

“When I was not able to follow through on a promise to my inner child, I made amends and let him know I was still learning. That started to build trust.”

“A simple reparenting thing I do is look in the mirror and say “I love you” to my reflection at least once a day.”

-Anonymous shares from the Loving Parent Guidebook

REPARENTING CHECK-IN

We can get triggered when our past childhood trauma is activated by situations in our present-day lives, oftentimes evoking intense emotional or physical reactions. To varying degrees and in differing ways for each of us, getting triggered is a part of life. We cannot avoid all triggers – but we can avoid abandoning the parts of ourselves who get triggered.

Checking-in with yourself when triggered (instead of staying “checked-out”) helps strengthen the loving parent. It also develops your capacity to identify and feel your feelings, grounds you in your body and helps you identify the parts of your inner family and their needs. We increase our ability to nurture, protect and guide our inner children each time we *keep coming back* to do a reparenting check-in. . .

First: What one-word emotion(s) are you feeling in this moment?

Where do you feel the emotion(s) in your body? Describe the physical sensations and where you feel them. What is your breathing like – short, rough, fast, constricted? Let yourself feel all of this without judging. Ground your attention in the body.

Second: Who (what part of you) is this?

The inner child might feel fear, shame, sadness, or embarrassment. An inner teenager might feel anger, resentment, a sense of betrayal or may want to lash out. If you don’t know which part is activated, that’s okay. Just being curious helps diffuse the trigger and builds internal trust.

Third: What triggered this part?

We can be triggered by external causes—such as a person, place or thing in our present-day world. We can also be triggered internally, by a critical parent or by other distorted thinking from our family of origin. Once triggered, we unconsciously think and feel like we did as a frightened child or angry teenager. The critical parent may get activated and intensify the



situation. We can set a boundary with the critical parent to protect the triggered part. Identifying the original trigger can help us understand our inner child's feelings and needs, and address them in a caring way.

Fourth: How can you tend to this part? What does this part need?

How do you feel toward the part who needs the loving parent's attention? Connected? Curious? Compassionate? If not, how can you get the loving parent into the reparenting seat? Call a fellow traveler, meditate, pray, be in nature. Once your loving parent is in the reparenting seat, proceed.

If the teenager is triggered, then empathize, validate and reassure. "I hear you. I get that you're feeling angry." If you didn't set a boundary with someone or the critical parent, acknowledge the boundary mishap to the teenager. Set a new boundary if possible. You may need to set a limit with the teenager, "I need you to let me handle this."

If the inner child is triggered, then validate, nurture and reassure them. "I see how hurt you feel. Your body is so tense. You did nothing wrong, it's okay. I love you, you're enough." Physical soothing helps - a hand on the arm or heart, rocking, warm tea. Short, simple phrases (rather than lots of detail) seem to be what the inner child most needs to hear.

In time, we learn to do reparenting check-ins not only when we are triggered, but regularly throughout our day and when we want to celebrate. Checking in with ourselves in this way becomes a self-reinforcing habit: "What am I feeling emotionally and in my body . . . what part of me is activated and 'speaking' to me . . . what does that part need?" Reparenting ourselves through attunement to our inner family becomes a spiritual mindfulness practice - "constant contact" in our everyday lives.

BEGINNING YOUR PRACTICE

You'll derive the most benefit if you practice on a regular basis. Even one minute of reparenting done consistently will make a difference. Some ideas:

- Pair up or start a group to do this reparenting check in together.
- Sit in silence with your inner child.
- Say hello to your inner child when you look in the mirror.
- Experiment with non-dominant handwriting.
- Say affirmations (BRB, page 329) toward a photo of your younger self.
- Throughout the day, check how you're feeling.
- Write down one thing you appreciate about your inner children each day.
- Place your hand on your heart or arm to soothe your inner child.

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