



## WEEK 8 | YOUR TRANSFORMATIVE PARENTAL JOURNEY

# The Voice of Empowered Parenting

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### **Empowered Parenting is dedicated to freedom.**

1. Freedom for every member of every family to believe they are worthy of belonging, kindness and justice.
2. Freedom from emotional reactivity and helplessness.
3. Freedom from blame, shame, control, and fear-based relating.
4. Freedom from survival stress and unsafe environments.
5. Freedom from assumption, accusation, and disconnect.

The voice is our greatest instrument of expression. It serves as a tool for freeing ourselves from past parenting patterns rooted in coercion and control.

### **Power Over Communication**

- = Blame others
- = Shame others
- = Criticism of others
- = Judgment of others
- = Comparison between siblings
- = Yelling
- = Sarcasm
- = Demands
- = “Do what I say”

### **Power Under Communication**

- = Blames self
- = Shames self
- = Self-critical
- = Self-deprecating
- = Compares self to others
- = Compares self to others
- = Goes silent
- = Believes conflict isn’t safe
- = “Do whatever you want”

Before we learn the practical application of empowered conversations, let’s look within.

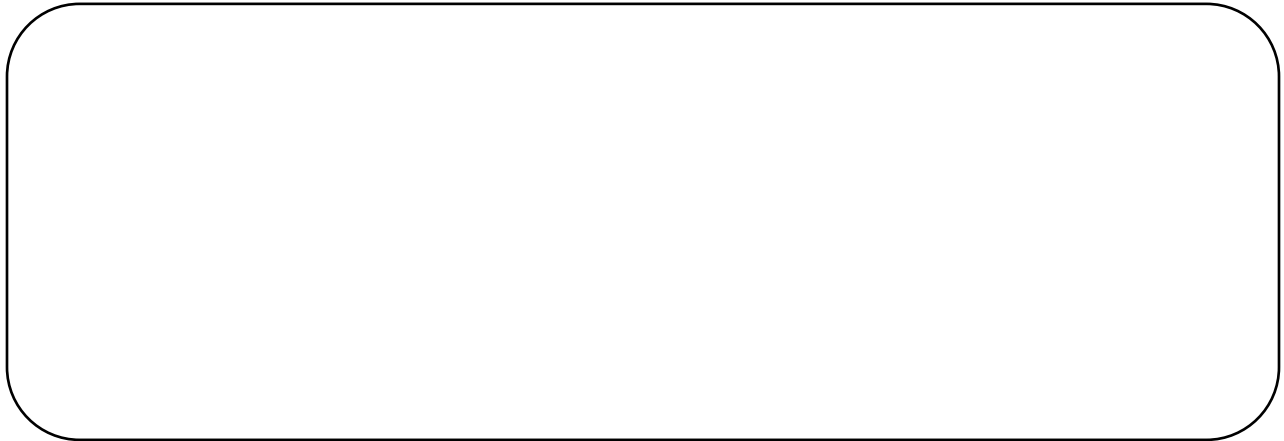
# Your Relationship to Your Voice

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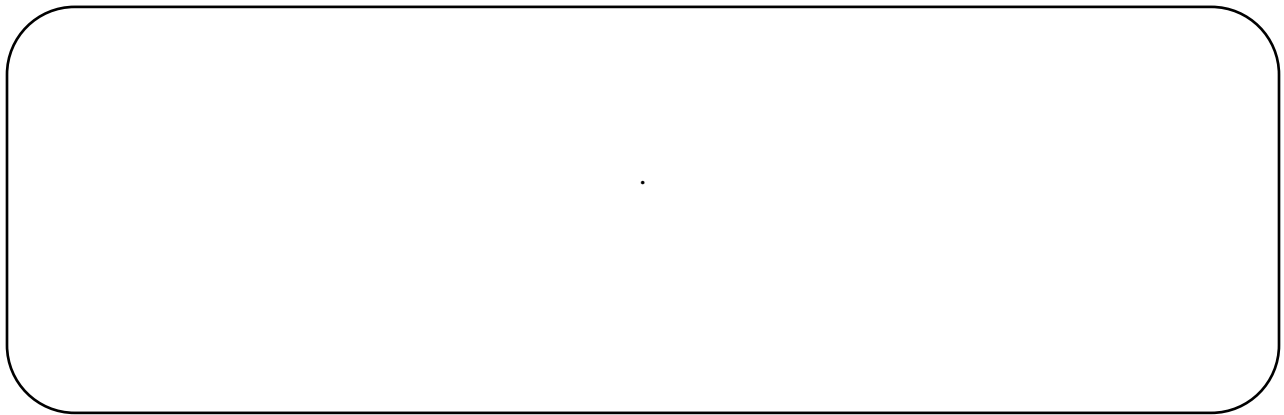
How we were communicated to as children created our belief system around the worth of our voice. Let's explore the beliefs you may carry about your voice.

