



**WEEK 10 | YOUR TRANSFORMATIVE PARENTAL JOURNEY**

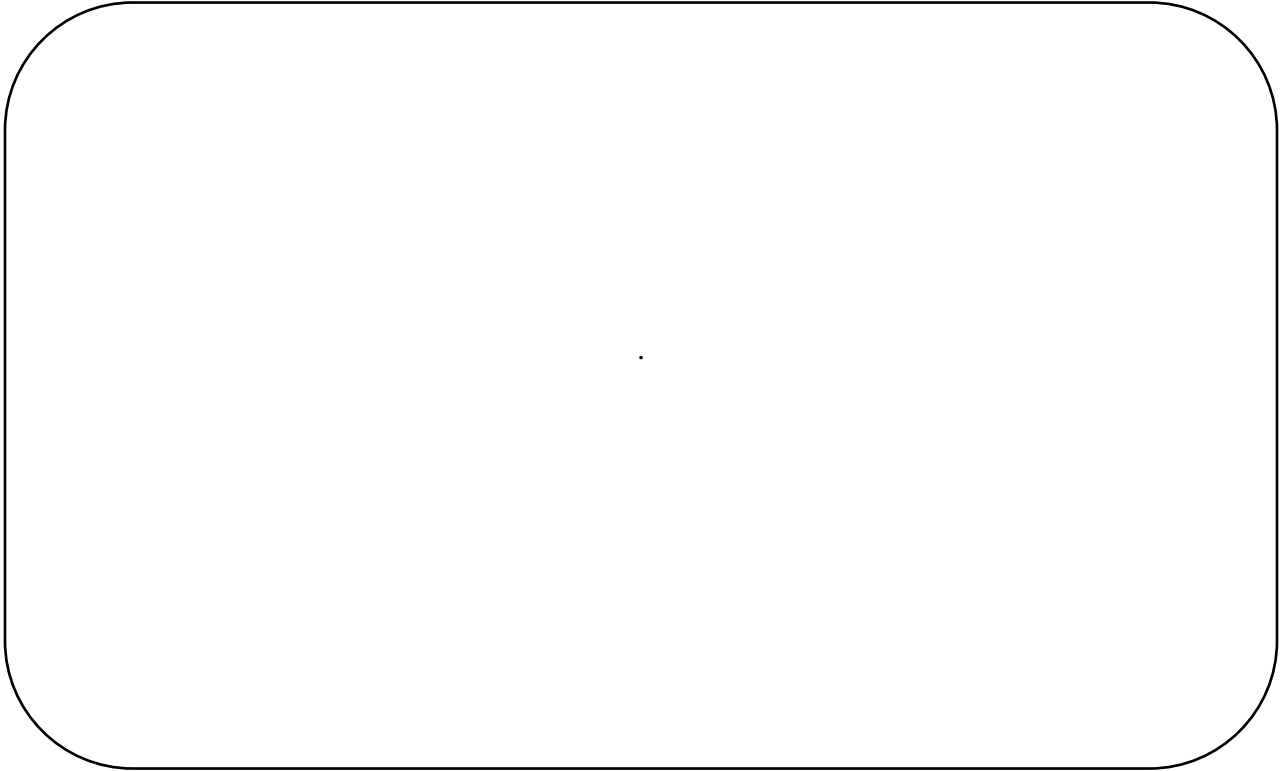
*Exploring Anger  
and  
Healthy Aggression*

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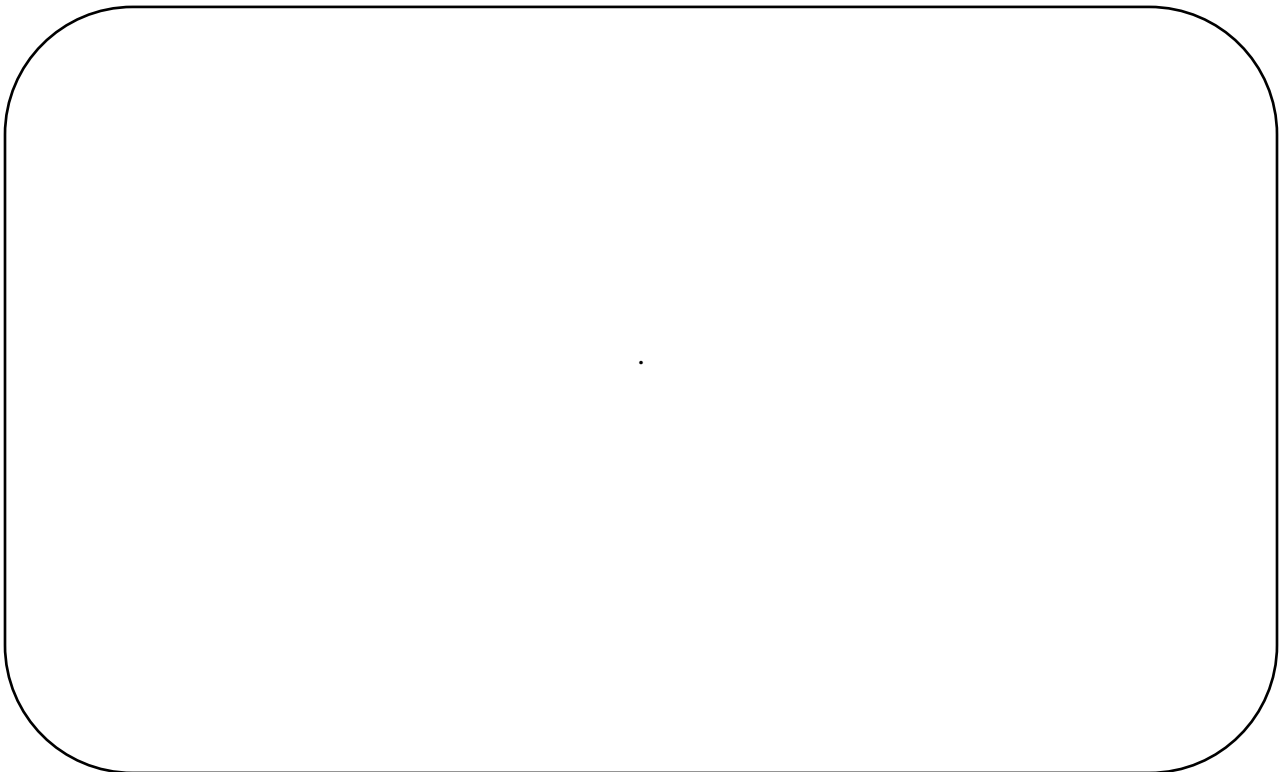
**Let's Recap:**

What did you love about Empowered Conversations?

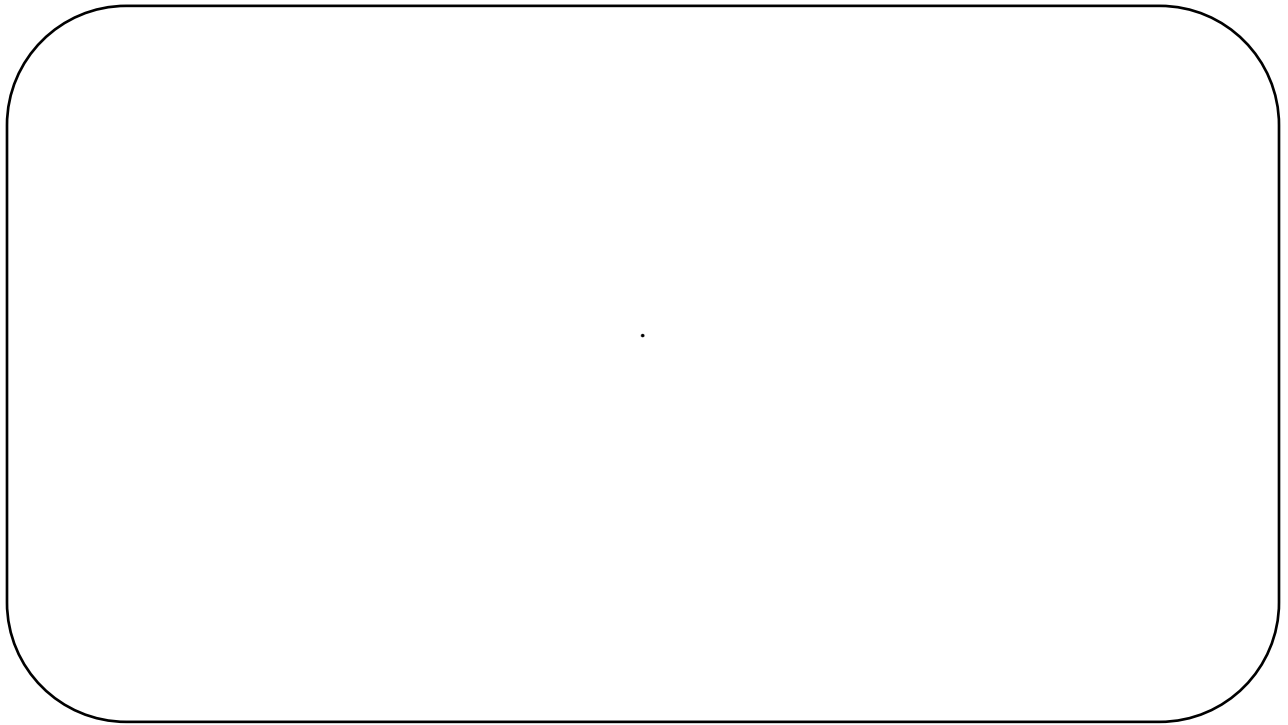
What awareness did you gain about your communication patterns?



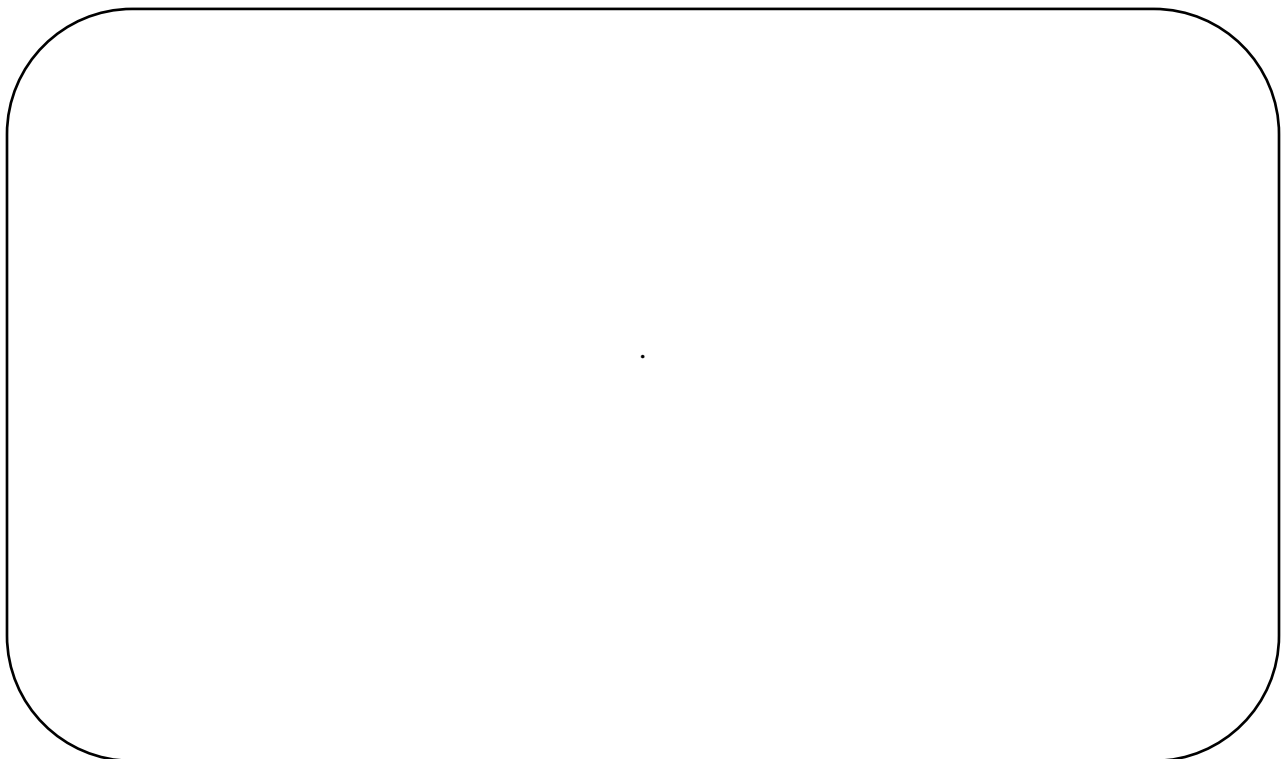
What awareness did you gain about your beliefs around your voice?



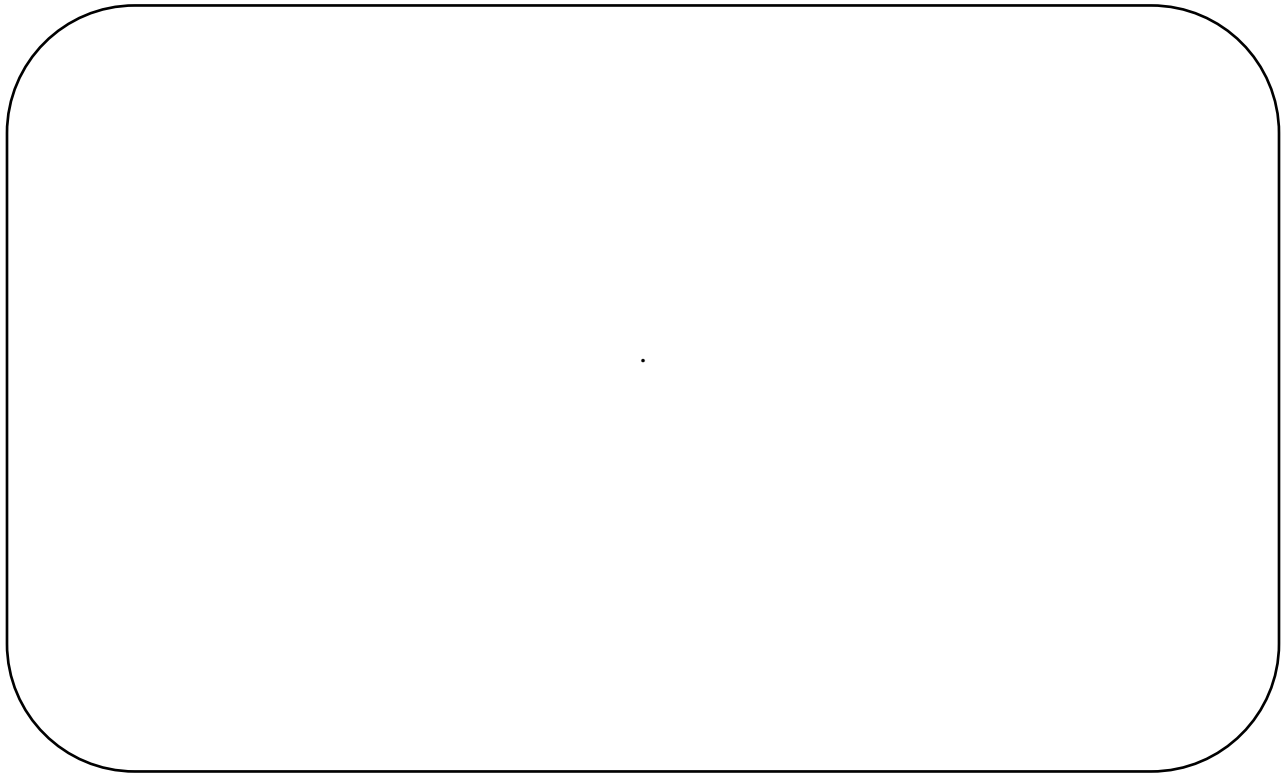
Have you found yourself better able to verbally express your inner world in a way that makes sense, and allows another person to understand you?



