



# A Child's Life

Parent Education Family Stabilization

## Participant Guide

### Helpful Resources and Daily Practices

1. Do four nice things for yourself each week
2. Read Dethatching with Love
3. F.A.L.L. Exercise (complete when you are ready to start living a life you love.)
4. Post the Co-Parenting Pledge
5. Take action if applicable, "NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSE!"
6. Communicate Powerfully
7. Use Self-Quieting instead of Time Out
8. How to redirect hurtful behavior
9. Have a weekly Family Meeting
10. Use Logical consequences and commit to not spanking.
11. Read nightly something inspiring, (See Sue's Favorite Book List)
12. Have the courage to be imperfect and live a life of learning and laughter

## SELF-CARE: Four items each week

Review the following list of self-care items. Using the scale below, rate the following areas in terms of frequency.

**5 - Frequently**

**4 - Occasionally**

**3 - Rarely**

**2 - Never**

**1 - It never occurred to me**

### Physical Self-Care

- Eat regularly
- Eat Healthy
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Take time off when needed
- Get Massage
- Dance, swim, walk, run, bike, garden, sing, act, boat, surf, fish, do something fun
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take vacations
- Take a mini vacation Day trip, spend a couple of hours beach, movie, eating out
- Make time away from computers, cell phone, Facebook, emails
- Other

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## Psychological Self-Care

- \_ Make time for reflection to feel and be with nothing to do or fix
- \_ Rapid gratitude Make a list of everything your grateful for in your mind or on paper.
- \_ Say Positive Affirmations "20 I AMs daily"
- \_ Write in a journal
- \_ Decrease Stress in your life
- \_ Choose to think in a positive way "We are all learning instead of good or bad"

## Educational and Growth

- \_ Take a parenting class
- \_ Attend a weekend personal growth program like Landmark or Tony Robbins
- \_ Read a book that inspires you
- \_ \_\_\_\_\_Do something that you are not an expert at or something you have never tried before that requires lessons. Horseback riding, parachuting, scuba diving

## Spiritual Self Care

- \_ Join an organization (community, religious, activist)
- \_ Spend quiet time in nature
- \_ Believe in a higher power than yourself

## Detaching With Love

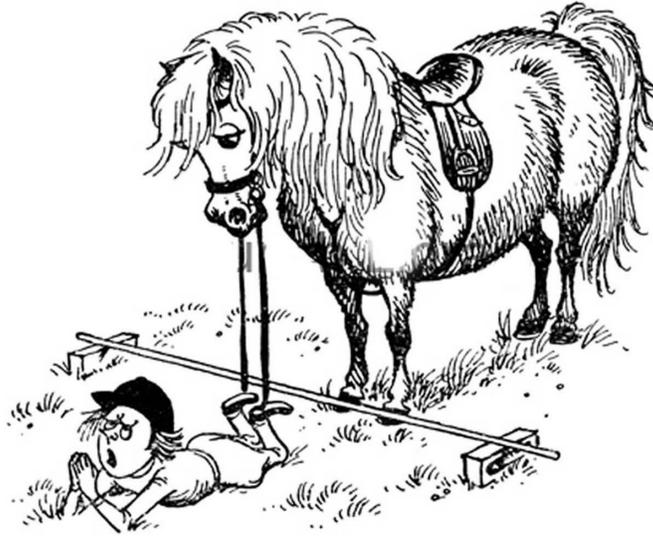
Adapted from Melanie Beatty *Language of Letting Go*

Sometimes people we love do things we don't like or of which we approve. We react. They react. Before long, we're all reacting to each other, and the problem escalates.

**When do we detach?** When we are hooked into a reaction of anger, fear, guilt, or shame? When we get hooked into a power play and attempt to control or force others to do something they don't want to do? When our reaction isn't helping the other person or solving the problem?

When our reaction is hurting us, often it is time to detach. Even if detachment appears to be the least likely, or possible thing to do, it is time to detach. The first step towards detachment is to understand that reacting and controlling doesn't count. The next step is being peaceful, getting centered, and restoring our balance. Take a walk and leave the room. Go to a meeting. Take a bath. Call a friend. Meditate or pray. Breathe deeply, find peace. From that peace and centering will emerge an answer, a solution.

## Self-Care: The Fallen Horse



Don't rush this. Wait until you're ready to get back in the saddle and Co-Parent Successfully. Remember to focus on Self- CARE FIRST.