Remember, the voice is either strengthened or weakened by how often we were met with empathy by our caregiver(s). Empathetic responses from our caregiver, rooted in an understanding of our nervous system, brain, and emotional development, gave us language to help us understand how we feel, what we need, and what we believe.

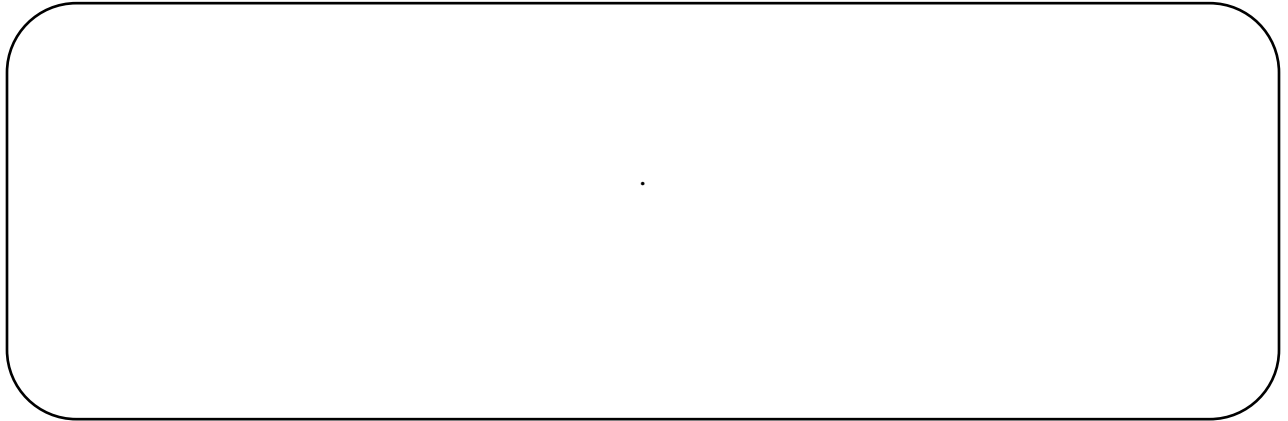
When you expressed big feelings as a child, did your caregiver long to understand your experience? (If you can't remember, that is OK.)



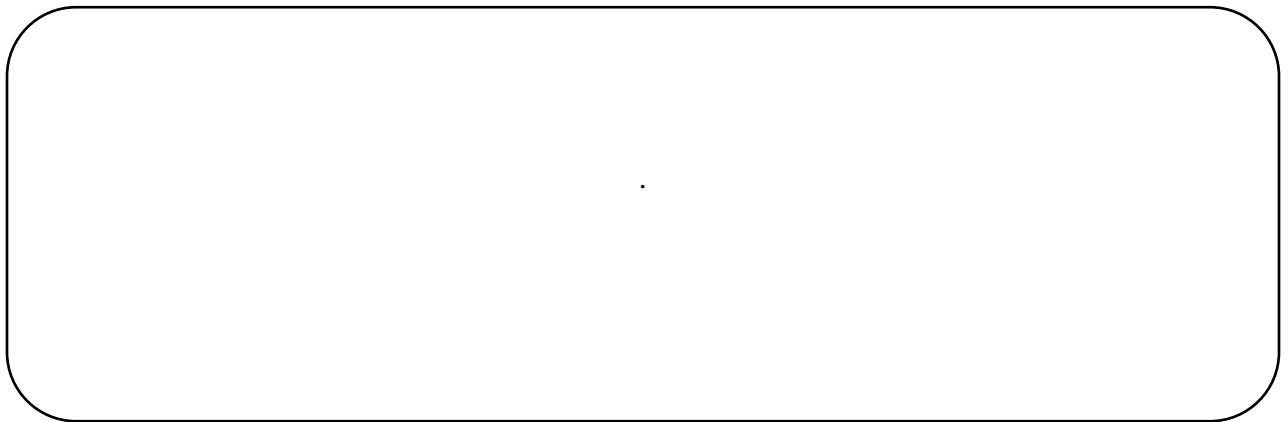
When your child expresses big feelings, does your body and mind feel curious and safe, or stressed and overcome by an urge to shout, run away, or urgently fix the problem?.