Are you struggling anywhere with making sense of Empowered Conversations, or Nonviolent Communication? (Hint--this is why working with a coach is so stupendous. Bring your concerns or confusions to your tenth session with your coach,)



How is the PEACE Process developing for you? Have you found yourself able to respond to parenting scenarios with this five-step process in mind?



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## Making Peace With Anger

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*As we continue our process through Empowered Parenting, we must confront every parent's best friend, or rather, worst enemy: Anger.*

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Most parents struggle with impatience, irritability, and long to be more calm, less reactive, and more peaceful within.

We've already laid the bricks of this discussion, having thoroughly explored attachment, nervous system science, the brain (especially the amygdala), emotional intelligence, and communication. It is worth spending an entire week understanding our most ethereal and riotous emotion: Anger.

Echoing Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson, on our continuing path to earn a secure attachment within ourselves and our relationship with our children, we are invited to create a coherent life narrative specifically surrounding anger.

## **What Is Anger?**

Anger is one of our six primal emotions (sorrow or grief, joy, fear, surprise, and disgust are the others). Everything emotional is neutral until we attach meaning to it. Attaching meaning to our emotions, especially weaving a (limiting) story around the emotional experience, is what brains do--especially young and immature brains. We learn to create our understanding of the emotion of anger, and so often, it holds us back as adults from having a neutral, emotionally objective experience.

**Hint: Emotional objectivity does not mean disconnecting from the emotion, rather it's the ability to feel with healthy non-attachment.** Think of nonverbal self-empathy: feeling the emotion in your body, and allowing it to melt away with ease through every deep exhalation. Imagine verbal self-empathy: "Wow, I notice I'm feeling angry. It does not feel comfortable, yet I am safe within this emotion. It's here to tell me something...what could it be? I think I'm needing to be heard right now."

## **What Is Anger Here For?**

According to Gabrielle Roth, the founder of 5Rhythms, a somatic-movement practice focused on establishing healthy and healing relationships with our core primal emotions, anger is our protector emotion, and it is here to communicate when our values have been crossed, or our needs are not being met. Sound familiar?

In parenting, our boundaries will inevitably be crossed by very immature and dependent young brains and bodies (our beloved children). In parenting, our needs are not always met while simultaneously being demanded to meet our child's needs.

## **Anger is a natural response that lets us know:**

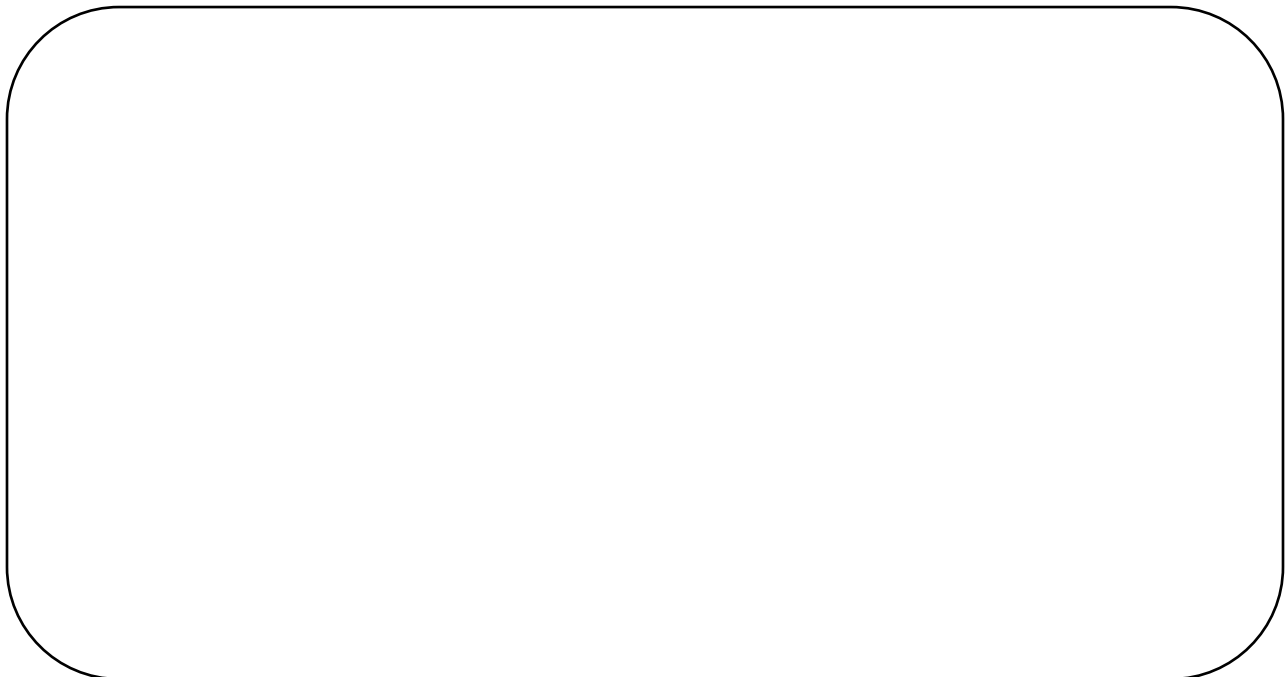
- This matters to you. How can you effectively communicate this boundary in a way that upholds the sanctity of your relationship with yourself and child?
- A need has been going chronically unmet, and it CANNOT be neglected or denied any longer. How can you become aware of your basic needs as a caregiver, to thrive in your parenting?

- This boundary is important for you, and you are not willing or able to be flexible. How can you support your child to connect deeply into trust, so they will find the willingness to surrender into collaboration?
- There is an imbalance, and you matter, too. How can you tend your non-negotiable needs AND tend to your children's needs? How can balance be modeled?
- Something is not right here. Something is amiss. A conversation needs to be had; a tweaking of a schedule needs to be made.
- Your expectations are not developmentally or contextually appropriate for yourself or your child in this moment. Your anger is showing you that you may need to access the courage and willingness to let go and find flexibility.
- This pattern of relating and communicating is no longer working for you. Something needs to change.

Which of the communications from above resonate with you?



Could you add any other communication messages anger may be trying to tell you?



## Looking Back

### How you experienced anger in your childhood

We do not intend to stir up painful or overwhelming experiences for you from your childhood. Rather, we are practicing naming what you have witnessed, to better understand the inheritances you unconsciously carry. Remember, our patterned responses, especially in time of stress, are a direct descendant of any overwhelming experience or unprocessed emotion from your childhood.

Please connect with your anchor before answering the following questions. If at any time you feel discomfort and wish to stop—STOP!

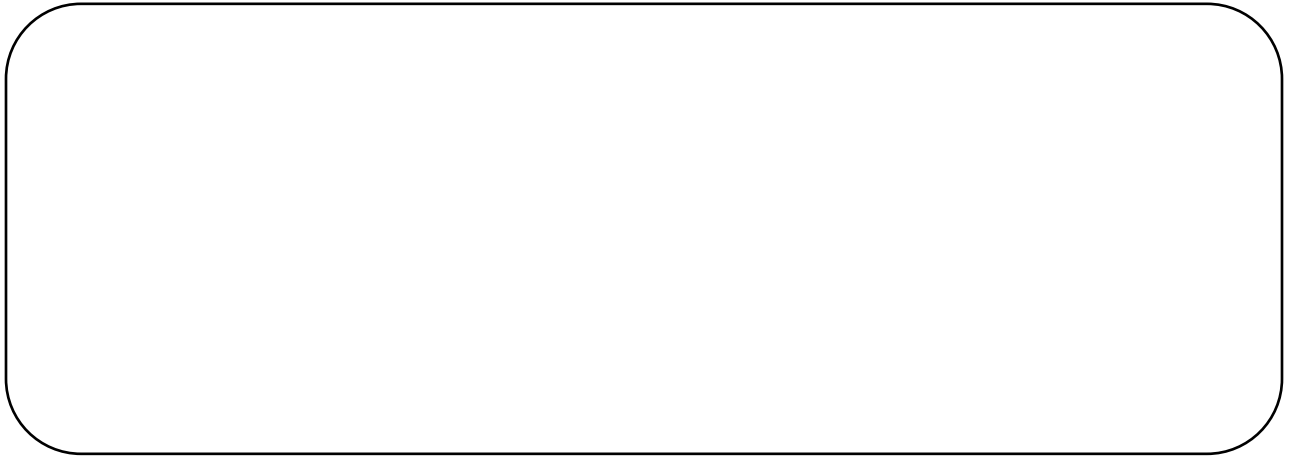
When you were a child, was anger shown in your home by your primary caregiver/s?




If so, how was it typically expressed?



Reflecting on this, how do you feel right now? (Remember, stay as present as you can in this moment--you are NOT a child anymore--this is NOT happening anymore. You are safe.)



What did you come to believe about anger as a child? There is no right answer here.

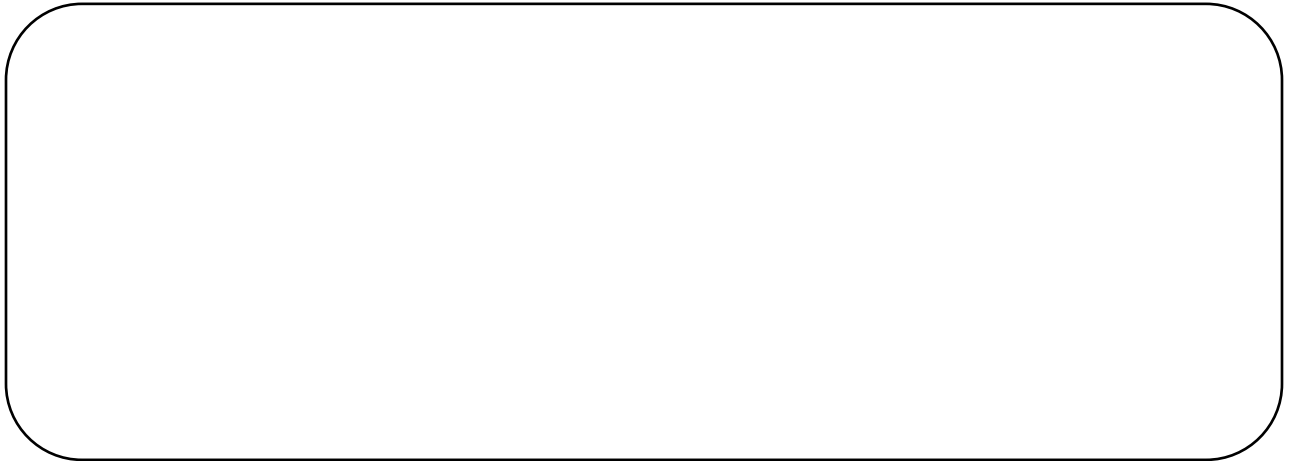


When you did not behave as your caregiver/s wanted you to as a child, how did they handle their anger/frustration/disappointment?






Do you remember experiencing anger as a child?



If so, were you met with connection and calm in your anger? Or disconnection and punishment?

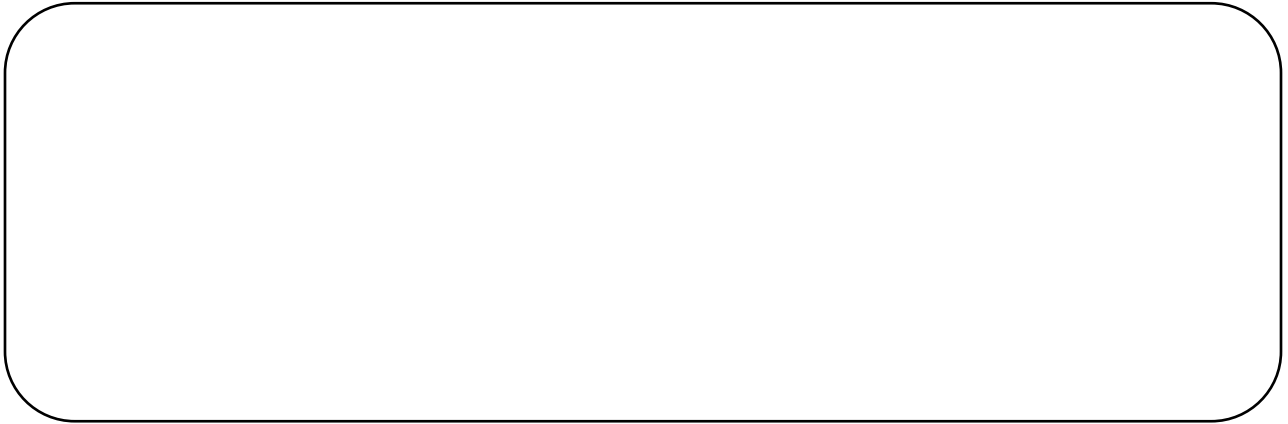


If you did not get what you wanted as a child, how did you respond?

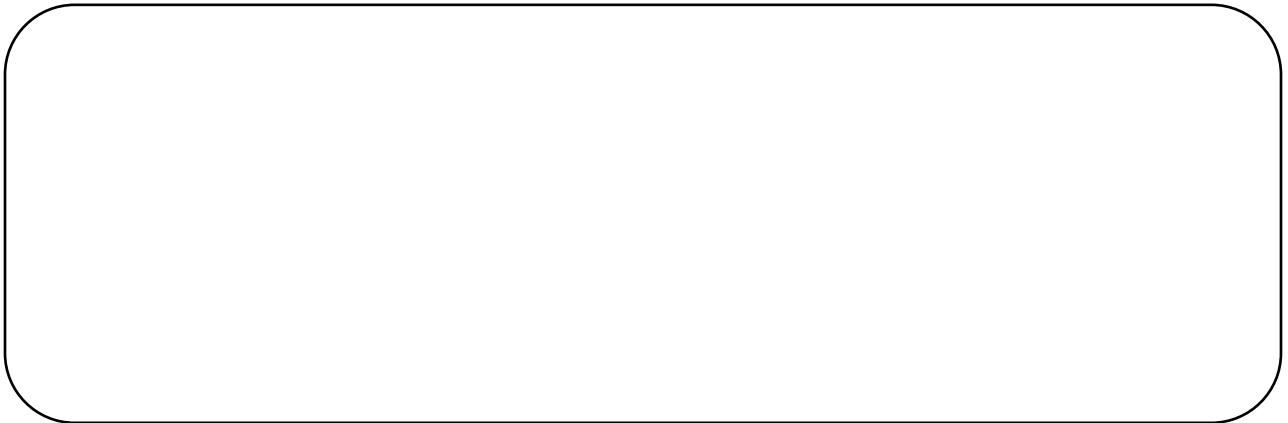


## Parenthood

As a parent, do you allow yourself space to feel and or reflect on your disappointments and regrets?



