



# Compassionate Parenting:

A Holistic Approach to Raising  
Emotionally Healthy Children

# WORKBOOK



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## Commitment Statement

Throughout this eCourse, I promise to maintain a compassionate view toward myself. I will take on an attitude of kindness and exploration, as I look into what hurt me as a child and the ways that I may be hurting my own child(ren).

I will not be self-hating. I will be brave in my willingness to know myself and confident in my ability to change.

In this way, I will be a positive role model for my kid(s).

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Your Signature

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Date



# Lesson 1

## Exercise 1: Questions for Self-Reflection

Making sense of your past is the biggest predictor of what kind of parent you will be. In this exercise, we invite you to really think about the following questions and reflect on how you felt growing up. By understanding your past, you can gain insight into how you are parenting in the present.

**Note:** *It is not uncommon for deep emotions to get stirred up in the process of answering these questions. Pay attention to your emotions as they come up. Do you feel anxious, angry or sad? You may want to discuss these feelings in our Forum or reach out to a friend or therapist to talk your feelings through.*

**"You have to know the past to understand the present."**  
~Carl Sagan

1. **What do you think your parents offered you that has been the most valuable to you in your adult life? Describe these traits, values or ideals.**

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2. **What faults or weaknesses did you dislike in your parent or parents? Describe these traits.**

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3. Were your parents strict or overly permissive in their discipline of you and your siblings?  
Describe an example of how they disciplined you.

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4. Did you experience any long-term separations from your parent or parents during your childhood? Through death? Divorce? Illness? If so, describe your reactions at the time.

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5. As a child, were you beaten or scolded in the presence of others?

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6. Did your parents demonstrate through behaviors that they liked you?

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7. Did you ever feel humiliated by things your parents did or said in front of others?

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8. Did you ever feel like your parents resented having to meet your needs?

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9. Did you ever feel rejected by your parents?

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10. Was there a parent you could turn to for comfort at difficult times?

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11. Was there someone other than one of your parents that you could turn to for comfort during times of stress?

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12. Did you feel safe, seen, soothed and secure?

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13. Were you able to talk to your parents about emotions? Was there an emotional connection?

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14. Did you feel your parents saw you for who you are or through their own projections and expectations?

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15. How did your parents interact with you when you were happy/excited? When you were in distress (ill, injured or unhappy)?

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16. Do you feel that you parent in the same way that you were parented? How so?

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17. Have you decided *not* to do certain things the way your parents did? Not set up certain rules, for instance. How do you do these things differently?

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# Lesson 1

## Exercise 2: Self-Compassion - How to Treat Yourself Like a Friend\*

\* Adapted from Dr. Kristen Neff's [Self-Compassion.org](https://www.self-compassion.org/)

Self-compassion is the practice of treating yourself with the same kindness and compassion as you would treat a friend. Follow these steps in order to learn how to practice self-compassion.

1. Reflect on times when one of your close friends has been struggling or feeling really bad about themselves. How do you respond to your friends at these times? Write down what you typically do and say. Note the tone in which you typically talk to your friends.

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2. Now reflect on the times when you are struggling or feeling bad about yourself. How do you typically respond to yourself at these times? Write down what you typically do and say. Note the tone in which you talk to yourself.

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3. Did you notice a difference? If so, ask yourself why. What factors or fears do you think lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?

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4. How do you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you are suffering?

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*Intention: Be aware of critical thoughts toward yourself and your children.*

## Lesson 2

### Exercise 1: Part A

### Identify Your Critical Inner Voices

"Parenting is a shame and judgment minefield precisely because most of us are wading through uncertainty and self-doubt when it comes to raising our children."

~Brene Brown

In order to challenge your critical inner voice, you must become aware of what this voice is telling you. This exercise can help you to identify your most intense and most common negative thoughts toward yourself and your children. You may notice certain themes in the type of voices you experience. Are they self-soothing or self-punishing in nature? Do they focus on a specific area of your life or your parenting style? Keep in mind, this exercise may stir up sadness, as you come to recognize the destructive lens through which you see yourself.