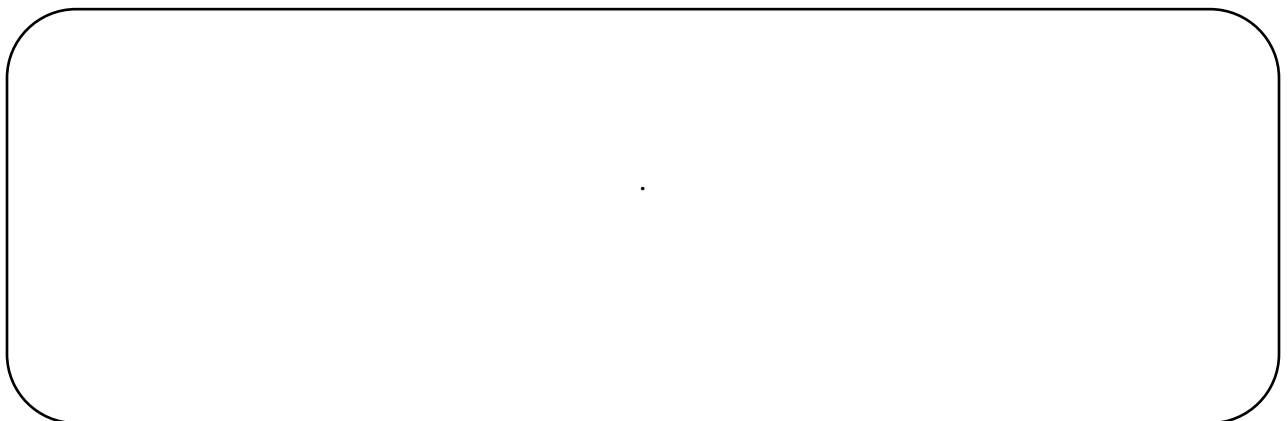
What beliefs did you internalize about feelings and expressing feelings? (Example: Expressing feelings will get me in trouble. Or, expressing feelings is safe.)



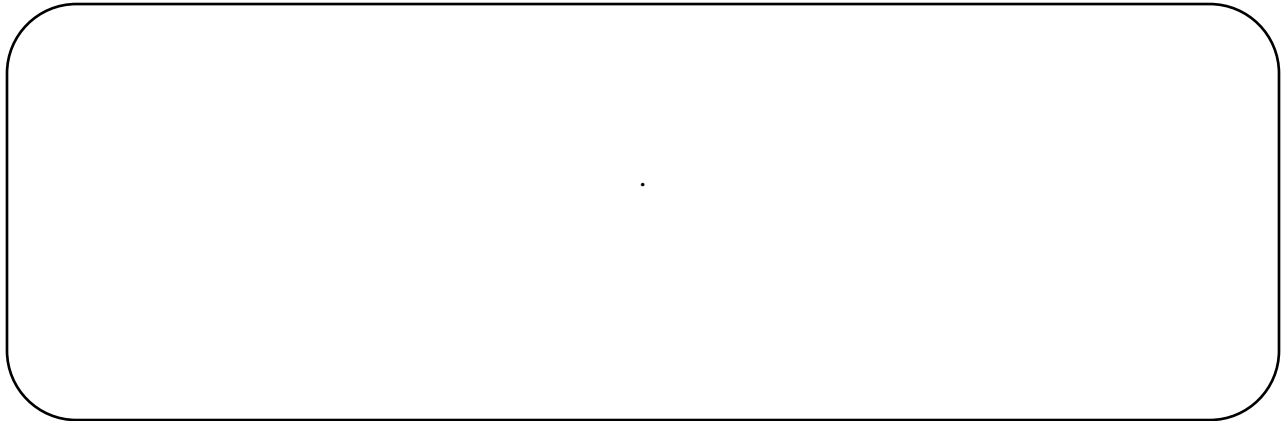
What beliefs can you imagine your child has about feeling strong feelings or expressing their feelings?