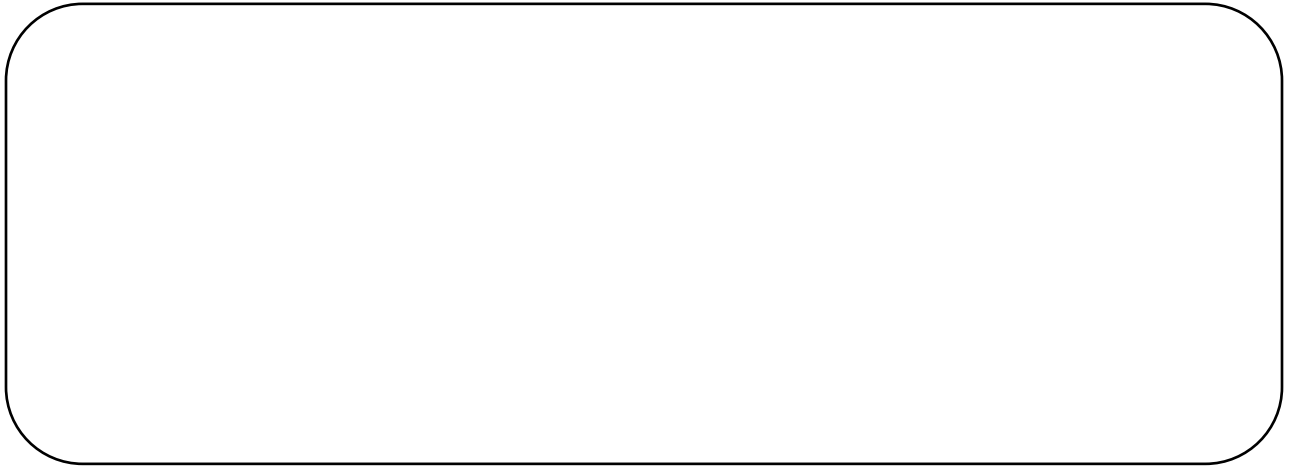
As a parent, when you act out in anger, do you take time to reflect on what happened, and why?



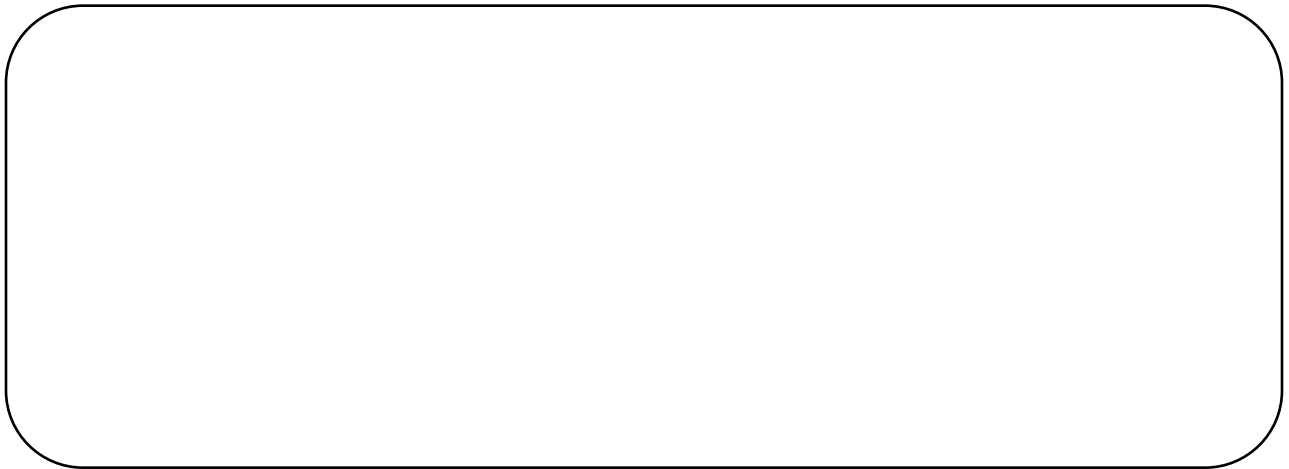
Do you experience anger as a parent? If so, how do you typically express your anger?



Do you sometimes assume or worry that your child is malicious, ill-intentioned, or only here to give you a hard time?



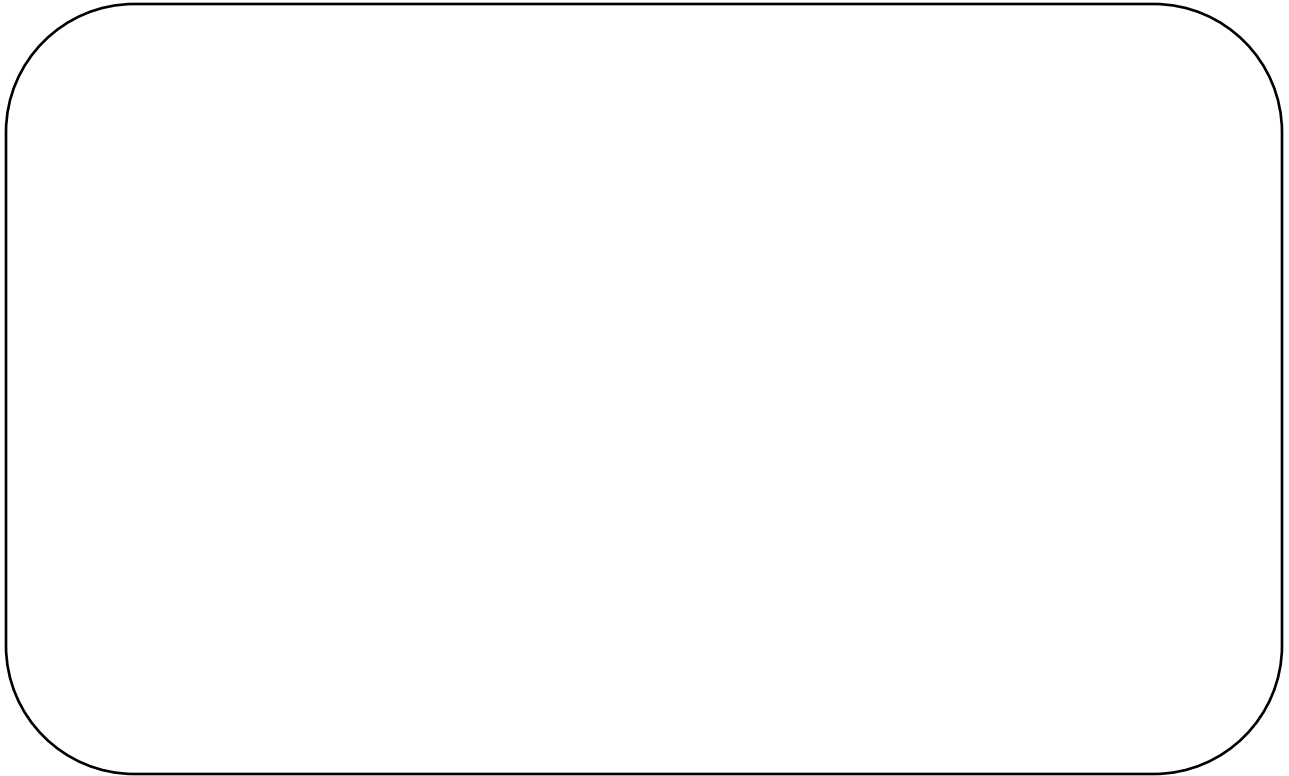
When do you find yourself becoming angry? Maybe when your child behaves in a way you cannot understand, back talks, or demands you meet their needs. Or when you are not getting your needs met?



When you act in anger, and it impacts your child, do you acknowledge your child's experience and apologize?



When you experience anger, can you pinpoint at least 3 feelings connected to it (shame, resentment, or burn out are typically present).

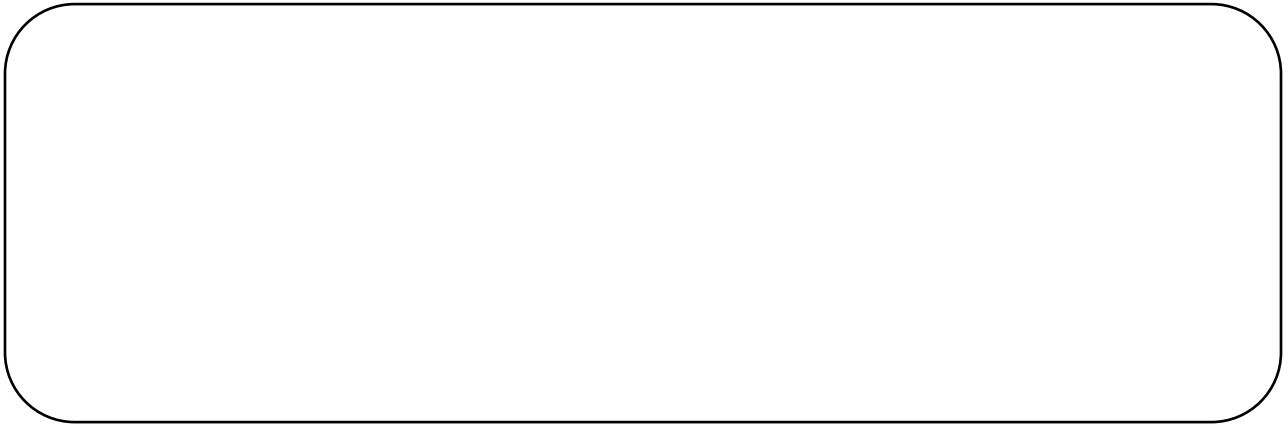
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Do you believe you can grow and mature to effectively contain your anger and consciously choose how to express it?

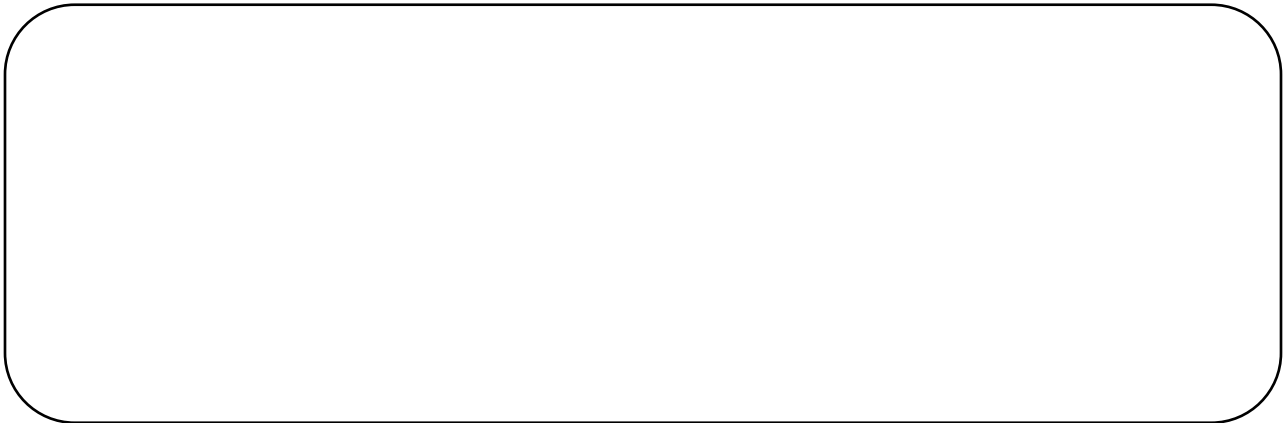
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## **Your Children**

When your child experiences the emotion of anger, how do you feel witnessing them in that emotion?



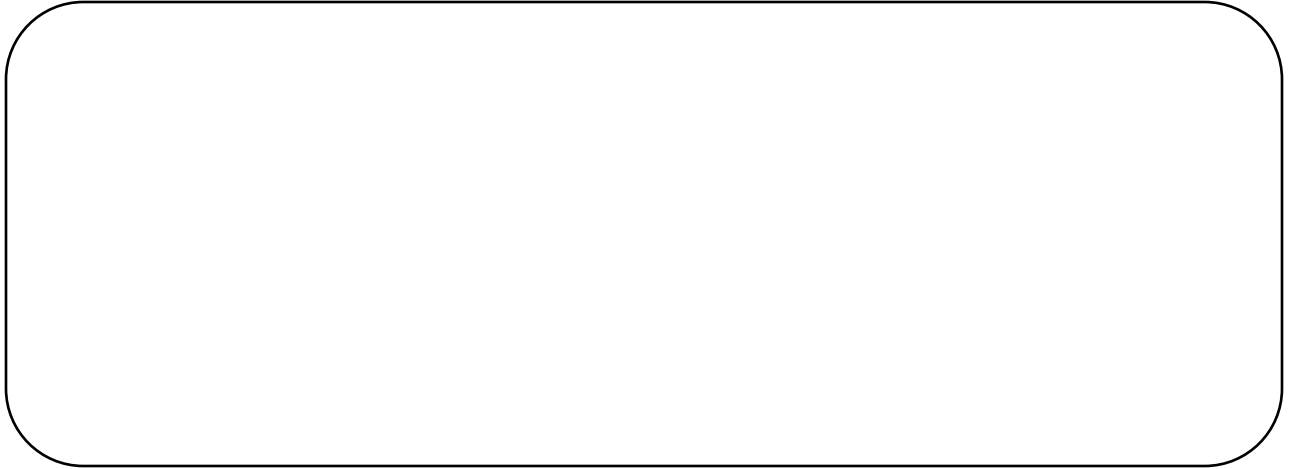
What thoughts run through your mind witnessing them in their anger?



