

MISSION: CONTROL!

A BIG FEELINGS ADVENTURE!



Parent Power Pack

“What Went Wrong?”

By

Nan Arkwright, MOT, OTR/L

In the story, Joseph's mom, in her rush to get everything on her “To Do” list done for the night, didn't think about what it would feel like to Joseph to be interrupted when watching his favorite TV show. Hats off to her though for being able to stop the mind chatter and be present for him when he needed her; sharing her calm with him really helped Joseph actually learn about self-control for the next time something doesn't go his way. Not only did Joseph learn something from the situation, but his mom likely learned that rescheduling his time before bed in a different way would make it easier for him to do what she asks in the future.

Let's dive a little deeper into the story:

Joseph's mom seemed a little distracted when she asked Joseph to stop playing and get ready for bed. Although she tried to calmly ask Joseph to stop and get ready for bed, she was also thinking about other things she needed to do and so she wasn't fully present, which Joseph noticed and responded to. When she saw him getting upset, she began to feel impatient as she continued to think of her list of things she needed to do for the evening. Of course, Joseph noticed this as well, which is when he started to get upset.

You can probably identify with Joseph's mom. It's hard to push the pause button, to stop thinking about that “To Do” list and be present, to breathe, to think beyond the moment, to stay in control when feeling stressed. It's not easy to regulate your own emotions so you can connect with your child and then guide him through those Big Feelings.

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If the “To Do” list had read: with patience, love, and empathy, get Joseph to bed, she might have scheduled extra time, knowing that it is usually hard for Joseph to stop his TV time. She might have delighted in sitting with him for a few minutes, she might have engaged/connected with him before asking him to stop. She might have let Joseph know that she understood how hard it is to be interrupted in the middle of a TV show and she might have asked him how she could help.

What could Joseph's mom have done to make bedtime more likely to look like this?

If Josephs' mom checked her inner state before entering Josephs' room, she might have realized she was feeling distracted and she might have remembered how she can feel if Joseph has difficulty transitioning from one activity to another (a trigger). Because she wants to have positive interactions with Joseph, she might have taken a few minutes to write down the thoughts in her head so she could be present to enjoy being with him and connecting with him and so she could be ready to show empathy if he struggled to stop and be ready to help him find a way to do what was expected, if needed. Some approaches she could have considered using are a playful approach, a collaborative approach, or a choices approach.

Perhaps she would have felt more equipped to do this if she had some time to herself e.g. to listen to parenting podcasts, exercise, connect with friends/family, reframe her thoughts from negative to positive, write in her gratitude journal or get more sleep.

In fact, this scenario is possible in real life, although likely to require some creativity. Let's look at ways you might equip yourself to share your calm.

From the list below, choose what you think will help you feel equipped to handle tricky situations that come up in your life.

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Raise Your Awareness: body sensations, thoughts, goals, emotions, reactions, childhood memories, triggers, stressors, lack of sleep, hunger

Educate Yourself: books, websites, podcasts, support groups, resources on my website

Take Care of Yourself: sleep, exercise, quiet time (e.g. prayer, yoga, meditation, mindfulness), gratitude, alone time, self-love, diet, self-appreciation

Create Support: family, friends, sitter, teacher, tutor

Use Positive Self-Talk: Consider another perspective or explanation, choose a positive message or affirmation, remind yourself of who you are, remember your goals or values, imagine the outcome you'd like, think of your child's underlying needs

Reduce Stressors: simplify, reconfigure challenging times of the day, participate in fewer extracurricular activities, spend less time on electronics, set realistic goals and expectations, create routines/predictability, schedule relaxation time, decide priorities, reassess "to do" lists, spend more time doing things that bring joy, pace yourself, delegate, slow down

Increase Joy: family time, nature, love, the arts, pets, forgiveness, gardening, doing for others, being part of a team, museums, reading, learning,, sunshine, smile, hugs, living in the moment, warm bath, cooking for others, spontaneity, friends and family, aspirations, laughter, spend time doing activities that reflect your values, connect with your child

Other: _____

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Please take some time over the next week to think through these steps and then share how you used it in a tricky situation.

1. Look at the list of self-care ideas and decide what you think would help you feel capable of managing your responses to stressors. Start integrating that into your routine.
2. Choose a situation where Big Feelings can pop up with your child and think about ways you can prevent, support, anticipate, restructure, make environmental changes, reschedule, add (e.g. special time with your child, an extra snack), be consistent (e.g. bedtime, rules), show empathy, encourage etc.
3. Imagine yourself sharing your calm with your child as you support preventatively, in the moment, and afterwards. Believe in yourself.
4. Decide what went well and what you would change for the next time.
5. How do you think you will feel afterwards? How do you think your child will respond?

I can't wait to hear from you. Wishing you great success!