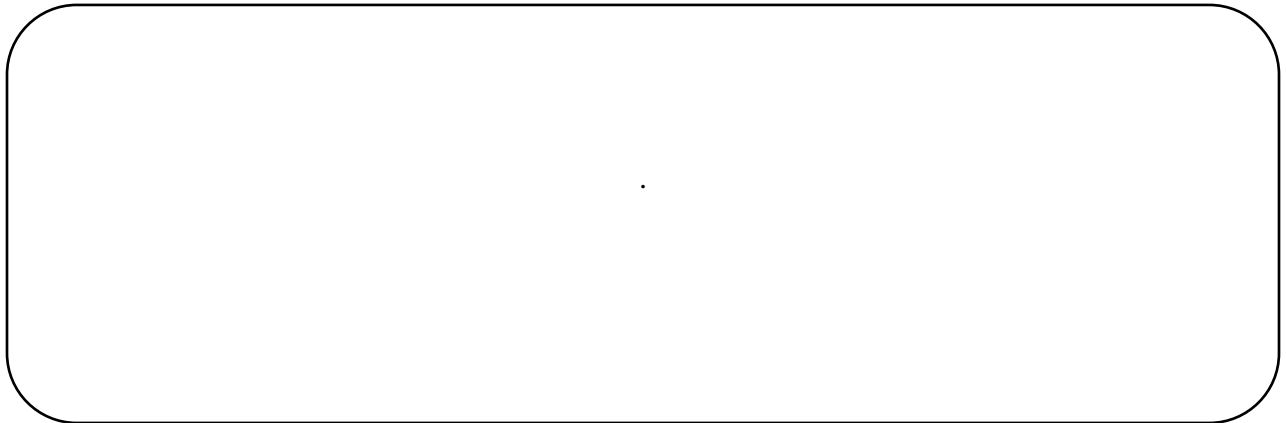
When you felt sad or disappointed as a child, were you met with kindness and compassion?



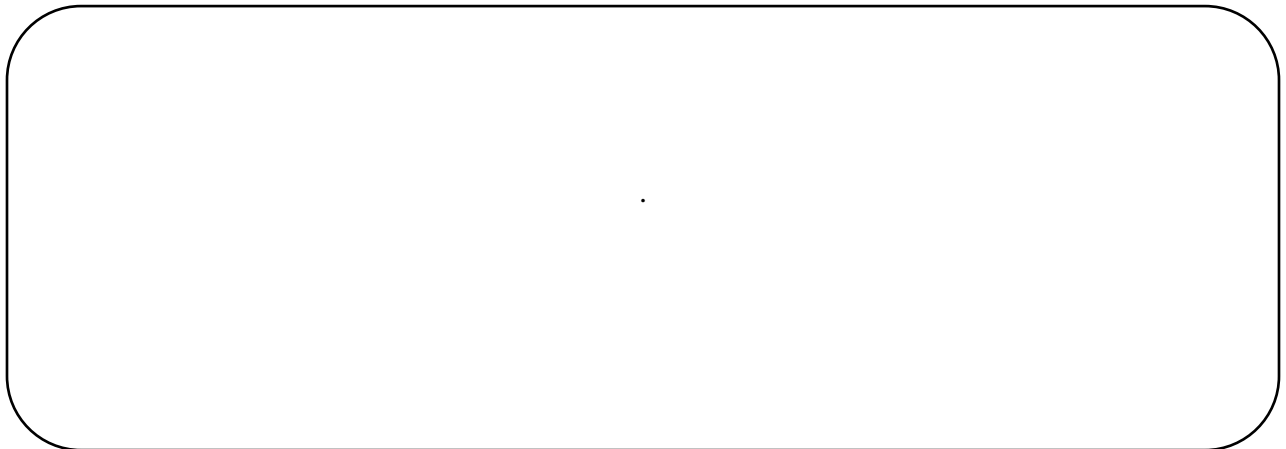
When you witness your child feeling sad or disappointed, can you validate their feelings and hold space for sadness and disappointment to pass, in its own time?