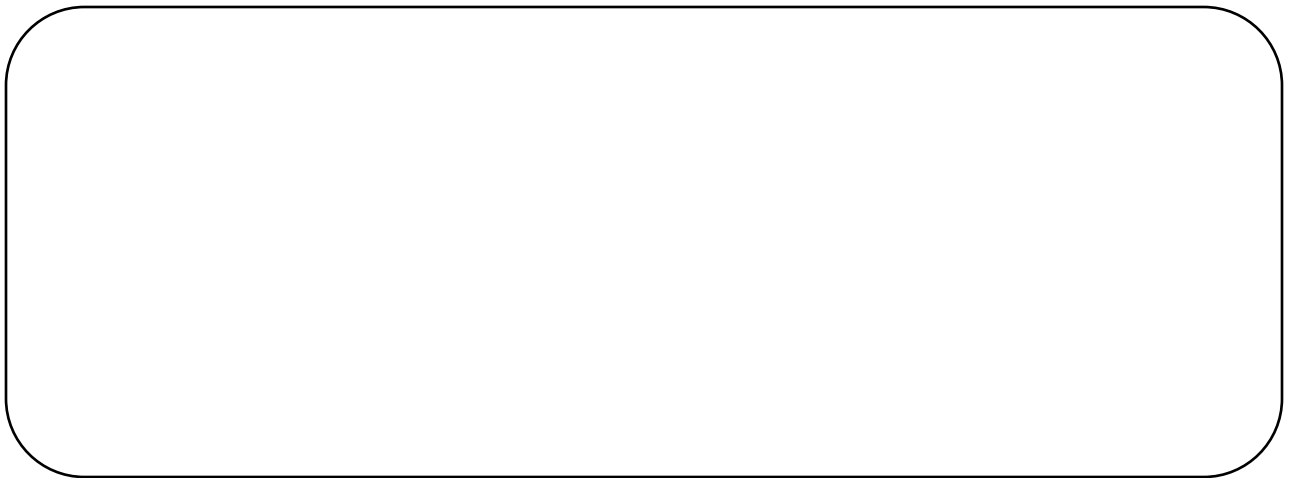
Does your nervous system interpret anger as dangerous or safe?



Does your brain interpret anger as healthy and good, or unhealthy and bad?



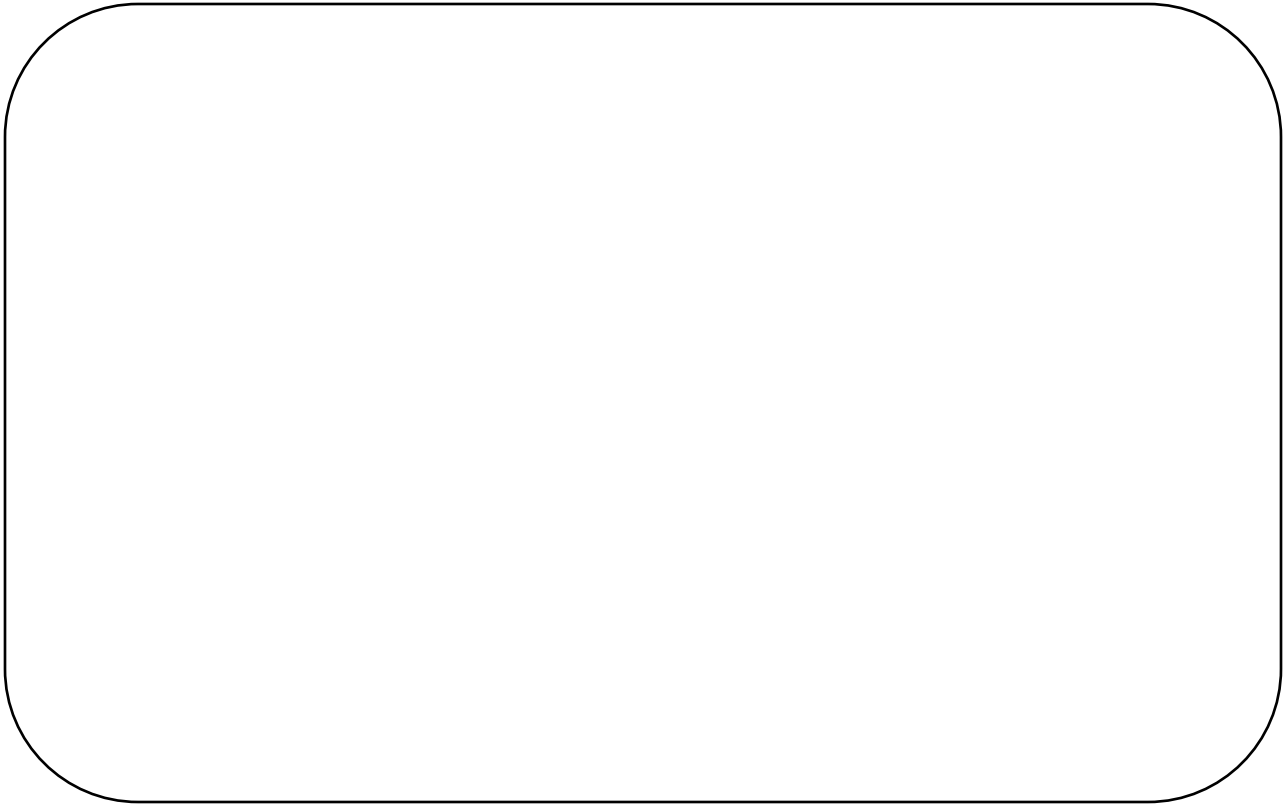
When your child experiences anger, how do they express it?



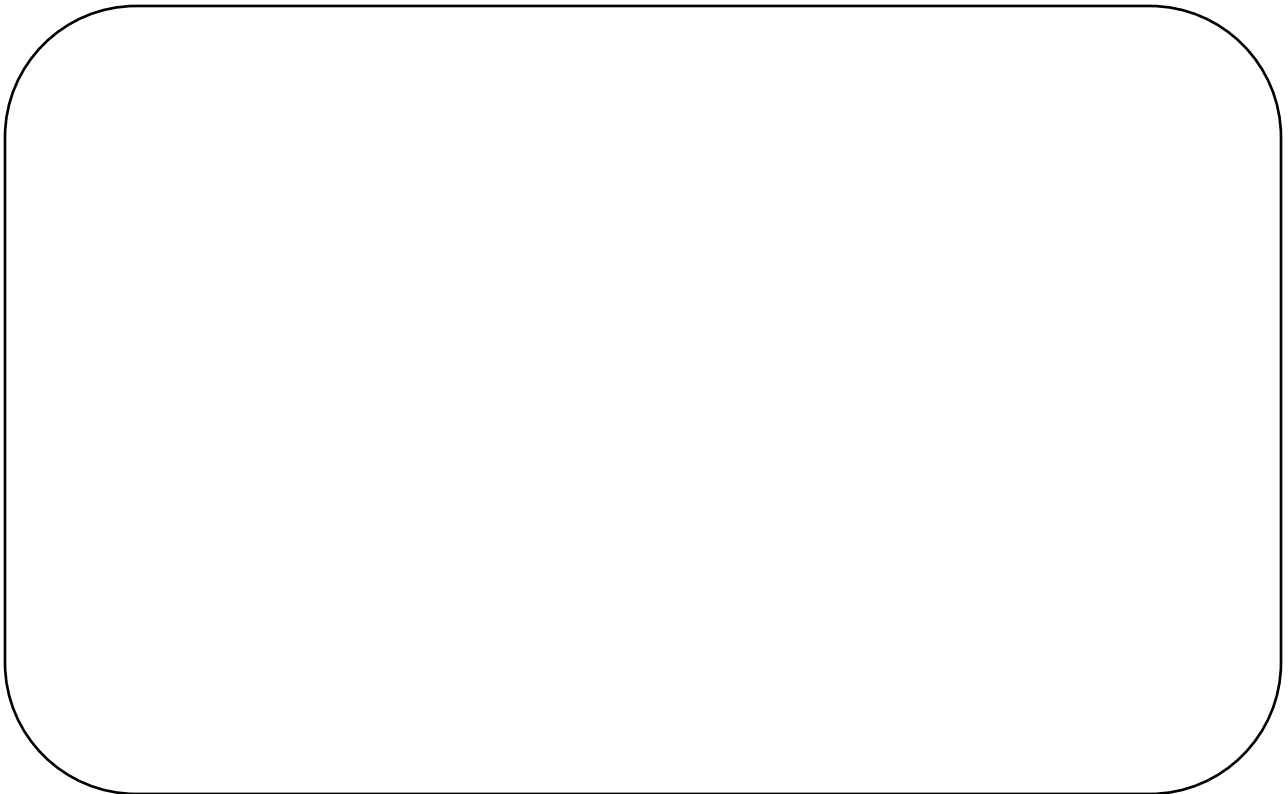
What typically sets your child off into anger? This could be when they are not able to live up to a developmentally appropriate expectation, or when basic needs of safety, being seen, heard, understood, and unconditionally accepted are not being met.



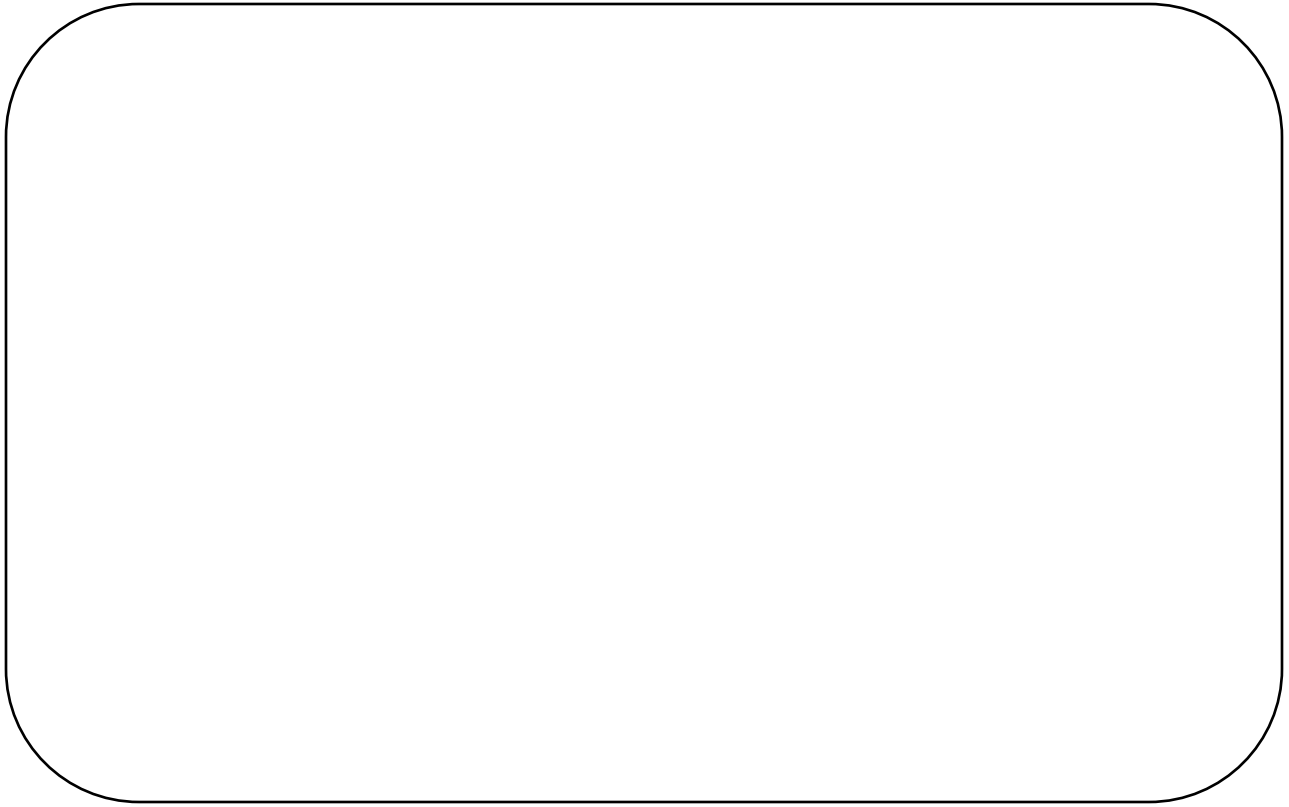
How do you typically respond to your child when they are angry? What do you do, say?



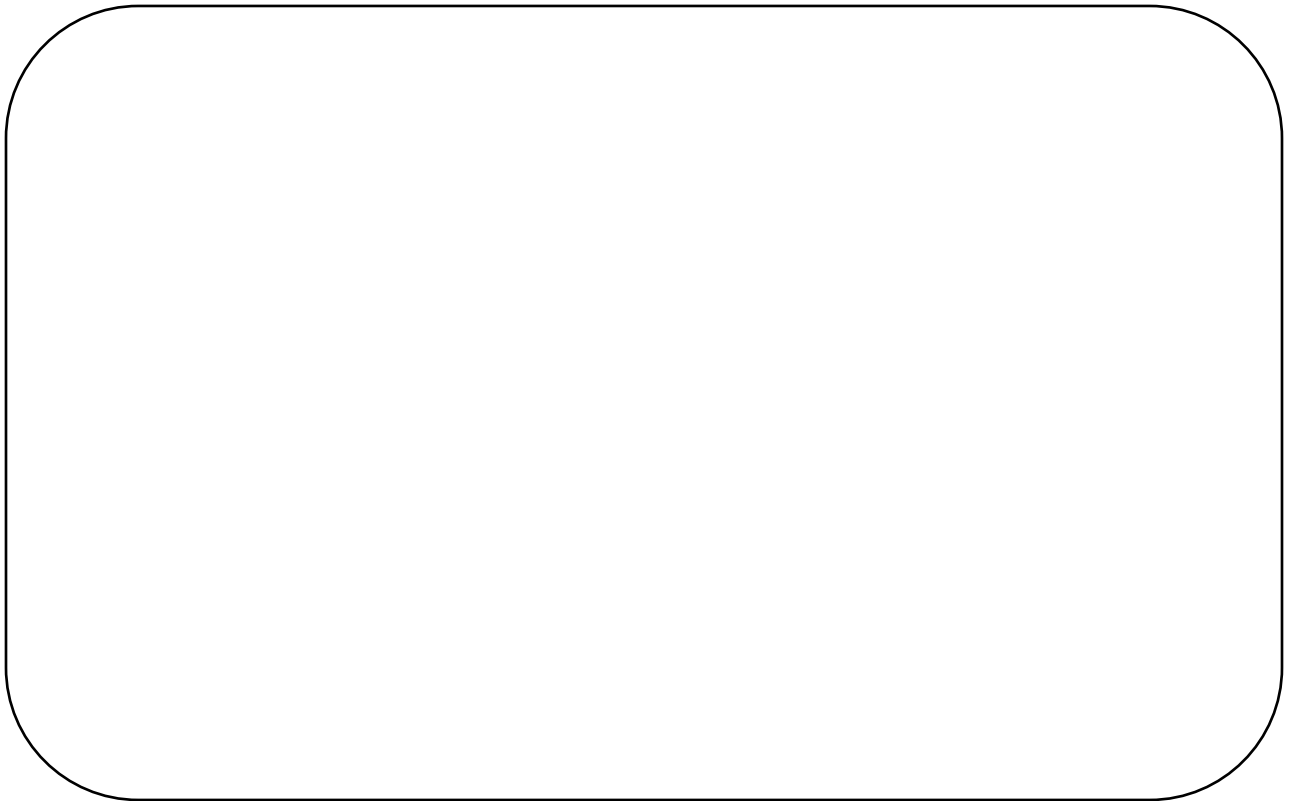
What beliefs do you want your child to have about anger?