### The Firestone Voice Scale for Parents

0 = Never    1 = Rarely    2 = Once in a While    3 = Frequently    4 = Most of the Time

0 1 2 3 4	You've wanted a baby for years, and now you can't wait till he/she goes to sleep. What's the matter with you?
0 1 2 3 4	Your kid is so ungrateful.
0 1 2 3 4	You're such an angry parent. You lose your temper all the time.
0 1 2 3 4	Your kid is so different. You don't understand him/her.
0 1 2 3 4	You're responsible for how they feel. It's your fault if they are upset.
0 1 2 3 4	You've got to be in control.
0 1 2 3 4	You're so impatient with kids.

0 1 2 3 4	Your child is supposed to fit into your life, not disrupt it.
0 1 2 3 4	You're just like your mother/father.
0 1 2 3 4	You're boring. You never do anything fun anymore.
0 1 2 3 4	Your child doesn't really love you.
0 1 2 3 4	You have nothing to offer.
0 1 2 3 4	You can't handle this.
0 1 2 3 4	Your baby is always crying. You must be doing something wrong.
0 1 2 3 4	You've got to clamp down early, so children won't grow up to be bad.
0 1 2 3 4	You're so old now.
0 1 2 3 4	Your child is so demanding and clingy.
0 1 2 3 4	You don't know the first thing about being a parent.
0 1 2 3 4	Your body doesn't look good since you had kids.
0 1 2 3 4	You're going to spoil that child. You should just let him/her cry himself/herself to sleep.
0 1 2 3 4	Your child has to learn that you mean what you say. Go ahead and spank him/her.
0 1 2 3 4	You're a failure at everything you try.
0 1 2 3 4	You shouldn't have had kids.
0 1 2 3 4	You never look attractive anymore now that you're a mom/dad.
0 1 2 3 4	What's wrong with this kid?
0 1 2 3 4	You don't know how to comfort your baby. You can't make him (her) feel better.
0 1 2 3 4	You don't deserve to have your own life.
0 1 2 3 4	Who cares about what you're feeling as a parent? Your feelings aren't important. The only thing that matters is what your child is feeling.

0 1 2 3 4	You don't know how to handle a baby. You're going to drop him/her. If you don't hurt it physically, you're going to hurt it mentally.
0 1 2 3 4	That kid is just trying to get under your skin.
0 1 2 3 4	You can't let kids get away with anything. You have to show them who's the boss whatever way you can.
0 1 2 3 4	You can't handle a career <i>and</i> a family.
0 1 2 3 4	See how unhappy your child looks. It's all your fault.
0 1 2 3 4	Your children are misbehaving in public again. See how bad they're making you look!
0 1 2 3 4	Why are these kids so needy?
0 1 2 3 4	You're so inconsiderate. All you think about is yourself.
0 1 2 3 4	You're miserable to be around.
0 1 2 3 4	These kids are out of control.
0 1 2 3 4	You don't deserve happiness.
0 1 2 3 4	That child is rotten just like his/her mother/father.
0 1 2 3 4	That baby's always waking up early just to bother you.
0 1 2 3 4	Nothing is fun anymore.
0 1 2 3 4	Why don't your kids just leave you alone?
0 1 2 3 4	No one would be attracted to you now that you're a parent.
0 1 2 3 4	Look, you got spanked as a kid; that's how you learned the difference between right and wrong. The only effective way to discipline children is to physically punish them. It's for their own good.
0 1 2 3 4	No one appreciates you.
0 1 2 3 4	How can you even talk about being deprived as a child? You had everything, two parents, a sister, a nice house. You have only yourself to blame for the problems you're having as a parent.

0	1	2	3	4	No one else sees how special your child is.
0	1	2	3	4	Don't show him/her that you are proud of him/her You'll just make him/her feel full of him/herself.
0	1	2	3	4	Children are born aggressive, greedy and selfish and have to be taught how to be civilized and unselfish.
0	1	2	3	4	Don't let your feelings show.
0	1	2	3	4	(Mothers) Men don't know how to take care of a baby, so you should just do it all yourself.
0	1	2	3	4	(Fathers) Men don't know how to take care of a baby, so let your wife do it.





# Lesson 2

## Exercise 1: Part B

### Challenge Your Critical Inner Voice

This exercise is adapted from Dr. Robert Firestone's five steps of Voice Therapy. It will help you to identify, separate from, respond to and challenge your critical inner voice attacks. Thinking negatively about yourself can seriously interfere with your efforts to be a compassionate parent. As you start to think of yourself in a more positive light, you will be better able to apply the child-rearing techniques talked about in this course. You also help prevent these voices from being passed on to your children.

