
"I can make this work."

VIII. Creating Your Personal Mission Statement
"From now on, I have a new perspective on parenting."

Goal for this class:

To raise awareness of the assumptions and expectations we hold about ourselves and our children that result in our ineffective reactions to our children's behavior; to take responsibility for those assumptions and expectations and reframe them into conscious intentions of parenting that break old patterns and foster connection with our children.

Our reactions go all the way back to childhood:

My Reaction

Why can't you ever be appreciative? Look at all I've done for you and all I get is your complaining.



My Assumption

She is so rude and inconsiderate. What have I done to bring her up to be so selfish?



My Expectation

I expect her to be considerate and respectful of myself and others –
(always)



Standard I was brought up by

Always look to the needs of others first. Don't be selfish.



Belief taken in on other side of The Gap

I don't count. I'm not important — based on hearing, "The world doesn't revolve around you, you know." "Who voted you the Queen?" "Stop being so selfish."

Assumptions stem from Beliefs:

Assumptions are rooted in our Expectations, Standards of behavior, and Beliefs we hold about ourselves - Homework – week 4

Assumption	Expectation	Standard	Belief
She never listens.	She should listen and do what I say when I say it.	Children should be seen and not heard and do as they are told.	Whatever I want doesn't matter. I have no mind of my own.
He's mouthy and fresh. He talks back all the time.	He should not be allowed to say such things.	If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.	I can't ever do it right. Nobody understands me.
She's so clingy and needy.	I should be there for her all the time.	You are perfectly capable of doing it. Parents are not to be asked for help.	I do things for myself. I can't count on or trust anyone to do it right.
I have to have all the answers.	If I do it right, everything should turn out right, and their lives should be perfect.	My parents' happiness and approval of me depends on my performance.	I get love and approval when I get it right.

Starting with an Assumption you have made, fill in the Expectation and Standard that may have provoked your Assumption and finally the Belief you hold about yourself at the base of it all. Write your belief in the present tense as if you are still a young child.

Practice 2: Your Witness

- You have now become aware of how your mind kicks into gear and creates thoughts and fears. These thoughts generate more emotions, which create more thoughts and emotions. The cycle spins and reactions get worse. The intensity of your reactions is equal to the degree of resistance to the present moment – the resistance to connecting with your child.
- Become aware that your resistance creates energy around you – tone, looks, body language – that your child reacts to. This is a power struggle. You have the power to stop it by changing your thought patterns.
- Become a witness to your thoughts. When you can watch them, you can control them. This takes time and practice. Go easy on yourself. We've all had the experience of hearing that little voice that speaks up even while we are reacting. It says, "What are you doing that for? You know it won't work." But you ignore it and do it anyway. This is your witness.
- Practice watching and witnessing to see if you can interact with your child in the moment without projecting yourself or your experiences onto your child. Just be in the moment and connect.
- Breathe deeply, watching your inhale and exhale flow in and out of your body.
- With your new awareness (if you're not there yet, stay with Practice 1 until you see that it is your own mind and thoughts that are pushing your button), you can cultivate your witness.
- In your mind, you will get to the point of saying to yourself, "Wow, look at what I'm thinking. Look at the spin I'm putting on this. I don't have to do this to myself." You are raising your consciousness and developing your witness-self.
- Even if you resist your witness and react, write your thoughts down as soon as you can. Don't worry about getting it right or completing sentences.
- The more you pay attention to this process, the more you will find your buttons beginning to defuse. But be patient with yourself. It takes time.