How do you want your child to experience anger as an adult?



Do you trust that your child can grow and mature into an adult who can contain their anger and consciously choose how to express it?





# Earning A Secure Attachment With Anger

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*Each of us has an attachment with our six primal emotions. Spotlighting anger, we will explore insecure attachment, as well as how to earn a secure attachment with our anger. Having an insecure attachment with anger is not bad or wrong, it is.*

*You may find yourself, as a parent, in security with anger sometimes, and in insecurity at other times.*

*This is normal. This is okay. We are here to develop more consistency, self-trust, and dependability in our ability to contain our emotions, especially anger, and how to express it in a nutritive, healing, and healthy manner. (More on healthy expression soon.).*

*Resource: "Healing Rage" by Ruth King*

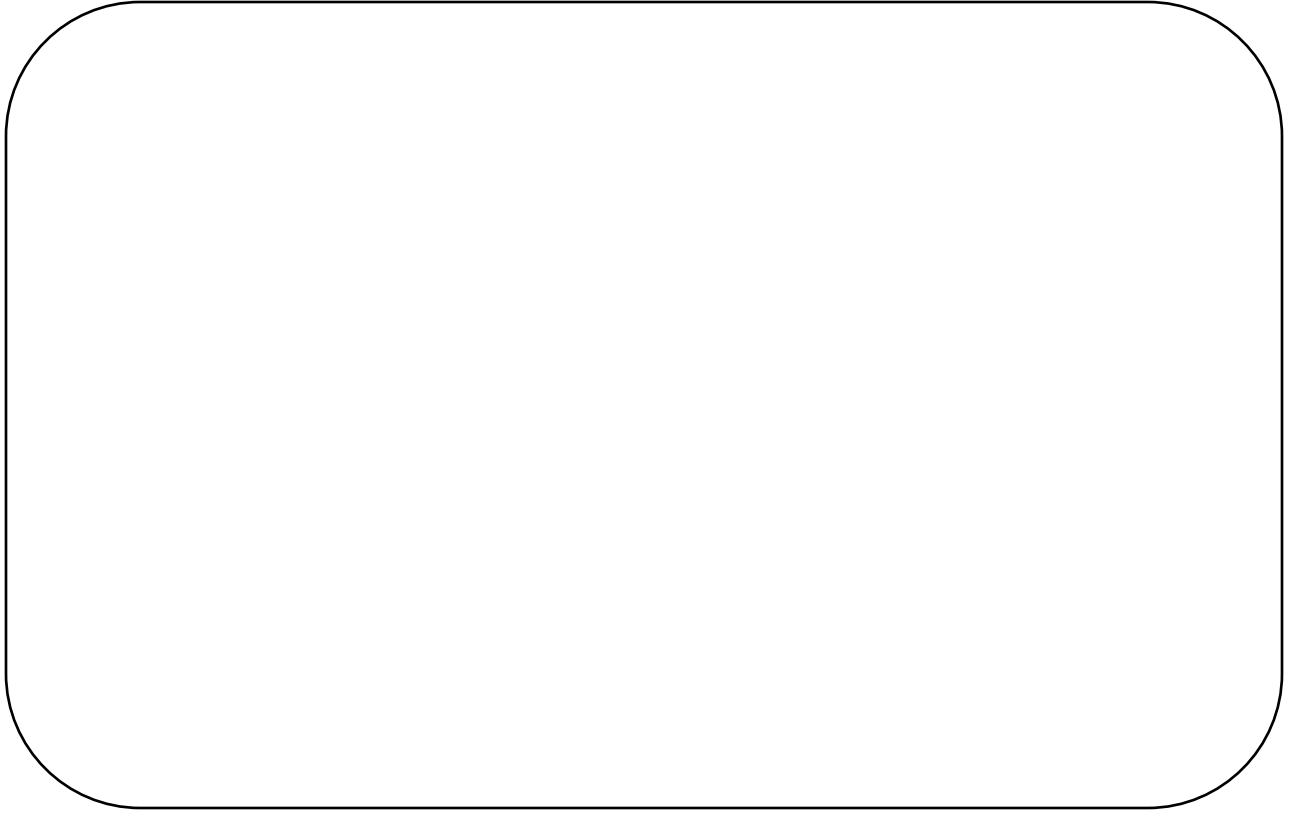
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## **Flight Relationship With Anger (Adult Or Child)**

- Shuts down and dismisses anger: "I'm fine. It's no big deal." Avoids conflict.
- Very often a martyr and deeply struggles with meeting their needs, instead focuses on meeting everyone else's needs.
- Distracts their child when they experience anger.
- Invalidates anger emotion in self and others. "Oh stop, you're fine. There's nothing to be angry about."
- Does not feel anger. "I never feel angry. I'm just carefree." May be a "people pleaser."
- When anger does inevitably arise, it may present more in the body's physiology as tiredness, exhaustion, or shutting down.
- Go quiet and "stonewall" your child or partner.
- Believe your needs don't matter, your voice doesn't matter, nobody cares about you.
- Baseline belief that anger is not safe, anger is bad, wrong, dangerous, and to be avoided.
- May not trust yourself to feel anger, because if you did, something bad would happen.
- Anger may be suppressed, and lethargy and depression take over.

Do you resonate with any of the above examples? If so, take a deep breath. You are here to learn how to develop a more secure and healing relationship with anger. It IS possible!

Was either of your primary care-givers a “flight type” with anger?



Is your child a “flight type” with anger?

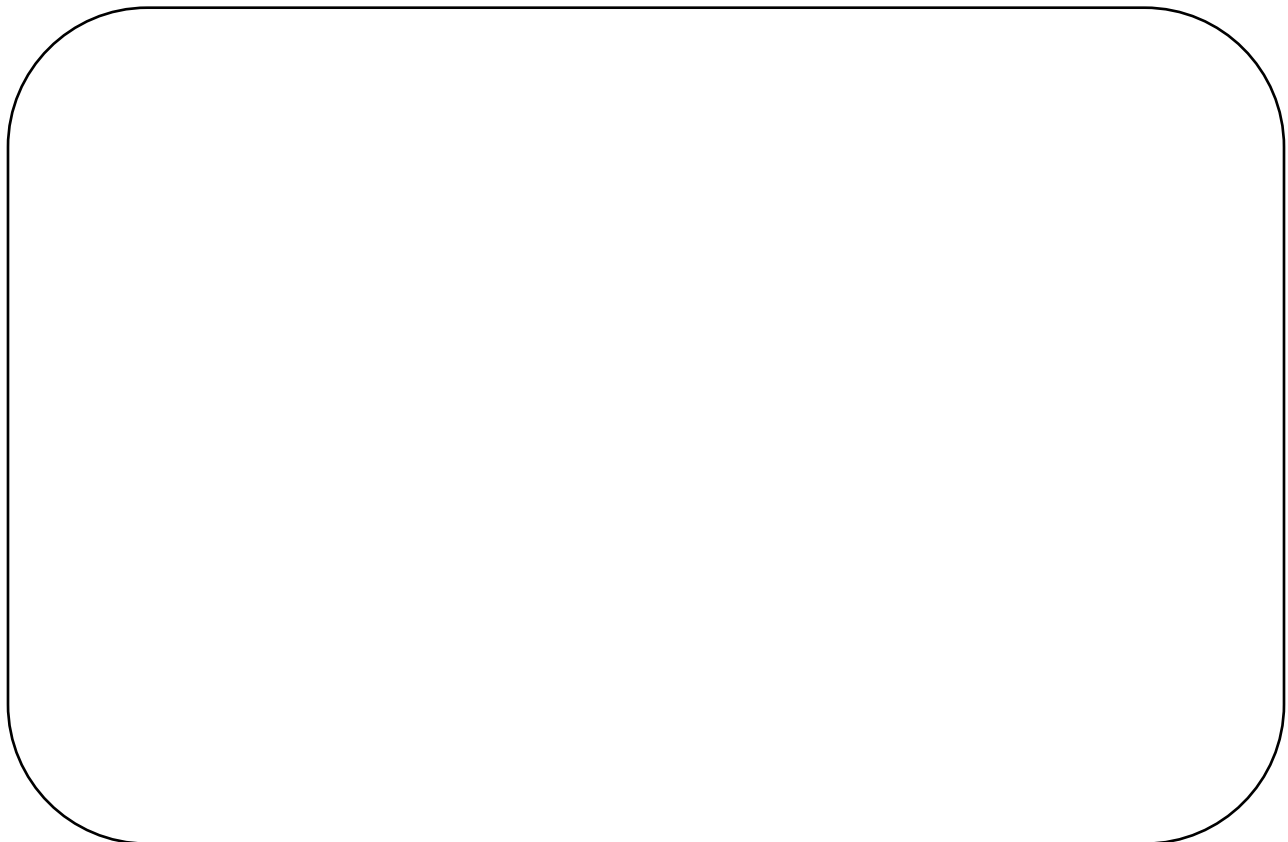


## **Fight Relationship With Anger (Adult Or Child)**

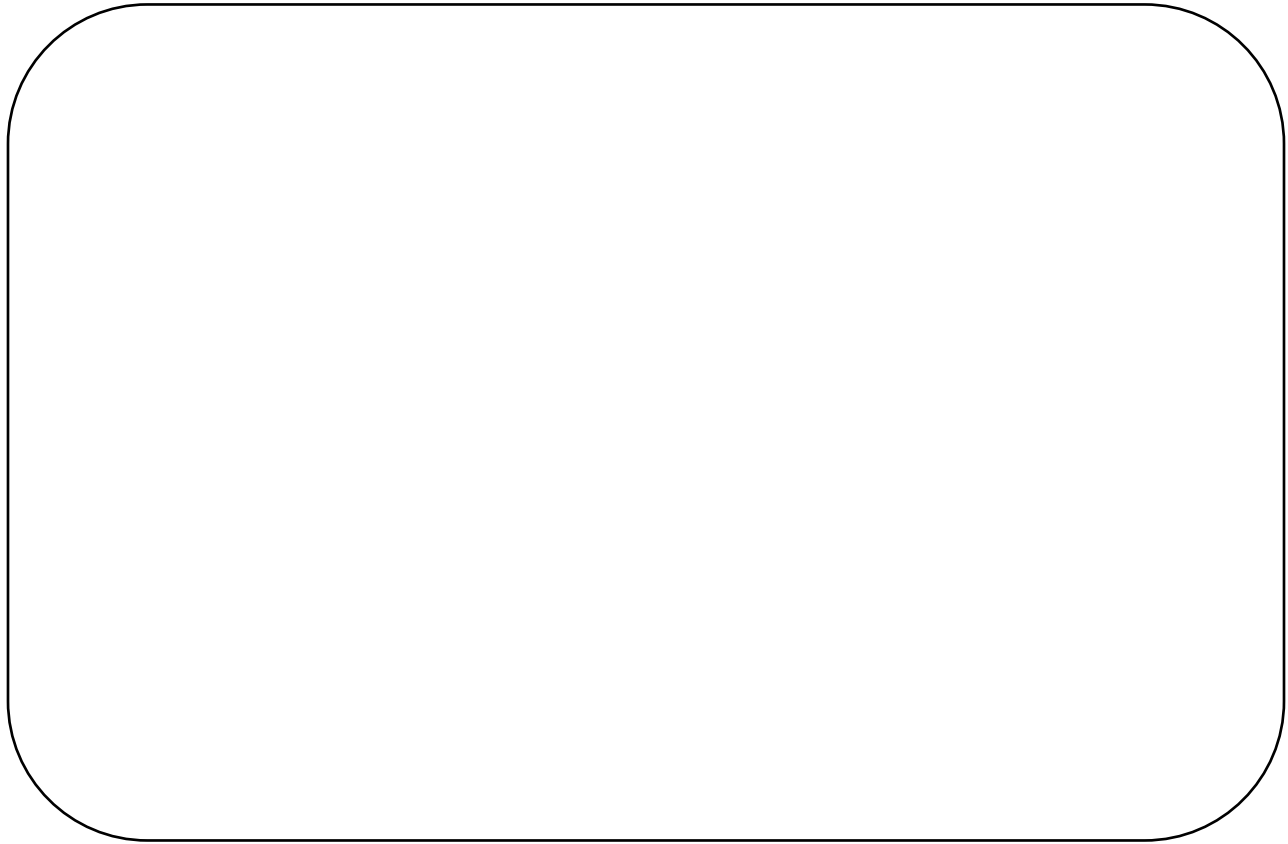
- Anger is very physically uncomfortable, and seems to be ever-present as chronic irritability.
- Seems to be “on edge” and often snaps when asked to do something against their will.
- Does not like being challenged or disobeyed.
- Anger may be suppressed and chronic anxiety takes over.
- Want to control others and their environment to feel safe.
- Your skin may become hot, your breath rapid, your head light, your body tingling.
- You may be so uncomfortable that yelling is your only way to cope.
- Your body may feel so “on fire” that hitting, throwing, or fast and impulsive movements are how you cope.

Do you resonate with any of the above examples? If so, take a deep breath. You are here to learn how to develop a more secure and healing relationship with anger. It IS possible!

Was either of your primary care-givers a “fight type” with anger?



Is your child a “fight type” with anger?



## **Shrink Relationship With Anger**

- Silent and passive.
- Believes they are invisible.
- Anger may be suppressed and helplessness and powerlessness takes over.
- Fear of being a disappointment, fear of being harmed.
- Goes for a long, long time without expressing dissatisfaction and then “breaks.”
- Witnessing their child in anger makes them feel like a powerless child again.
- May view their child as abusive.
- May believe their child is trying to manipulate them, does not trust emotional expression as healthy, but rather a tool that is wielded to harm them in some way.

Do you resonate with any of the above examples? If so, take a deep breath. You are here to learn how to develop a more secure and healing relationship with anger. It IS possible!

Was either of your primary care-givers a “shrink type” with anger?

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Is your child a “shrink type” with anger?