#### Step 1: Identify What Your Critical Inner Voice is Telling You

On the left side of Chart 1 (included in the following pages) record any negative thoughts that you have had toward yourself recently (*I am so lazy/unworthy/ absentminded*). Then, on the right side, translate these same statements into the second person (*You are so lazy/ unworthy/ absentminded*). Read over the negative statements on the right (it can be helpful to read them out loud). Do you get the feeling that someone else is talking to you? Do you detect an unfriendly, snide or hostile tone? Do these negative statements trigger more attacks? If so, write them down in the second person on the right side of the page. Putting your critical inner voice in the second person can help you see it as a separate and alien point of view.

#### Step 2: Recognize Where Your Voices Come From

After you write down your voices, you may have deep feelings as well as some insight into the source of these voice attacks. Do your voices remind you of things you heard or felt in your past? Do the attacks feel old and familiar? Your voices may be representative of attitudes that you experienced as a child, perhaps ways your parents treated you or ways they saw themselves. Recognizing where your voices originated can help you further separate from your inner critic and develop more compassion for yourself.



### **Step 3: Responding to Your Critical Inner Voice**


In the third step of voice therapy, an individual answers back to their voice attacks. Take Chart 2 (included in the following pages) and place it along the right side of Chart 1, on which you wrote down your voices in the second person. On this new page, next to each voice attack, try to express a realistic and impartial view of yourself, your qualities and your reactions. Remember to maintain a self-compassionate view toward yourself. What would a trustworthy friend or an objective observer say or see about you in relation to the voice attack? Make sure to state this point of view in the first person (“I” statements). This is not meant to be an exercise where you build yourself up, but rather where you view yourself with an objective and kind attitude. You are seeing yourself through your own eyes, as you really are.

### **Step 4: Understanding How Your Voices Influence Your Behavior**

After expressing and responding to your voices, think about how these patterns of self-defeating thoughts have influenced you and how they impact your present-day behaviors. Gaining an understanding of how your critical inner voice has affected your actions is helpful to changing specific self-limiting behaviors.

### **Step 5: Changing Your Self-Limiting Behaviors**

Once you’ve identified areas in which you limit yourself, you can begin to challenge behaviors that don’t serve you in your life today. Try to notice a moment when your critical inner voice creeps in (maybe getting your kids to do their homework or tidying up in the evening). Take notice of the behaviors the voice inspires (like encouraging you to blow up at your kid or to complain about how hard you’re working). Refuse to engage in the self-destructive behavior that is being encouraged by your critical inner voice. Instead, consciously make choices to take positive actions that go against the recommendations of the voice (maybe calmly talk to your kid about if and why they’re struggling or simply and directly ask for help with whatever you’re working on).



# Chart 1

Write your voices as “I” statements.

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Write your voices as “you” statements.

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## Chart 2

Respond to your voices with more compassionate, realistic statements about yourself.



# Lesson 2

## Exercise 2: Becoming a Role Model

**Write your answer to the following questions:**

Do you feel that you are a good role model for your children? If you are not completely satisfied with yourself as a role model, what areas would you like to change in the future?

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# Lesson 2

## Exercise 3: Emotional Hunger

Write your answer to the following questions:

1. Can you recall your parents being overprotective or intrusive? Did their treatment of you make you feel that you were more helpless or incompetent than you really were at that age? Describe your reactions.

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2. Did your parents try to get comfort from you when you were a child? Did one of them seek you out as a confidant or special companion and leave the other parent out? How did you feel?

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3. Did your parent or parents insist that you perform for friends and relatives? How did you feel at those times?

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4. Did your parent or parents brag excessively to their friends and relatives about your accomplishments (as though your achievements or talent were theirs)? How did you respond?