Some Common Childhood Limiting Beliefs

Circle ones that apply to you:

- | | |
|--|---|
| I can't ever do anything right | I have to do everything myself |
| What others think is more important | I'm responsible / It all falls on me |
| Nothing I ever do is good enough | I have to make sure everyone is happy |
| I am unimportant / invisible | I'm guilty / bad / always wrong |
| I have to be the good one / perfect | I am undeserving of anything good |
| I'm stupid / klutzy / not good in math | I must conform / not stand out |
| Nobody's there to help me | I don't count / my problems don't count |
| I have to prove myself to get approval | My feelings / opinions don't matter |
| I'm a disappointment | Arguing gets you nowhere |
| I'm guilty until proven innocent | I can't outshine anyone in the family |
| I had it easy | I'm the one to be counted on |
| I can't trust anyone, myself included | I'm the best / smartest / most talented |
| Girls aren't as capable as boys | Just grin and bear it |
| I don't know enough | People take care of me |

Add your own:

Steps to Identifying the Beliefs that Drive You

- What behaviors/ type of behaviors push your buttons?
- What gets triggered in you when that happens? How do you feel?
- Does your child remind you of anyone when that happens?
- What are you afraid will happen if you don't stop it right away?
- What would either of your parents have done if you had behaved this way? If you're not sure make it up.
- What did you hear on the other side of The Gap when this happened? Or guess you might have heard.
- What is the message you took in about yourself?
- How does this effect your expectations of your child?
- With this understanding, how might your expectations change?

My Beliefs - Example

When I was a child, the message I often heard from my parents when they were

frustrated or angry with me was Why do you always do that? You're ruining

everything for the rest of the family. Why can't you just be more like your sister?

(typical words or phrases often said to me in the heat of the moment)

The message I took in about myself was that I could never get it right or do it

right, that I was a disappointment and my parents wished they had never had me.

This belief continues to drive me in my parenting whenever my button gets

pushed by leading me to yell at my son when he doesn't do what I ask right away

(your reaction)

because I want him to do it right and get along so he doesn't feel like a loser like

I did. If he would just do it right, he'd be happier and I'd be happier with him

I realize now that what my parent intended on the other side of the Gap was

to get me to make life easier for them like my sister did. I was a pain and they didn't

have the patience. So what I believed about myself as a child was not true. I can

now look at the situation and see that I am in fact someone with strong

opinions who doesn't blindly obey without questioning and making it work for me

(what you can believe about yourself now)

My Beliefs

When I was a child, the message I often heard from my parents when they were

frustrated or angry with me was _____

(typical words or phrases often said to me in the heat of the moment)

The message I took in about myself was that I _____

This belief continues to drive me in my parenting whenever my button gets

pushed by leading me to _____

(your reaction)

because _____

I realize now that what my parent intended on the other side of the Gap was

So what I believed about myself as a child was not true. I can now look at the

situation and see that I am in fact _____

(what you can believe about yourself now)

Your Beliefs - Homework - Week 5

Describe an incident or generalized incidents in which you got certain messages from your parent/s. What were the messages?

What did you decide to believe about yourself based on this and why? What did you "buy into?"

How do these beliefs affect your life today in general?

How do you think they affect your reactions to your children? Why?

These were your perceptions, fears, and assumptions made when you were a child based on things that were said or done. Describe why they are not the truth.

If you could let go of believing this, how might your children benefit?

Why Do I Keep Doing What I Do?

Check the reason/s that seem applicable to you. Write a description of why that is so. Or add your own reason at the bottom.

What I believe about myself is true.

Who is to say that if I were to change what I believe about myself, it would make anything better?

What is it I'm supposed to do exactly?

I don't have time for this psychological stuff.

This is way too hokey for me.

It's not my fault. My parents made me this way. Or: What's good enough for me is good enough for my kids.

I don't think I can do it. I don't know enough. I'm not strong enough.

I'm afraid that I would have to be a completely different person if I were to change/believe differently about myself.

It's who I am. I can just learn to live with it.