**F**orgive yourself and mistakes you've made in parenting.

**A**ccept the other parent... Let go of blame.

**L**earn: Continue to learn... it is the water for growth.

**L**et go of the past.

**M**ake a list of all of your losses...

When you're ready to move on and create the life of your dreams, start with a list of your losses. It's ok to be upset and emotional. *Do four nice things for yourself before proceeding.*

Make a list of everything you are grateful for (rapid appreciation)

Write a letter thanking the other parent (next page, you do not have to send it)

Make a commitment to do three things you learned in this class (hint:  
Get along, parent effectively, have fun with your kids)

## If It is to BE It Is UP TO ME!

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (mother or father of my child)  
**yourself**

**Sample letter for**

I forgive you  
for \_\_\_\_\_

I am grateful  
for \_\_\_\_\_

What you can count on me for from this point forward is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What I request from you is *(Example: I want to co-parent with you so our kids have healthy happy lives.)*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Something I want to thank you for is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Something I want to forgive you for is

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Something I want you to forgive me for is

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Sincerely,

## Co-Parenting Pledge

I will let go of the past and focus on the future.

I will not ask our children to deal with situations they cannot control

I will not ask the kids to deal with adult issues.

I will listen powerfully to every family member. First to understand  
and then to make them feel understood.

I will talk directly with the other parent about serious issues involving finances,  
time-sharing and schedule changes.

I will not disagree with the other parent in front of the kids.

I will agree to disagree and schedule a time when we can focus on a solution.

I will tell all of our friends, family members and especially grandparents to support our  
co-parenting roles and keep all conversation around the children positive and encouraging.

I will model self-care and do four nice things each week for myself so  
I feel better and parent better.

I will parent our children using discipline methods that teach a  
better way of problem solving, and use consequences that are reasonable, related, respectful,  
and teach responsibility.

We agree to use the dating checklist before introducing anyone to our children.

We will agree to settle difficult issues with a professional who can guide us in the direction that  
is in our children's' best interest and avoid conflict and costly litigation.

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Co-Parent/Date

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Co-Parent/Date

## No Excuse For Abuse

### 3 Steps To A Better Life For You And Your Kids

1. Call 911 or abuse hotline 800 962 2873
2. Call Safe Space join a support group now
3. Do four nice things for yourself each week (*going to a meeting counts for one*  
[www.myflfamilies.com](http://www.myflfamilies.com), [www.safespace.fl.org](http://www.safespace.fl.org))

#### Find A Local Support Group

24 hours 1 800 500 1119

Martin 772 288 7023

St. Lucie 772 464 4555

Indian River 772 569-7233

DCF Abuse Hotline 800 962 2873

- Create an Emergency Plan (talk with an expert)
- Get your kids help
- Educate yourself - abuse is not something to hide, be proactive!

#### What if the other parent is only verbally abusive?

**ABUSE is ABUSE.** Call Our Family Wizard 1-866-755-999 or visit  
[www.ourfamilywizard.com](http://www.ourfamilywizard.com)

- Get support from Safe Space (*everyone I send there loves it!*)
- Sign up for Family Wizard and communicate through email. It is a small fee for a whole year. All of your conversations are court records. It is helpful for anyone whose co-parent continues to fight over little things that cause big stress.
- Read books. *Heal your Life* By Louise Haye. (see my book list)
- Say 20 "I am..." all day long and before bedtime
- Play the I am game with your kids back and forth on the way to/from school
- Get your kids help (First YOU) – Call Safe Space NOW
- If you are in another area call 211 or the 800 numbers

## “We are Learning” How To Communicate Powerfully

Which Side Is Going To Give Them Life Skills For Success?

FEELING ENCOURAGERS		FEELING STOPPER
Notice	<i>“You look sad”</i>	Punishment
Be Curious	<i>“What’s going on</i>	Blame
Affirm Feelings	<i>So you feel sad</i>	Criticism
Validate Feelings	<i>I can see why</i>	Fixing
Empathy	<i>I can see how</i>	Assuming
<b>Self Quieting</b> Go to your room and come out when you are calm and ready to talk.	<i>Do you want to control or Teach Self-Control?</i>	<b>Time-Out</b> Go to your Room and don’t come out until I tell you!
Really		You deserved it
What else...		You were goofing off
Tell me more...		Don’t lie to me
You did... then what		Your grounded
What else... repeat		Go apologize NOW!
Help me understand		No TV
Do I understand?		Stop complaining
Same boat	<i>Sibling Rivalry</i>	Pick sides
<b>Self-Quiet</b>		<b>Time out</b>
How do you feel?	<i>Negotiate</i>	Don’t Back talk!
What do you want?		I don’t care
What will you do?		I will tell you

### ASK QUESTIONS

- How do you feel?
- What do you want?
- What will you do?
- Is their anything I can do to support you

## Self-Quieting

1. Self-quieting is a practice everyone should use, especially Mom and Dad.
2. Whenever anyone is having an amygdala hijacking and things are being spewed out, no one is really focused enough to communicate effectively. Sometimes the brain stem is involved and someone hits or throws something – this immediate impulsive reaction is not safe. You need to physically be removed from the situation (or count to 6 in another language if you can't leave) to interrupt a hijacking. The best ways for the brain to calm down are room temperature water, walking, being outside and looking at nature, listening to music in a quiet room, journaling, punching a pillow or a punching bag, running, or exercise. Find what helps calm you and rely on it.

