

I Messed Up...Now What?

As caregivers, we all have moments we wish we could take back. Whether it's losing our patience with our child or saying something we regret.

The bottom line? We all make mistakes. If we didn't, we would be robots. And who wants to be a robot?

Don't answer that.

What sets us apart from robots is that we love our children enough to make amends when we make mistakes.



So the next time you screw up, don't beat yourself up. Cut yourself a little slack and remember these tips:

Own up.

It would be easy to believe that you can just move on and pretend the mistake didn't happen. Maybe we hope our children will just forget. But, just like adult relationships, we have to acknowledge a mistake happened to move on.

"A mistake is simply an opportunity for repair," says Sue Klingaman, early childhood

mental health consultant at Robert Young Center. "And that repair can really strengthen the bond with your child."

Without repair, we can do more damage. Just like in an adult relationship. So tell your child that you know what you did was wrong.

For example: "I am sorry I yelled at you. That wasn't right. I should have taken a deep breath and talked to you instead. Next time I will do that."

Not only are you working to correct what happened, you are also teaching your child a great life skill about how to manage irritation!

Think about the why.

Are you finding yourself making the same mistake over and over?

"Ask yourself what's really going on," suggests Jennifer Best, certified family life educator with Iowa State University Extension. "It could have nothing to do with the child."

now what? Keep Going.

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If you find yourself yelling at your child unnecessarily, maybe you are distracted by finances, an adult relationship or a stressful job. Diagnosing the actual issue is the first step to making it right.

"You wouldn't treat all illnesses with cough medicine," says Jennifer. In the same way, we need to address our mistakes in different ways.

Trust your gut.

As parents, we should trust our judgment with our kids. When making amends after messing up, we need to deal with it in a way that makes sense for our child and ourselves.

"There's no cookie cutter way to reparation," Sue says.

Jennifer agrees. "It's about being a reflective parent and thinking about your own relationship with your child."

Think of it as a teachable moment.

Caregivers are always teaching children something - but it's not always with words. You know that your actions speak louder than anything you say. So, model the behavior you want to see in your son or daughter.

"You are teaching your child what to do when you make a mistake," Jennifer explains.

We expect our children to apologize when they make mistakes - when they hit another child, refuse to share, or break something. By doing the same when we mess up, we're reinforcing the behavior we are trying to teach.

now
what?

KEEP GOING.

So, you made a mistake as a parent? Welcome to the human race.

Don't beat yourself up for screwing up. Instead, think about why it happened, how you can make amends with your child, and how to move on.

These actions show your child that making mistakes are a part of life and that repairing relationships after mistakes is important.

Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 8/27/14 The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention
2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse
3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

now what? Keep Going.