Other:

How My Belief Serves Me - Example

I have identified a limiting belief I have about myself from childhood as:

Sacrificing my desires gets me approval. Other people's needs are more important

I have this belief because *my mother taught me to ignore my own wishes cause*

whenever I talked about what I wanted, she told me I was being selfish

How that drives my parenting today causes me to *never say no when I'm asked for*

anything, jump when my children want anything, and volunteer for too much

which keeps me from *spending more time with my family — relaxing — taking*

care of my needs

What I get out of hanging onto this belief is *believing that I am making other*

people happy and getting approval for doing so much

(how this belief serves you)

This allows me to *keep believing that I'm a good person and am*

worthy of being liked or loved

(what you can keep doing or avoid doing)

If I let go of this belief, I'm afraid that I will have to face *being found out for*

being a selfish person and no one liking me and then I will have to

find other ways to be okay with myself—maybe have to admit that I'm not so perfect

(what you would have to change about yourself)

How My Belief Serves Me

I have identified a limiting belief I have about myself from childhood as: _____

I have this belief because _____

How that drives my parenting today causes me to _____

which keeps me from _____

What I get out of hanging onto this belief is _____

(how this belief serves you)

This allows me to _____

(what you can keep doing or avoid doing)

If I let go of this belief, I'm afraid that I will have to face _____

_____ and then I will have to

(what you would have to change about yourself)

Letting Go – Homework – Week 6

Dig deeply and come up with some limiting belief/s that keeps you stuck from doing or getting what you want (broaden your thinking from just parenting).

What spell does it hold over you? Who is holding it over you? Are you passing that spell on? If so, how?

Is it a belief that your child-mind took in? Why?

What reason can you see that you keep holding on to this belief/s?

What does it get you/how does it serve you?

How does it affect your parenting?

Try putting a positive spin on the belief (break the spell) and write it from a different perspective, i.e. change *I'm no good and can't pay attention* to *I'm very capable of managing several things at once and leading others*.

Practice 3: Changing Your Perception

- Now that you are aware of what your thoughts are doing—creating your emotions and sending energy out to your child, now that you have become aware of your witness, you will be more able to stop your thoughts to be in the moment and reframe the assumptions that have caused your reactions in the past.
- Keep practicing stopping your thoughts (it's like meditation) to be in the moment. When you hear them start to take over, try saying to yourself, "detach, detach, detach" or some word that will bring you back to awareness.
- Breathe counting your inhales and exhales.
- When you have stopped your thoughts, focus on the fact that your child needs something, that s/he is having a problem. You don't have to know what it is. Allow yourself to let your child in and connect. This requires a shift in your energy and your child will feel it.
- Listen without judgment or criticism—perhaps even without words. Hear what your child is saying beneath the behavior.
- Now create an idea (a reframed assumption) that will help you have compassion for what your child needs. "He has a hard time when he doesn't get what he wants" instead of "He never listens." "She wishes that she could do what her friend is doing" instead of "She doesn't appreciate anything I do for her.
- When you can drop out of your thoughts and listen, you will be better able to hear what your child is trying to tell you with the behavior.
- When you can listen without judgment, you are in your heart, and your mind will have the freedom to open to new possibilities of what to do in the situation.

The Nine Habits to Defusing Your Buttons

1. Become aware of what happens to you physically when your button gets pushed. Do your hands sweat, does your throat tighten, stomach hurt, etc?
2. Breathing is not to be overlooked or underrated. Focusing on the breath, counting inhales and exhales, can help you cool down and feel more grounded.
3. Note the feelings that come up for you when your button gets pushed. Be specific. Anger covers up fear, many feelings fall under anger.
4. Ask yourself, *What must I have been thinking to feel the way I did?* Make note of these thoughts, whether or not you think they are justified. These assumptions are what provoke your emotions and then your reactions.
5. Don't take it personally. You can't see the situation objectively, nor respond effectively when you do. Try not to react at all before you breathe and detach. You can always come back to a situation when emotions are calm.
6. Detach. It's not about you. If your child is doing something inappropriate, even to you, it's not about you. He is having a problem. Detaching means maintaining a degree of neutrality and objectivity so you can help.
7. Witness. Watch yourself. Develop that witness voice that watches you react and says, "Why are you doing/saying that? You know that's not going to work." Listen to it. With detachment, you will be more creative with problem solving.
8. Use affirmative self-talk, which is a counter process to the easily accessed negative voices that put ourselves and our children down.
 - silently go over what happened and why
 - remind yourself of the assumptions you made
 - consider both agendas
 - reframe your assumptions so your perception and thus feelings change
 - consider whether or not your expectations are realistic or appropriate.
9. Adjust your expectation to one your child can meet successfully.