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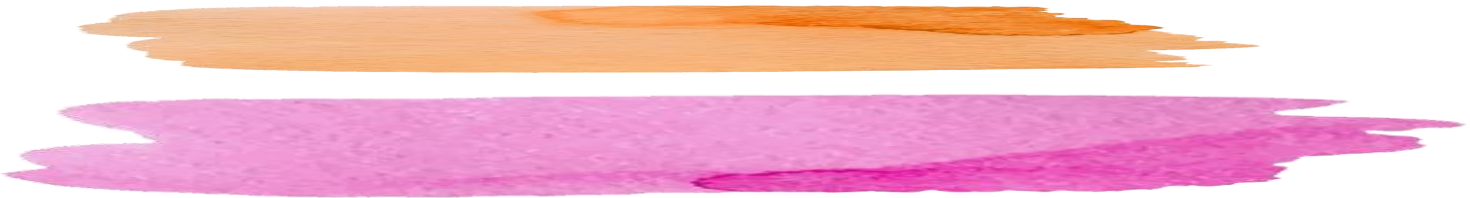
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*Intention: Understand your attachment history and how it influences your life today.*

## Lesson 3

### Exercise 1: Reflect on Your Own Attachment Style

- What style of attachment do you think you had with each of your parents? Based on what you learned in this week's multimedia presentation, do you think the attachment pattern between you and your parents would be best described as secure, anxious, avoidant or disorganized?

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"What lingers from the parent's individual past, unresolved or incomplete, often becomes part of her or his irrational parenting."  
~ Virginia Satir

- How do you think your attachment style affects you in your life today? Do you feel like your early attachment has affected you in your relationships or parenting?

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# Lesson 3

## Exercise 2: Three Words

Think of three words to describe your relationship with each of your parents and/or early child caretakers. For each word, write out an example that represents or illustrates the word.

Parent/Caretaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

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Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

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Parent/Caretaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

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Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

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Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

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Parent/Caretaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

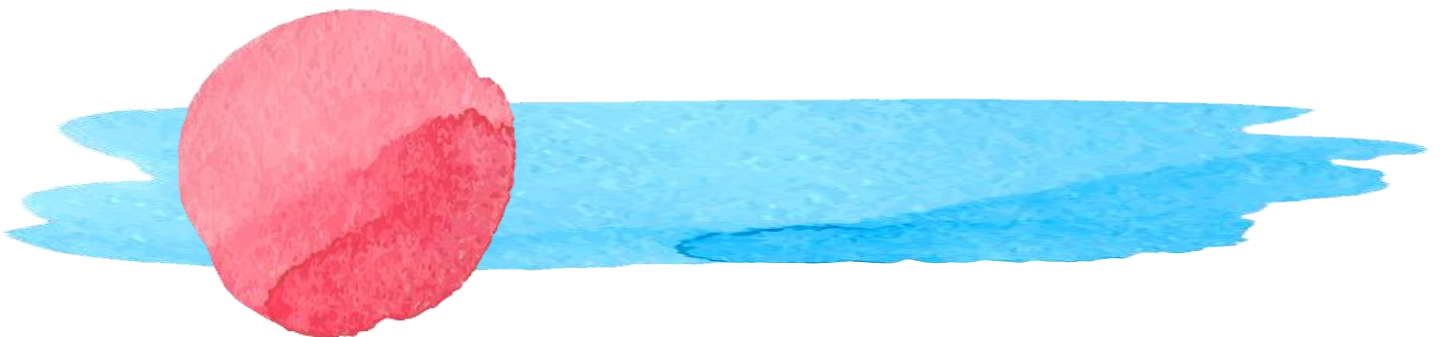
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Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Look back at your answers. Do the examples you describe fit with the words you chose?





*Intention: Reflect on the times that are challenging for you and look for patterns.*

## Lesson 4

### Exercise 1: Triggers

All parents face particularly challenging times in parenting. At these times, we often get triggered and may “lose it” with our children. Some examples of common triggers include, running late, temper tantrums, inappropriate public displays, or our own stress. This exercise asks you to reflect on the times where you feel triggered or flip your lid with your child.

**"Parents forgive their children least readily for the faults they themselves instilled in them."**

**~ Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach**

#### 1. What situations commonly trigger you?

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#### 2. How do you feel when you get triggered with your child? What are the feelings and sensations you experience in your body when you are triggered?

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3. Are you aware of any thoughts or critical inner voices that come up when you are triggered?

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4. What actions do you normally take when triggered with your child?

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5. What are some actions that may be more effective?

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# Lesson 4

## Exercise 2: Choose Your Words

Choose from the descriptive list given below and pick the word that best describes the deeper emotion that comes up for you when you get triggered. This is often some kind of fear about yourself or how others feel about you. It may be some kind of anguish or hurt.