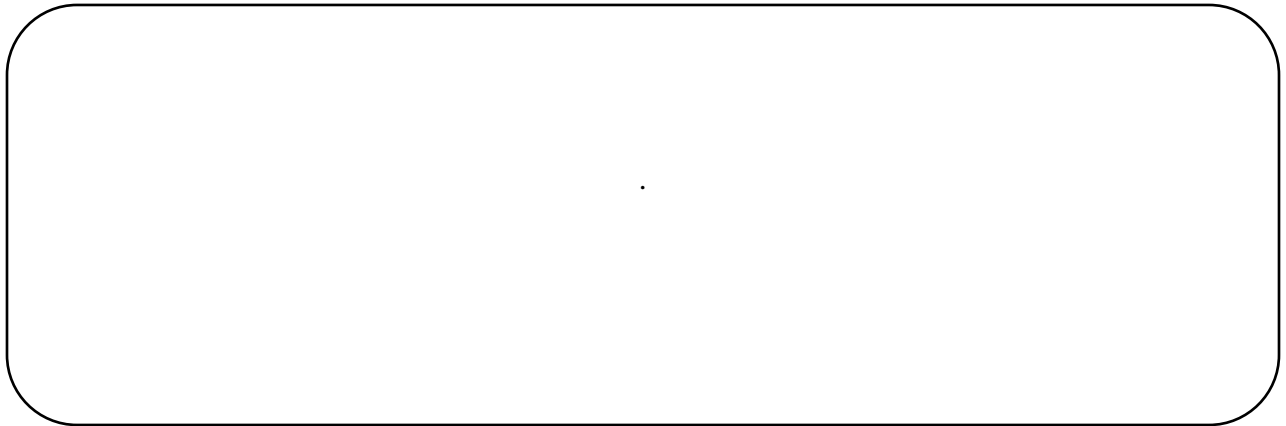
Did you feel like you were listened to as a child and truly heard?



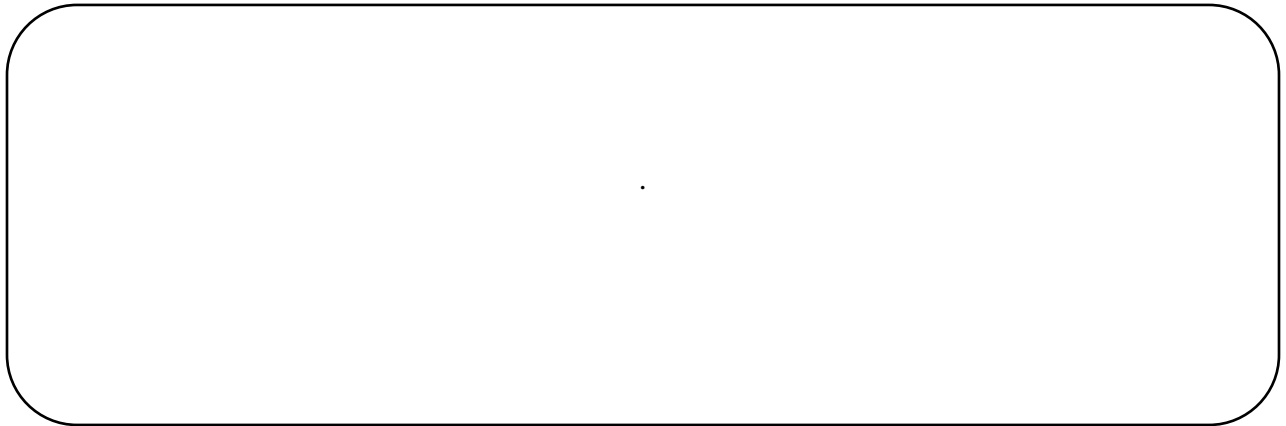
If not, do you struggle communicating today? Maybe you shout to be heard, or you stay quiet and suffer in silence?