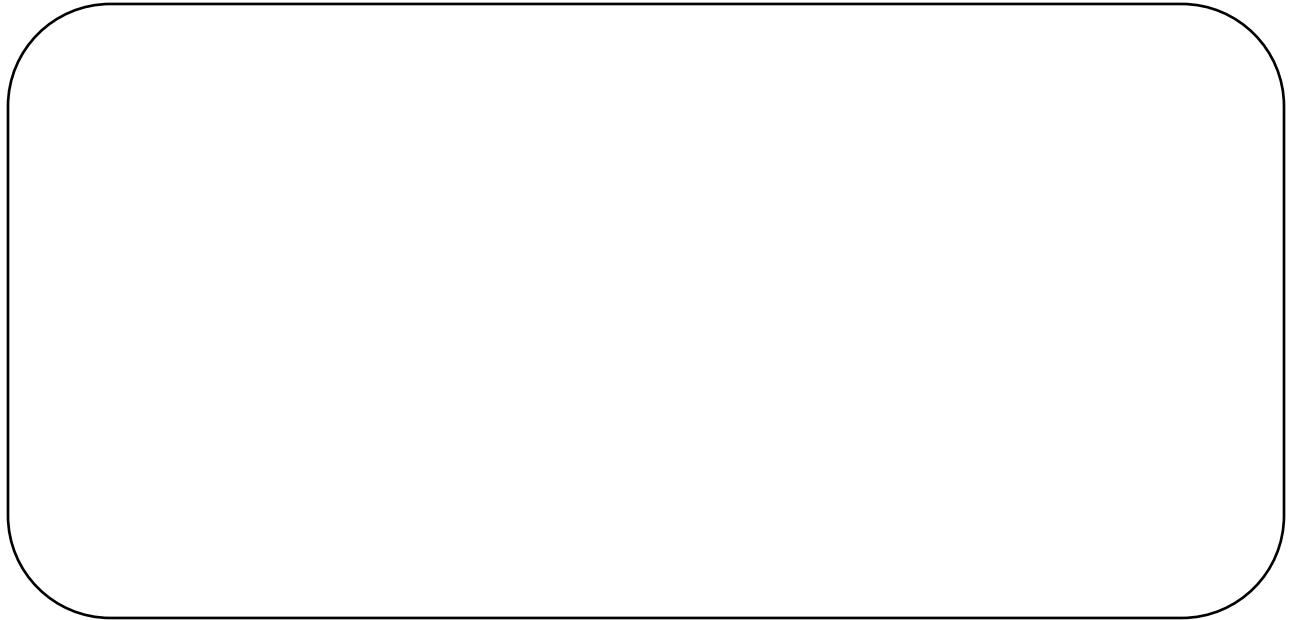
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## Earn A Secure Attachment With Anger

### For flight types, ask yourself:

What needs of mine am I ignoring so as not to be a burden on others?

(Example: Stay-at-home dad feels guilty for not working, therefore does not ask spouse for time away from the children.)



What request could I make of others in order to tend to my needs?

(Example: “I would feel so much more healthy and energized if I had a half hour every evening to go for a walk, and write in my journal. Would you be willing to do bath time with the kids?”)



How can you support yourself to NOT take responsibility for other people's feelings?

(Example: Rather than trying to rescue a child from their emotions, you can simply respond: "Take your time and feel sad/angry/disappointed. There is no rush". Instead of taking your child's feelings personally, you allow them to feel it: "I know this math worksheet challenges you. Instead of me doing it for you, I wonder if we could take a break and eat some "brain food," then come back and try again?"')



What expansive beliefs can you commit to so you can begin caring for yourself and not feel ashamed of having needs?

(Example: I matter. I am worthy of meeting my basic needs).

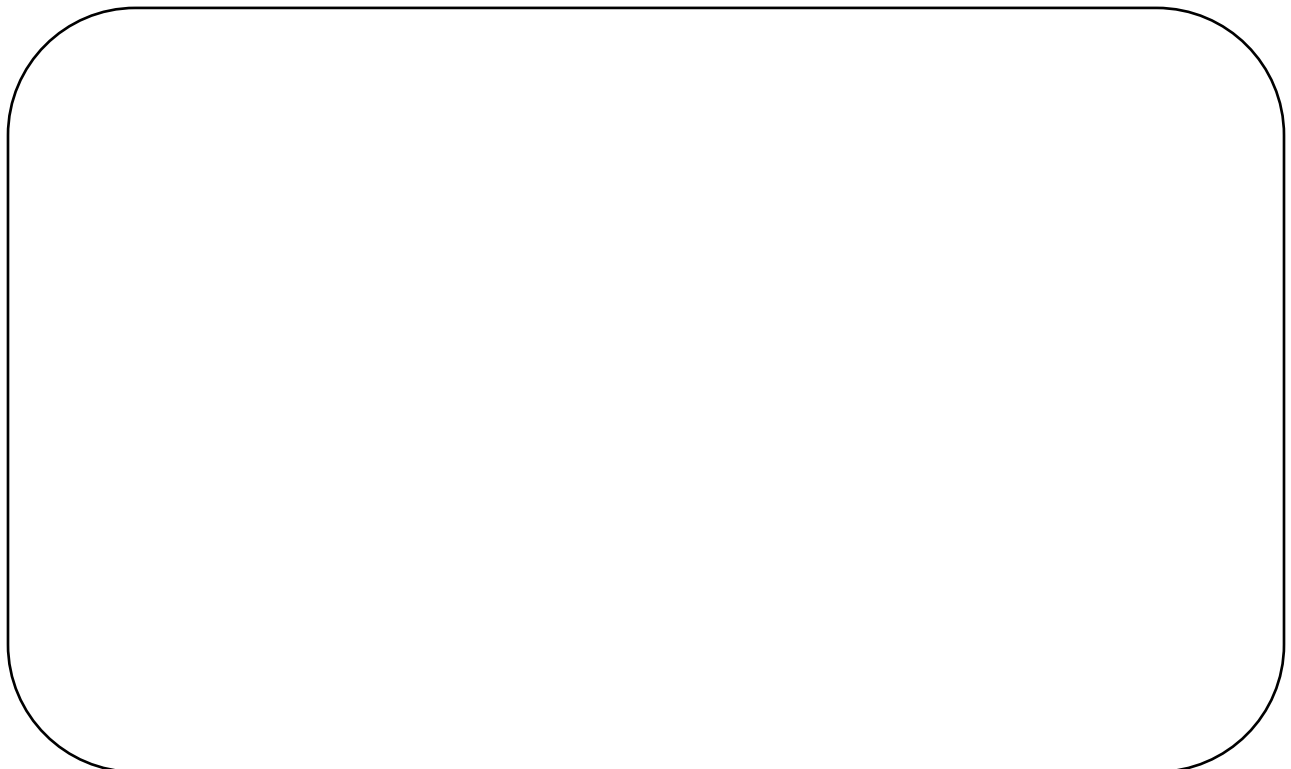


**For fight types, ask yourself:**

Can you imagine a relationship with yourself and your child that is devoid of harm?

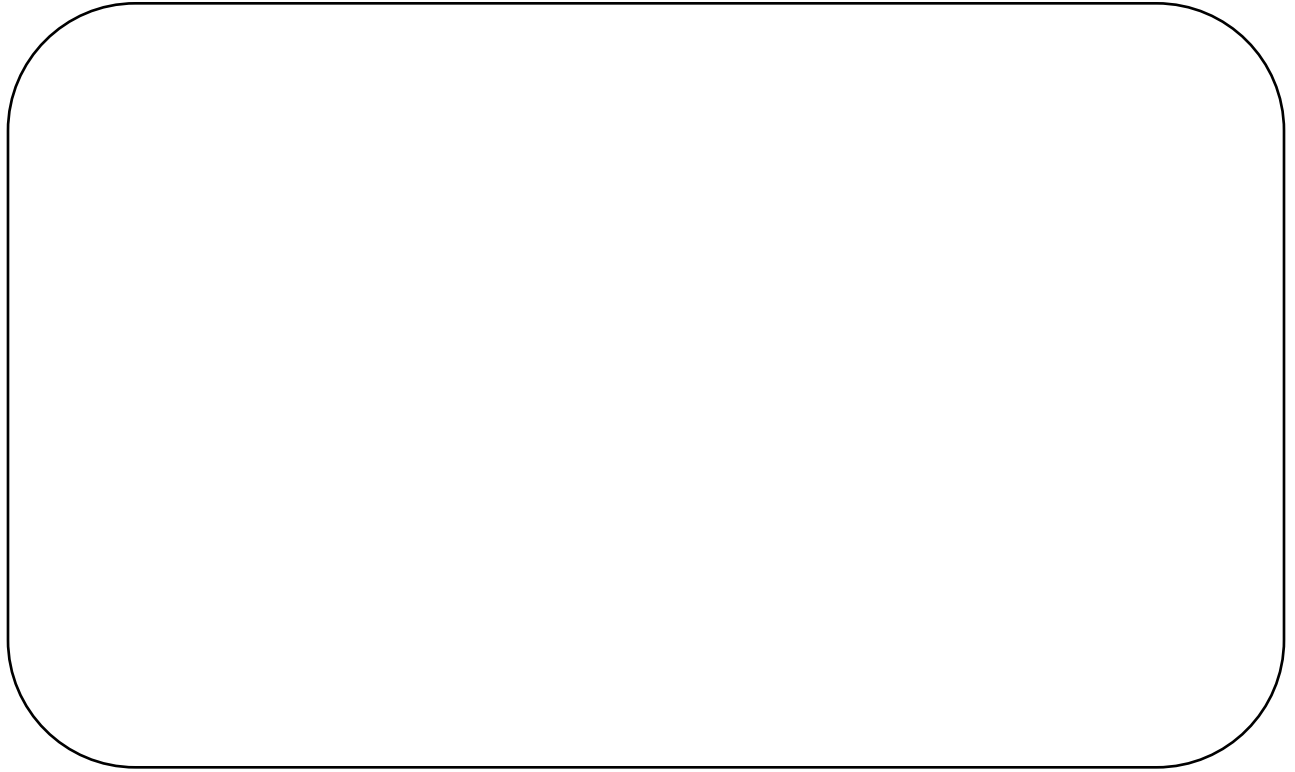
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Can you imagine getting what you want and need without having to force it to happen?

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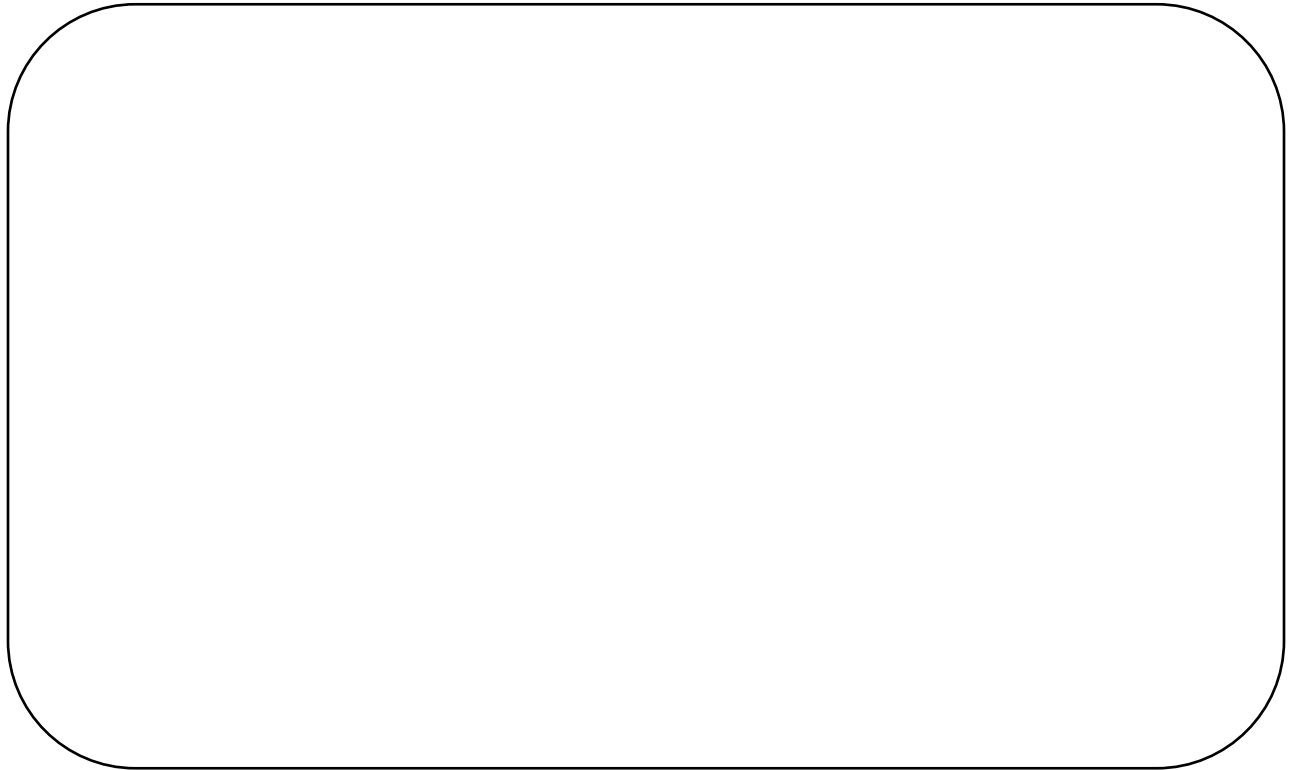
Do you believe that love without harm is possible?



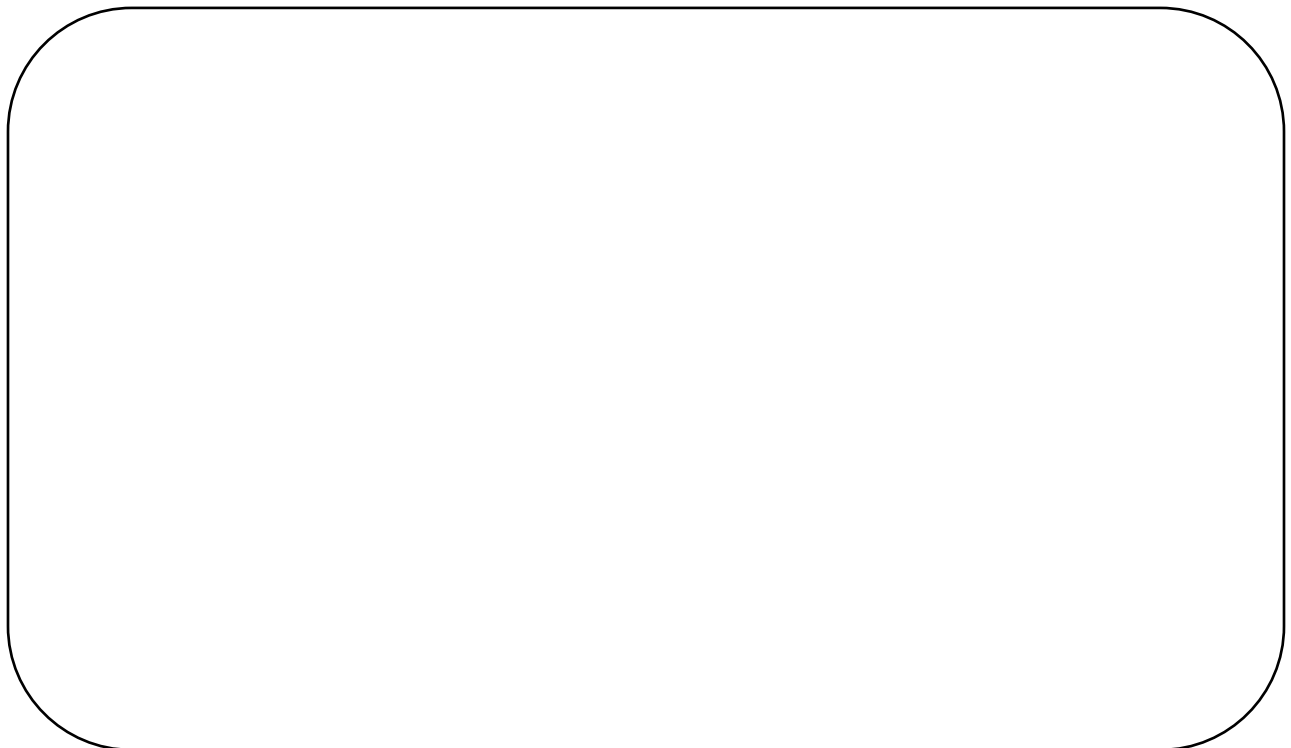
If you could rest, rather than fight, to prove to the world that you deserve to be seen, heard, and to succeed, what would happen?