**Self-Quieting is different than time out** because you are doing something to make you think better so you can act better. Time out is external control. Self-Quieting is internal control. The child gets to choose what is calming for them and they get to choose how long it will take before they are fully in charge of their brain ready for problem solving.

In order to solve problems you must be able to access the cortex part of the brain. This is like putting your hands on the wheel. If you are emotional and not in control you are probably in your old brain. Back when Saber Tooth tigers were something real. Today they are trigger thoughts that cause us to overreact and say things that are hurtful rather than helpful.

Self-Quieting allows the child and the adult to calm down until they can focus on a solution or a better way to behave. It is a normal thing to over react. Back in the caveman days it was part of our survival. Today we need more help from our cortex frontal lobe area. This is where we have empathy, can listen intently, affirm feelings, and solve problems peacefully. Do you want your children to grow up and know how to solve problems? Then we have to model self-quieting and use it often.

I refer my self-quieting time to going on a mini vacation. When I was getting stressed out I would tell the kids, I am going on vacation. When I get back I hope the rest of the dishes are done so we can start the movie. Then I would go lay down for 10 minutes and meditate. After 10 minutes, the kitchen was clean and we started our movie. The old way was I would keep nagging and showing what I meant by a clean kitchen and pretty soon I would have cleaned the kitchen myself and made everyone feel worthless.

By stepping back you give your children the opportunity to restore their integrity by keeping their promise to wash the dishes before the movie.

## Self -Quieting Rules

1. Ask the child to go to their room and do something that will make them feel better. The child gets to choose what to do in their room, how long it will take them to calm down and be ready to behave in a better way. It may take 2 minutes or 2 hours. You have no preference as long as the behavior improves or if it involves another person that they are ready to work it out and communicate powerfully.
2. It is not a punishment. Self-Quieting is a life skill.
3. Parents must teach self-quieting by modeling and showing your kids what you like to do when you're stressed. Then ask them to show you what they will do.

## Create Contingencies

Give up yelling and just say quietly and calmly, for example, "When you homework is done I will give you back your phone." or "When you help me in the yard for an hour I will give you my car for a couple of hours." This teaches children to work first and then have fun.

## How to Redirect “Hurtful Behavior”

When your child does something hurtful, use Self-Quieting and ACT.

For example, say your children are crying and you aren’t sure what happened, or maybe you do. First, don’t assume one child is to blame.

Instead, you might say: *“It looks like something happened here. Your sister is crying and you look really angry. Go in your rooms, calm down, and when you are calm, I will come in and find out what happened.”*

### Separately Use ACT

#### A - Acknowledge Feelings

“I hate my sister!”

“You are really angry with your sister.” (Respond to feelings not words.)

“Yes, she’s always messing with me!”

“She can really make you mad, huh? I can see how you might feel that way. What else are you feeling?”

“I just wish she wasn’t so mean. She is always trying to get me mad so I hit her then she fake cries and goes and tells on me. Then I get in trouble.”

“I can see why you are so upset and the hitting thing really isn’t working. Is it?”

#### C - Communicate limit

Communicate limitations of their behavior.

“Hitting is not safe. What else can you do?”

## T- Target

Target what they can do with anger instead of the limitation.

"You can use your words. You can say, I am angry! Get out of my room. But you cannot hit. Hitting is ABUSE and it is not safe. Would it be ok if I hit you when I get upset? No, that would be child abuse and scary. It is not ok to hit your sister. Hitting doesn't solve problems. It sounds like it makes more problems if you keep getting into trouble. Relax for a while and I will talk with your sister."

Go to the other child and repeat.

## Opportunity To Teach Problem Solving Skills and Communication

After speaking with each child and when they come out of their self-quieting area, post these three questions in your house so they know how to solve problems on their own next time. One at a time, teach the sender to answer the question and the receiver repeats what they heard and checks to make sure they understand the sender.

### 1. HOW DO YOU FEEL?

RECEIVER - "How do you feel Casey?"

SENDER - Casey responds, "I don't like it when you come into my room and mess with my stuff. You annoy me and make me angry."

RECEIVER: Kelly (listens and repeats what she heard without adding anything else to it or leaving anything out)

1. She repeats back. You don't like it when I come into your room and mess with your stuff and I annoy you.
2. Checks for Understanding, "Do I understand you?"

SENDER - Casey replies yes.

SWITCH

RECEIVER - Casey asks Kelly, "How do you feel?"