**Lonely**

**Let down**

**Inadequate**

**Overwhelmed**

**Vulnerable**

**Failing/Ashamed**

**Hurt**

**Worried/Shaky**

**Humiliated**

**Intimidated**

**Unimportant**

**Small/Insignificant**

**Rejected**

**Scared**

**Unwanted Dismissed**

**Sad**

**Hopeless**

**Helpless**

**Lost/Confused**

**Panicked**



# Lesson 4

## Exercise 3: Rupture and Repair

There is no such thing as perfect parenting. We all have times where we are misattuned and unintentionally hurtful with our children. The best thing to do after a rupture with your child is to repair.

**You can follow these steps to repair a rupture:**

- Get calm.
- Sit down with your child at eye-level.
- Draw out your child's experience of the situation.
- Try to understand how it felt to be them in that situation, how things looked through their eyes.
- Don't contradict their experience or get overly emotional.
- After they have expressed their experience, you can say yours and apologize.

**Think about a recent rupture with your child. What happened? How did you repair it?**

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# Lesson 4

## Exercise 4: Three Questions in Discipline

Think about a recent time where you had to discipline your child. Ask yourself these three questions from No Drama Discipline by Daniel Siegel and Tina Bryson.

**1. Why did the child act this way?**

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**2. What lesson do I want to teach?**

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**3. How can I best teach that lesson?**

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*Intention: Reflect on the type of person  
you want to raise.*

## Lesson 5

### Exercise 1: Help Your Child Identify and Communicate Core Emotions

**"The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers."**

**~ Thich Nhat Hanh**

Practicing the following exercise with your kids helps them to be more mindful and attuned to their own thoughts and feelings. By developing their emotional IQ, you offer kids a chance to feel more calm, resilient and emotionally healthy.

- Notice when your child's emotions have been stirred up. This can be a moment of disappointment, anger or even excitement.
- If your child is in the middle of an "emotional storm," try to help him or her feel safe and contained until the intensity of emotion passes, and he or she feels calmer.
- Ask your child about what he or she felt in the experience. "What did you feel in your body?" "Can you name the feeling you had?" "What did that feeling make you want to do?" As much as possible, try not to name the child's emotions for them. If they're too young to articulate their feelings, you can name a couple of emotions that it seemed like they were feeling and allow them to reflect and respond. You'd be surprised how young a child can affirm when they are scared, sad or mad.
- Emphasize that all feelings are acceptable. Explain that there are no bad feelings, and that actions are different than feelings. We don't choose what we feel. Feelings move through us. However, we do choose how we act, and actions have consequences and can be hurtful.
- Keep an open and ongoing conversation about what emotions your child experiences. Encourage this by being open and vocalizing your own feelings on a consistent basis.

# Lesson 5

## Exercise 2: Test Your Own Emotional Intelligence

How well do you read other people's emotions? Take this quiz from Greater Good to find out:

[http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/ei\\_quiz/](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/ei_quiz/)

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Body Language Quiz | *Test Your Emotional Intelligence*

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### How Well Do You Read Other People?

Facial expressions are a universal language of emotion, instantly conveying happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and much more. Reading these expressions is essential to compassion and empathy.

Take this short quiz to measure your emotional intelligence. Try to identify the emotion conveyed in each of the 20 photos. Each answer will pinpoint the exact muscles involved in that emotion and explain the subtle differences between expressions, drawing on pioneering research by psychologists Paul Ekman and Dacher Keltner. Some emotions appear more than once.

When you're done, share your score and have friends take the quiz—and watch for our forthcoming empathy training tool, designed to improve your score.

TAKE THE QUIZ

30





## Lesson 5

### Exercise 3: Teach Your Child to Do a Body Scan – A Mindfulness Exercise for Kids

This exercise helps kids to relax and reconnect to themselves. It offers them a way to calm down within themselves and can be helpful to do before bed or in times of transition, for example, when they first come home from school. Try this exercise yourself a few times before you do it with your kids. Then, walk them through the following steps. Take as much time as you like on each step, giving each part of your body time and attention and adding any specific instructions that could be useful. The exercise can last anywhere from three minutes to 10:

- Lie down in a comfortable position or sit in a chair with both feet on the floor. Feel your weight against the surface beneath you. If lying down, let yourself melt into the floor or bed.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Start to focus on the very top of your head. Do you notice any feelings, pain or tightness? Don't try to change what you feel – just notice it.
- Now move down to your neck. Notice what it feels like, any stiffness or discomfort. Do the same with your shoulders, arms, elbows, hands and fingers. Pay attention to any part of your body that's touching another surface like the back of chair or the floor. If your hands are touching something, notice the position they're in and how they feel.
- Keep moving down and on to your chest. Notice your breath or any feeling. Then, think about what you feel in your stomach, legs, feet and toes. Notice the way your feet are positioned, their heaviness and any other feelings or sensations.
- Once you've scanned your entire body, take a few deep breaths to end the exercise.