If you didn't have to work so hard, and instead allowed yourself to receive, what would happen?

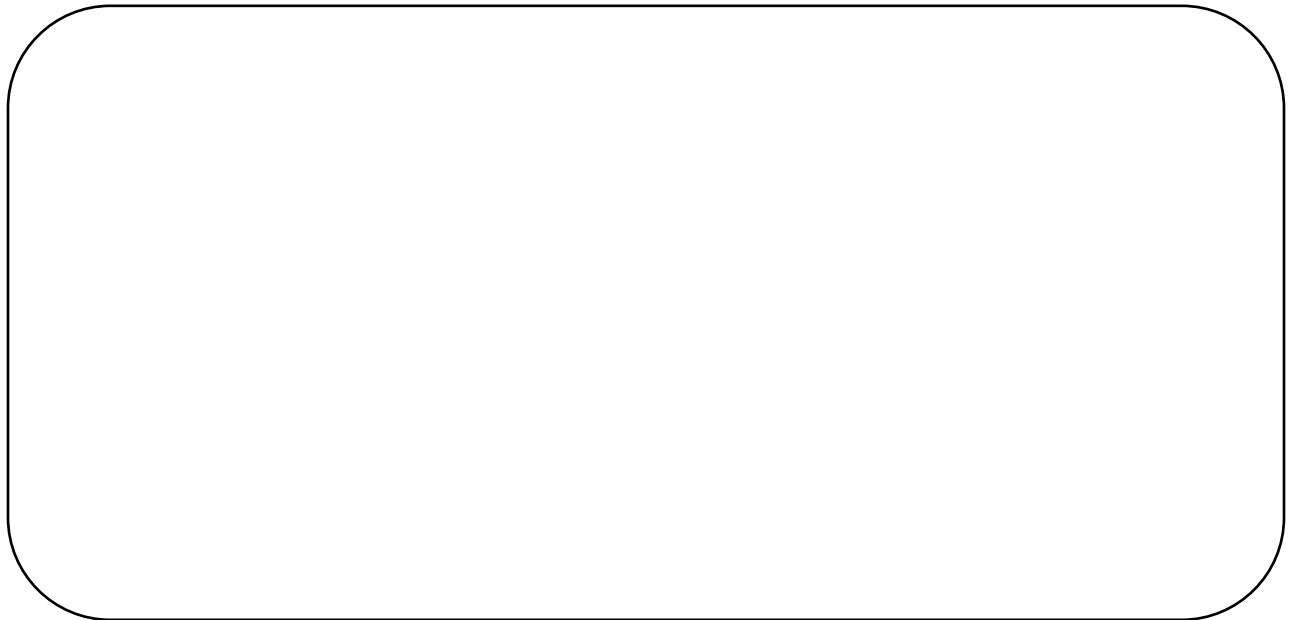


Are you willing to end every day by asking yourself, "In what ways did I cause harm today (intentionally or unintentionally), and how can I apologize for these harms before I sleep?"



**For shrink types, ask yourself:**

The bravery beneath your helplessness: If your bravery had a name, what would it be? If your bravery was a character from a movie, what character would it be?

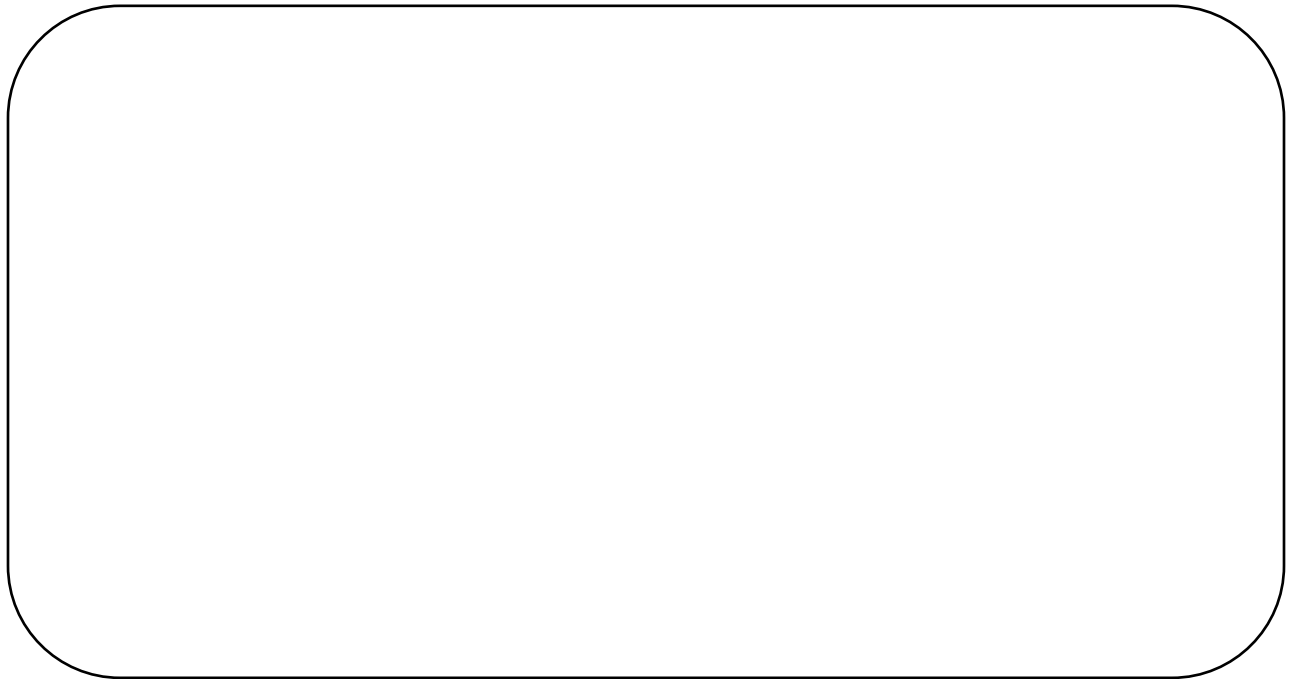


On a daily basis, how can you show yourself you're competent and capable? What TINY victory or success could you set up for yourself?

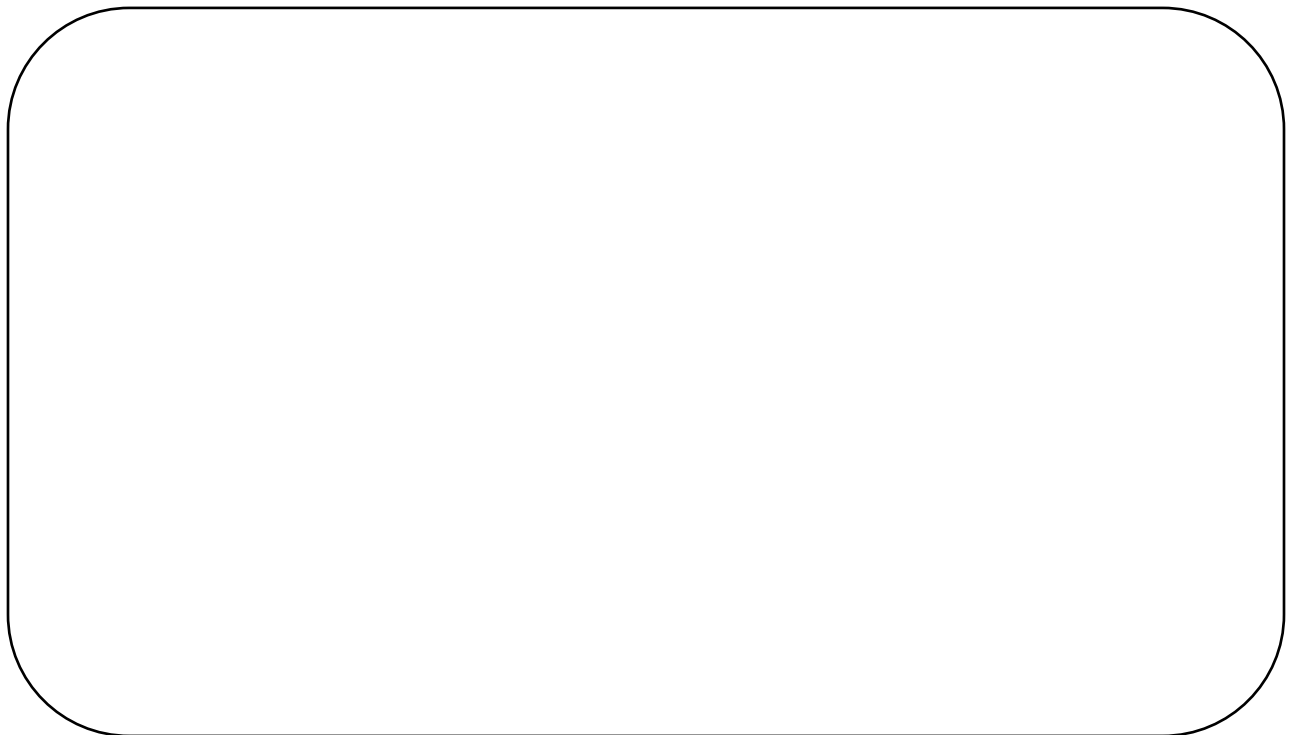
(Example: On waking, drink a glass of water. Celebrate how you show up for yourself. Or, every week, listen to a new podcast. Write a blog about what you learn. Show yourself that you're capable of having a plan, and executing it.)



Instead of seeking answers from experts, try asking questions in a journal with your dominant writing hand, and answering the question with your non-dominant writing hand.

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Every day, how can you honor your intuition?  
(Example: Texting a friend when you think of them. Or, driving a new way to the grocery store out of curiosity.)

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# Self-Empathy For Our Anger

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Ruth King calls our rage or anger our inner Rage Child.

This is because our rage has been accumulating since childhood, since our parent's childhood, since our grandparent's childhood. We are stunted in our emotional growth and wellbeing, and a deep force within us knows this is wrong.

For many of us, our anger was either not allowed to be expressed, or expressed from parents in a violent, terrifying way. Because of this, we learn to FEAR anger.

A great way to soften our fear of anger and begin the process of developing the right relationship with anger, is to give our inner child empathy. This can be used with our actual children, too!

**Imagine a time when you were angry. In that feeling, offer yourself validation and empathy.**

## **Step 1: Validate And Name Safety**

- You are feeling angry. Anger is safe.
- You are safe to express this feeling.
- This is normal.
- I am not going to leave you.
- Offer a hug to yourself or child. Offer to simply hold yourself/your child.
- Stay near your child, even if they want you to leave. Stay near energetically. Keep your heart open.

## **Step 2: Invite The Experience With Support**

- I welcome this feeling.
- I am here for you.
- You don't have to do this alone.
- I am strong enough to take care of you through this.
- I trust myself (you) in this feeling.
- My (your) anger is good/safe/normal.
- My (your) anger serves.
- It's ok to be angry.
- I allow my (your) anger.

- I am strong enough to feel this feeling.
- I am courageous enough to feel this feeling, and to let it pass through me.
- I will do no harm with this feeling.
- You don't have to hide this big feeling from me.
- You don't have to do this all by yourself.

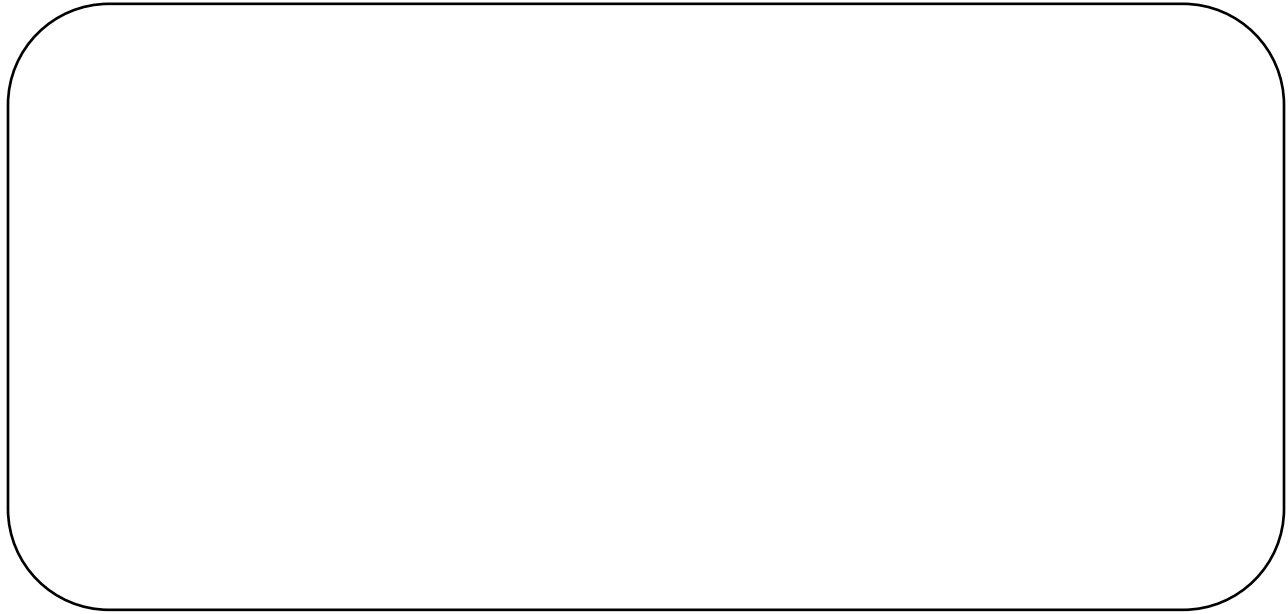
### **Step 3: Empathy (Verbal And Non-Verbal)**

- Are you feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because you need \_\_\_\_\_?
- It's overwhelming, isn't it?
- This feels like too much, huh?
- Mmmmmmm. Yes, I'm here.
- Deep breathing. Breathing in safety, breathing out anger.
- Feeling nervous?
- Kinda want to get this feeling out of your body RIGHT away, don't you?
- I understand how scary and uncomfortable this feeling is. It's VERY normal.
- As you grow, this feeling will become less scary. You will learn how to be so brave with this feeling.
- Do you feel afraid that you are not being heard?
- Your body feels on fire, doesn't it?
- This feeling seems like it is never going to pass, huh?
- Feeling nervous that you are truly able to feel this feeling without hurting someone? I understand that fear.
- Take all the time you need to feel this.