SENDER - Kelly responds, "I don't like it when you hit me. Hitting Hurts."

RECEIVER - Casey responds, "You don't like it when I hit you, because it hurts." Is that it?

SENDER: Kelly responds, "Yes

## **2. WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

RECEIVER: Casey asks, "What do you want Kelly?"

SENDER:- Kelly says, I want you to use your words and stop hitting me

RECEIVER: You want me to use my words and stop hitting you.

SENDER: Kelly responds, yes.

## **3. WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

RECEIVER: Casey what will you do?

SENDER: - Casey responds, I will tell you to get out of my room. If you don't I will get mom instead of hitting. (Parent steps in with a consequence if Casey hits)

RECEIVER: - You will tell me to get out of your room and if I don't you will get mom and she will have us hang out in our rooms for awhile. Do I understand you?

SENDER: -YES

*SWITCH*

RECEIVER Casey asks Kelly, What will you do?

SENDER: -Kelly responds, I will stop messing with your stuff and leave your room.

RECEIVER: - Casey repeats, "You will stop messing with my stuff and leave my room. Do I understand you?"

SENDER: Yes, Let's go play.

### **THE KEY IS TO PUT THE CHILDREN IN THE SAME BOAT**

Do this once or twice, and the next time it gets out of control, stop the fighting and say do you want to go to your rooms and chill out or can the two of you work this out? Watch how fast they work it out to avoid the three questions! Encourage them for working it out and fire yourself from being the judge the juror or the referee.

These tools will help them to build healthy relationships throughout their whole life

## Family Meetings

Family meetings are essential to establishing [ground rules](#), maintaining communication, and creating a team-like atmosphere in your home. But the trick to making them work is simply *having them weekly*, without fail.

### Weekly Family Meetings Are a Time to:

- Sync everyone's [calendars](#)
- Confirm social and family commitments for the coming week
- Discuss [transportation](#) needs and visitation schedules
- Talk about upcoming school projects
- Voice concerns
- Plan family time
- Create closeness and workability
- Plan meals for the week
- Get help solving problems, chores,
- Use I Statements. Practice effective communication "I feel...when... I want...I will..."

### Special Family Meetings Can Be a Time to:

- Create your family rules together
- Discuss future plans, Time Sharing, Smooth Transitions
- Solve Sibling Issues,
- Establish Routines bedtime, homework, hygiene
- How to make morning's time fun
- Face-to-Face family time (unplug, form computers, cell phones, TV)
- Share weekly goals and accomplishments
- Plan fun events, family field trips

### How to Hold Your First Family Meeting:

1. Post agenda to add topics (dry wipe board on the refrigerator or central area)
2. Set a weekly time so everyone can plan to be there. If you are not there you don't get to vote
3. Bring your [family calendar](#), as well as a [weekly planner](#) (if applicable).
4. Keep a family notebook, to jot down solutions and consequences
5. Always start with an encouragement feast- one member goes first and everyone says what he or she loves about him or her. Then they say what they love about themselves. Repeat till everyone has a turn. (Make this be all you do for the meetings)
6. Practice actively listening to your kids throughout the meeting.
7. Leadership changes each meeting the leader reads agenda and calls on people to

speak (Use a toy or something to pass. Practice one voice rule)

8. Allow each person to speak freely without being interrupted.
9. Assign a sender and receiver to solve problems between two people. The sender starts with I have a problem with \_\_\_\_\_ (the receiver) listens intently then repeats back what the receiver said, and asks, "Do I understand you?" If they say yes. Then they switch roles. Once they both feel understood they focus on solution. Or sometimes just feeling understood is the solution. This teaches listening skills and problem solving.

## Dating Check List

Make a list of five deal breakers and end it before it starts.

Before you introduce anyone to your kids. Make sure you know how they handle their own life

1. Background check
2. Financially stable
3. Able to have fun without a drink or drug in his or her system
4. Likes kids
5. Good communicator
6. Patient
7. Handles anger
6. Gets along with his own family
8. Handles money
9. Understanding of your commitment to your kids
10. Believes in not spanking

### **Warning signs of an Abuser**

1. She lies to you – Relationships can't survive without trust
2. He won't let you talk to other guys-This is control "RUN"
3. He loses his temper quickly- If he snaps over the tiniest thing and then blames.
4. If she embarrasses you in public-Calling you names, acting loud, not caring
5. She threatens to hurt herself if you break up with her.-fear, guilt, manipulation
6. He forces you to have sex-anything physical by force, fondling
7. She keeps you from your kids, friends or family
8. If he does anything to scare you in anyway: reckless driving
9. She checks you phone constantly
- 10 He act jealous and controlling
- 11 He showers you with gifts, flowers, attention after doing something on this list.

Make sure you date someone long enough to see if any of these things show up before you introduce them to your kids.