

Here's a Quick Way to Cool Down Before You Blow Up

"Every day is a new day." That's what I heard Miss Anne, my 3 year old's preschool teacher say to a group of 3-4 year olds as they created a game on the hay bales and excluded one of their school mates. The morning had just begun and already the children were thinking about the trouble they had in the past with their friend. It took some explaining, but the children soon realized that everyone can start fresh, with a clean slate - there are no mistakes in this beautiful new day!

My son, at only 34 months, understood the concept. The other morning he cried in defiance because he insisted on wearing a short sleeved shirt while I firmly stated that today he needed another shirt on top with long sleeves. Big tears rolled down his cheeks and he pulled and yanked at his shirts. I felt frustrated and exasperated. His desire to wear summer apparel in November was getting so old! I could feel my adrenaline pumping through my veins and my brain swirling with high emotion as his shrieks and foot stamping danced on my head like staccato piano notes.

Deep breath. In and out. This was a moment for a PAUSE. "Okay," I asked myself, "What is my intention?" Hmm...I thought. I want him to be comfortable, settled, and warm. I want to teach him that in hot weather we wear short sleeves and in cold weather we wear long sleeves. I want to be calm and not let his upset ruin my day. I sat and took my PAUSE for about 30-60 seconds. I heard him stop shrieking and stomping. He found me, sitting quietly, taking my pause. He crawled up into my lap and said, "Let's start over."

Next time your child provides you with an opportunity to be annoyed, angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed, make a conscious effort to **PAUSE**. Just like hitting the "pause" button on your DVD player, you want to briefly take a moment to reflect on "*what is my intention?*" This brief moment will help you stay in your thinking brain rather than slip down into your emotional brain stem. You will be able to then respond to your child rather than react.

What behaviors does your preschooler do that sends your brain swirling, and make you need to stop and PAUSE?