### **Reflect**

What are two empathy responses you can give yourself when overcome with anger?

What are two empathy responses you can give your child when overcome with anger?



## Healthy Aggression

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Aggression is a four-letter word for many people, especially parents. We struggle to understand aggression and have learned to distrust it. Most of us witnessed unhealthy forms of aggression in our childhood homes in the form of:

- A caretaker using violence and harm of any kind while angry.
- A caretaker shutting down and seething in anger, giving the child the silent treatment.
- A caretaker losing presence and melting into a pit of despair. (“I’m a terrible mother. How could you love me?”)

These are examples of caretakers who were unable to experience and contain their energy, and access conscious choice on how they would like to express their aggression in a healthy, connective way.

## **What We Want To Understand And Embrace Is That Aggression Can Be:**

- Used intentionally to recover inner peace and create space.
- Used responsibly as a mobilizing energy to support you to “get up and go,” to take care of yourself, make a plan of action, and actualize self-care that has been neglected.
- Used safely to expel pent-up emotions.
- Expressed respectfully to strengthen our capacity to experience strong emotion safely.
- Activated intentionally, with choice to stop or start.
- Not feared or demonized.
- Understood as natural, normal, and a healthy expression of an adult and child’s natural will and inherent power.
- Grant us the energy we need to use our voice and advocate for ourselves or our children against injustice or ill treatment.
- Supply us with the courage to say NO when we mean it, and to not back down when our “no” is challenged. (Differentiate this from rigidity with our children over small infractions from when a real threat of danger or harm is present.)

## **Aggression Through The Lens Of Nervous System And Brain Science:**

All humans are born with an inherent will to live. We strive toward life, like a sunflower striving towards the sun.

This is will power, and life-force energy. This is our mobilizing activation, the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system. Remember fight or flight?

### **Why do we struggle when embracing aggression is healthy, healing, and supportive?**

When in danger as children, especially witnessing our caregiver in an unhealthy expression of anger, our nervous system moved into “freeze or faint” mode. When we displayed normal and natural expressions of anger for our maturity level, such as hitting, biting, or throwing, and we were met with punishment or violence, we learned that:

- My body’s natural desire to expel this intense emotion of anger is bad.
- Fighting back against my parent in their anger will NOT HELP me.



- Running away and hiding from this parent in their anger will NOT HELP me.
- I must shut down my will to protect myself and live through this.

### **We learned that:**

- Self advocacy is dangerous.
- Saying NO is not allowed, if I say NO to a command then I will make my parent angry.
- If I am not obedient and subdue my will and inborn tendency to go after my wants and needs, I will suffer.
- Using my voice is dangerous.
- Anger is dangerous.
- The only way to survive anger is to be an opossum and play dead.

So, it makes sense that for many people, witnessing their child in anger and aggression is almost unbearable. We are stuck in fear, judgement, and a severed relationship with healthy aggression ourselves.

- We see our 2-year-old bite their cousin and we think, “Oh my god, what is wrong with my child?”
- We are hit by our 5-year-old having an enormous emotional storm, and we think “my child is violent and needs serious help.”
- We are screamed at by our tween and think “I’ve raised a monster.”
- Meanwhile, our children are not being shown how to experience our basic human pull toward expressing our life-force energy in a way that nourishes, protects, and creates opportunity for health and longevity.

## **Aggression Re-Imagined**

How can you begin to develop a secure and nutritive relationship with aggression? This way, your child’s very natural aggressive and assertive tendencies in their willpower, voice, and body will not trigger you so deeply. Rather, you will see it through the lens of your child trying to advocate for themselves, and use their life-force energy to secure their wants and needs. Once you are able to see through this lens, you will soften. You will access more safety in your body, and thus be able to support your child back into safety and calm. THEN, you can do your teaching and remind the child of the boundary: “Now that you’re calm again, I’m here to remind you, as your teacher, that we are working toward feeling angry, and NOT hitting mommy. I’m here to help you. You will learn.”

Our goal is to FEEL anger, and CHOOSE how we want to express it. With a daily aggression practice, we will not have so much “heat” in our body, that boils over when we experience anger on a daily basis.

### **Examples of healthy aggression practices:**

- Listening to music that attunes to the rhythm of assertion--music with a strong beat, strong drums, music that makes your body want to move sharply.
- Family dance parties!!!!!!!
- Play the “Mama/Daddy Bear Game,” and crawl around on the ground grunting and huffing, expelling your energy vocally.
- “Karate chopping” your right hand against your left palm. Breathing in deeply, and expressing a loud “HA!” when you chop.
- Squeezing the forearm of another adult while grunting. (This sounds kinda funny, but check Irene Lyon on YouTube.)
- “Towel Twist,” YouTube video by Irene Lyon.
- Practice throwing a “pretend” heavy weight against the floor while firmly saying, “NO!”

## **Our Children’s Anger And Aggression**

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*Just like us, we are here to teach our children that ALL FEELINGS ARE SAFE! That anger is a continuum and that we can track our triggers. We are here to show them that acting out anger in hurtful ways does not actually help them, though it may feel relieving in the moment. We are here to teach them sustainable modes of healthy aggression that lay the neural pathways in the brain to fully support emotional regulation and healthy nervous system functioning for your child for decades to come.*

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### **Help Them Name And Affirm Their Anger**

*“Feeling frustrated? I see those big feelings arising, it’s safe. I’m here.” “I know you don’t like when I brush your teeth, let mama show you how gentle and sweet I can be.”*

Be angry, it’s normal. Your anger is safe here. You can be angry AND gentle, both are possible. I am here to teach you.

## **Help Them Reflect**

This can be done with conversation with kids over 6 or 7, and through play with younger kids. During moments of calm, invite the scenario back into your child's space and support curious reflection.

With children under 7, role playing with dolls or animals or even toy cars is more useful than a conversation.

*Example: One car is the kid who is mad and hitting, the other car is the Mama who is saying "Oh, you're so mad! What else do you feel? Sad?"*

Act out the scenario. Explore through role playing how the baby car learned to self reflect on their anger, and practice making a different choice next time.

## **Teach Them Healthy Aggression Practices**

Show them the towel twist. Give them squishy balls and have them growl like a bear and squeeze the balls. Help them to self-soothe and stop their hands or arms from hitting by teaching them when they feel their anger rising, to give themselves a hug and ask for help or yell NO!

Invite them in a running game, jumping jacks, or anything with intense momentum that can support a cathartic release. Invite them into dance music with a strong beat (when they are feeling calm) so they can learn to feel their healthy aggression and associate it with safety.

## **Track Their Triggers**

Your child will most likely not be able to track their triggers. That is our job. If you know your child hits around nap time, or becomes angry around bedtime, engage in ANCHOR and HARBOR tools before escalation.

"Come here love, we are going to practice a few deep breaths and big cozy snuggles before we start bedtime. That way, we can work so well together, and feel connected. Like we are on the same team! I love being on your team. Are you willing to try that with me?"

## **Provide Strong And Secure Limits**

*"Yes, you're angry and no, I will not allow hitting. I love you so much. I am your teacher. I am here to guide you. I will NOT allow you to hit."*

Or, "Ouch, this hurts. I'm going to help your body find peace. I love you."

## **Stay Near**

Even if your child tells you they want space or for you to go away, or if they are throwing things that it's not safe for you to be near them, affirm you are with them in your heart, and that you are never far away.

When they are ready to receive your warmth and affection, you are eager to support them in that way.

## **Prevention**

**Empathy:** Release judgement and labels. Commit to actively listen. Commit to presence.

**Sacred space:** Devote at least 20 minutes daily to each child. Step into their universe, surrender your agenda, and commit yourself to the sacred space created by the love you share for each other.

**Rhythm:** Simplify your daily rhythm. Let go of excess activities. Create predictability and familiarity by letting your child know what to expect the night before and go through your day together before bed.

**Create the container:** Make it known that in your home, in your arms, ALL feelings are welcome, and all needs are valid and worthy of expression.

**Skin-to-skin and eye gazing:** This need never fades. Skin-to-skin time is one of the most powerful and transformative experiences for humans.

Engage in consensual affection with your child.

- “Can I hold you? I miss the way your hug feels in my arms.”
- “Can I hold your hand? Holding your hand fills my heart with love and song.”
- “Can I look into your eyes? When I do, I remember how incredibly humongous my love for you is.”

**Full-throttle play and laughter medicine:** Engage in full body play! Mindful of your body's range of motion and ability, engage in wrestling, tag, leapfrog, pillow fights, catching them in a blanket while they run around the house.

This gets kids laughing uproariously, a potent medicine for releasing pent-up energy.

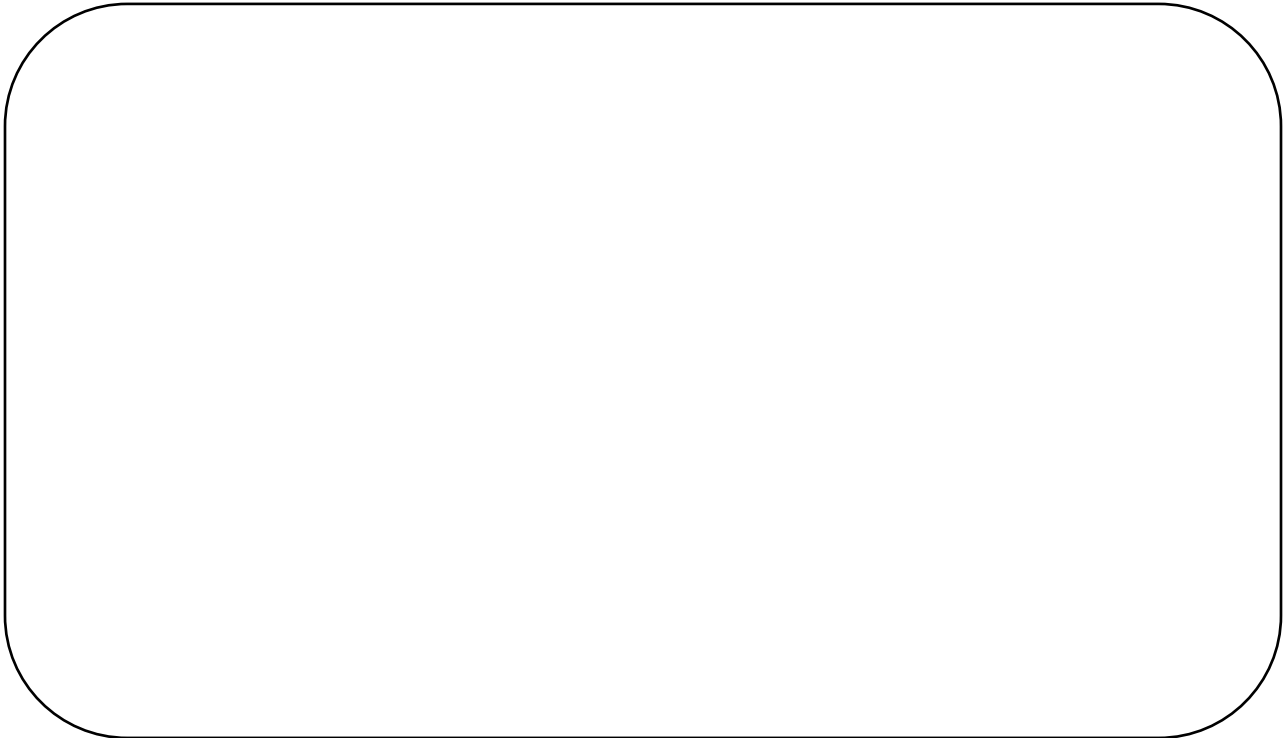
# Check In

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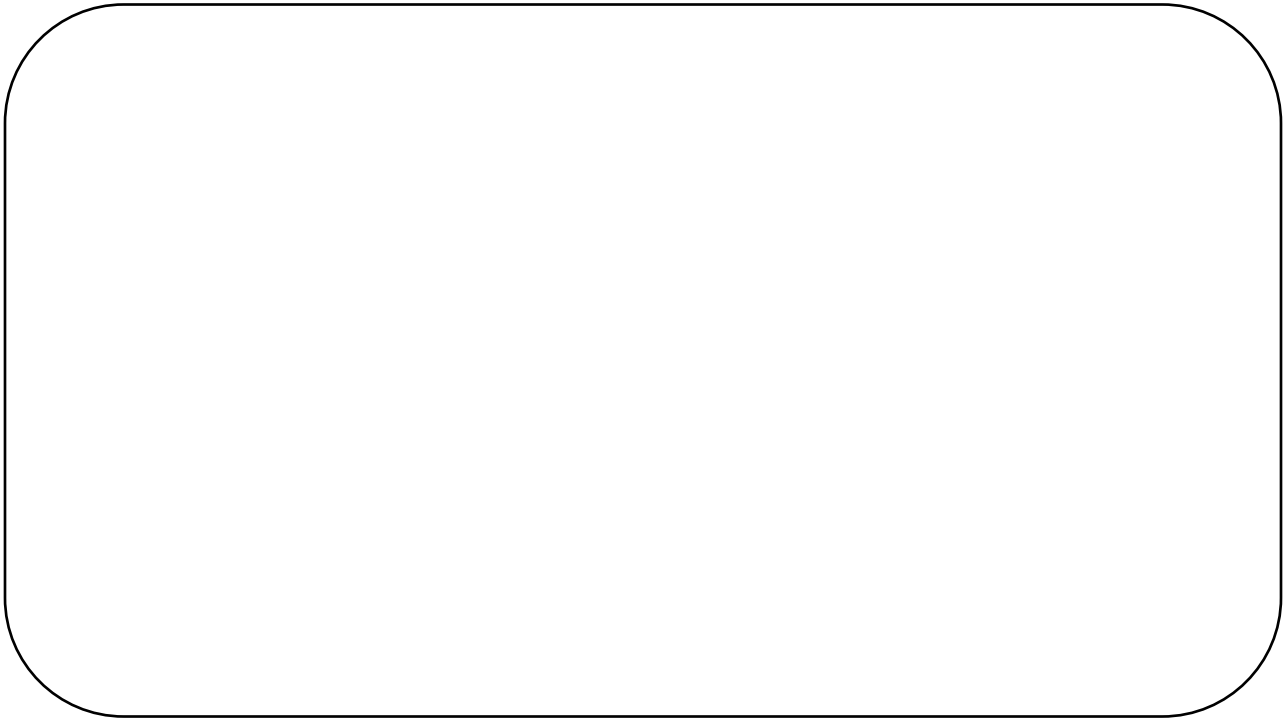
What has been your greatest take away from Anger and Healthy Aggression?



What are you committed to in your relationship with anger?



How do you long to respond to your child when they are angry and experiencing underdeveloped expressions of aggression?



How do you long to model healthy aggression to your child?