*Intention: Think about what lights you up and makes you feel fulfilled.*

## Lesson 6

### Exercise 1: Create a Value System for Your Kids

**"The most rewarding aspect of parenting is seeing my children be authentic."**  
~ Jamie Lee Curtis

Think about the qualities that most matter to you in your child. What values and traits do you want them to possess? Try to separate these from the qualities your parents may have pushed on you. This exercise helps you identify the type of person you want to raise and outlines the traits that you yourself should model for your kids. Once you've completed the exercise, you can think about which of these traits will most serve your children throughout their lives. Is the way you're raising them conducive to them developing these


traits? You can even determine if some of the pressures you're putting on them may be exaggerated or unfair.

**Rate the importance of these qualities in your children on a scale of 0-4:**

0 1 2 3 4	Generosity	0 1 2 3 4	Compassion
0 1 2 3 4	Confidence	0 1 2 3 4	Achievement/ Success
0 1 2 3 4	Kindness	0 1 2 3 4	Honesty
0 1 2 3 4	Intelligence	0 1 2 3 4	Emotional Intelligence
0 1 2 3 4	Competence	0 1 2 3 4	Creativity
0 1 2 3 4	Work Ethic	0 1 2 3 4	Capacity for Joy
0 1 2 3 4	Social Skills	0 1 2 3 4	Ability to make/keep friends
0 1 2 3 4	Patience	0 1 2 3 4	Individuality
0 1 2 3 4	Enthusiasm	0 1 2 3 4	Sportsmanship

0 1 2 3 4	Curiosity	0 1 2 3 4	Physicality
0 1 2 3 4	Athleticism	0 1 2 3 4	Playfulness
0 1 2 3 4	Appearance/ Attractiveness	0 1 2 3 4	Affection
0 1 2 3 4	Passion	0 1 2 3 4	Warmth
0 1 2 3 4	Commitment	0 1 2 3 4	Sense of Humor
0 1 2 3 4	Respectfulness	0 1 2 3 4	Assertiveness
0 1 2 3 4	Resilience	0 1 2 3 4	Compliance
0 1 2 3 4	Calmness	0 1 2 3 4	Bravery
0 1 2 3 4	Independence in Thinking	0 1 2 3 4	Cooperation with Others
0 1 2 3 4	Easy-Going Attitude	0 1 2 3 4	Altruism





## Lesson 6

### Exercise 2: Create a Support Team for Yourself and Your Kids

Surround yourself with like-minded people who support you being a better parent and who model qualities that you want your kids to have. Remember, children need a minimum of five loving adults to thrive. Building a support team will not only help you stay on track as a parent and in your personal goals, but it will heavily benefit your kids.

#### Part 1: Find Your Team

Think about the people – friends, family members and co-workers – that you feel good being around. Are these people supportive of you being the parent you want to be? Do they have traits you want your kids to emulate? Do they support you in your personal goals?

- List their names and describe their qualities.

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Think about those people that you don't feel so good being around. For example, a friend who offers you unwanted advice.

- **List their names.**

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Think about the toxic traits and behaviors that these people may possess.

- **List these qualities.**

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## Part 2: Take action!

### Action 1:

- Make a plan to spend more time with the people who make you and/or your kids feel good.
- Think of activities you and/or your kids might share with these people.

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- Think of steps you could take toward this goal.

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### Action 2:

- Describe the steps that you plan to take to recruit a friend (supportive person) to talk with from time to time on a one-to-one basis.

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- Discuss your progress and how to overcome any obstacles that come up in your life and goals.

## Lesson 6

### Exercise 3: What Gives Your Life Meaning?

Write your answer to the following questions:

### What did your parents think gave life meaning?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

**Name three areas that you feel give your life meaning.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### What about these things matter to you/ light you up?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

### How could you do these things more justice in your life?

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