Getting to New Responses

Behavior — My child is refusing to get dressed.

Buttons – Appreciation, Resentment, Control

Old:

My Assumption — She is being disrespectful and obstinate.

My Emotion — Anger, resentment

My Reaction — Power struggle over getting dressed, fighting. (I miss what the behavior is telling me. Maybe it's telling me she wants connection with me before we part for the day).

Based on:

My Expectation — I expect my child to listen to me when I tell her to get dressed.

My Childhood Belief — I must do what I am told, or else.... Other people are more important than me. (So when my child doesn't listen it tells me I'm still not important).

New:

My Reframed Assumption (my new automatic) — She's fighting about getting dressed because she knows it means leaving me.

My Emotion — Compassion, empathy, some frustration

My Response — "It's really hard to get dressed when you don't want to leave home. Would you like help? Let's talk about what we will do when we get back home again."

Based on:

My Adjusted Expectation — My child has a hard time with transitions. She needs lots of interaction with me before she is ready to leave the house.

My New Belief — My rights and needs are important enough to be considered.

Creating Your Parenting Mission Statement - Homework - Week 7

Write your old assumptions, expectations and beliefs that you held coming into this class. Change each one to be more realistic, more workable for you and your children. State what your child's button-pushing behavior has been telling you about both you and your child. What messages would you like your child to hear across your narrowing Gap.

Write a mission statement for yourself—your new job description that you now hold as a result of new understanding. Describe how your new perceptions will allow you to be more neutral and thus more effective in your parenting. Use whatever form of writing works best for you—lists, paragraphs, etc. *There is no right or wrong way to do this.* It needs to work for you. Do not be concerned if you are not presently parenting in the way your mission statement says. This is your intention from now on. Write it as if you are parenting this way 100% of the time using present tense and "I" as your pronoun. Then aim for over 50% to start. When you write it as if it were true, it has an amazing way of becoming true!

What to Do When My Button Gets Pushed

- **Stop! Don't React!** Walk away
- **Breathe** - focus on inhale and exhale
- **Detach! Detach! Detach!**
- Look for the **root** of the **Behavior**
- **Self- Talk:**
 - What's my **Agenda**? What's my child's?
 - What am I **Feeling**?
 - If I **feel** that way, what must my **Assumptions** be about my child or myself to provoke those feelings?
 - What do I **expect**? Of my child? Of myself?
 - What is my child's **behavior** trying to tell me?
- **Change** my perspective
 - Don't take it personally
 - My child is *having* a problem, not *being* a problem
- Reach across the Gap and **Connect**
- Identify my Limiting **Beliefs**
- Adjust my **Expectations**

Defusing Your Buttons Worksheet

Behavior _____

Emotion _____

Reaction _____

Assumption _____

Expectation _____

Reframed Assumption _____

Changed Emotion _____

Adjusted Expectation _____

New Response _____

Behavior _____

Emotion _____

Reaction _____

Assumption _____

Expectation _____

Reframed Assumption _____

Changed Emotion _____

Adjusted Expectation _____

New Response _____

Behavior _____

Emotion _____

Reaction _____

Assumption _____

Expectation _____

Reframed Assumption _____

Changed Emotion _____

Adjusted Expectation _____

New Response _____

Notes:

Notes:

This workbook was designed to accompany a "When Your Kids Push Your Buttons" parent workshop. If you are using it on it's own, be sure to work with it along with reading the book, "When Your Kids Push Your Buttons and What You Can Do About It".