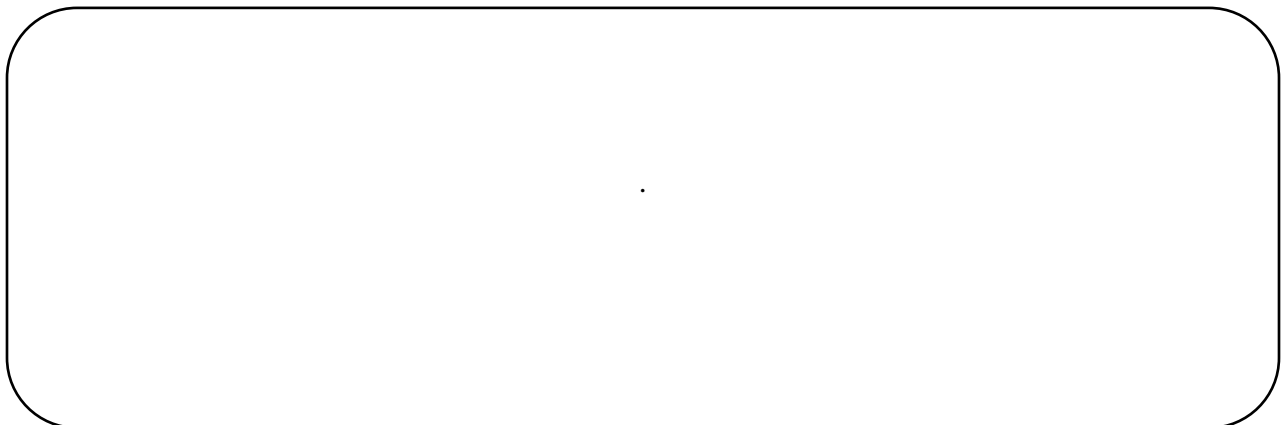
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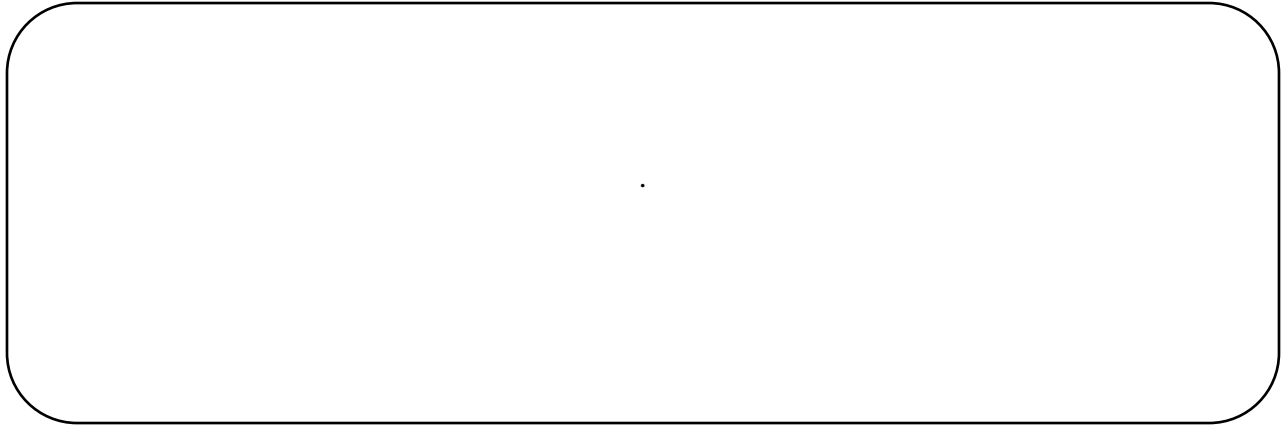
As a child, did you witness your caregiver(s) express their feelings through communication?



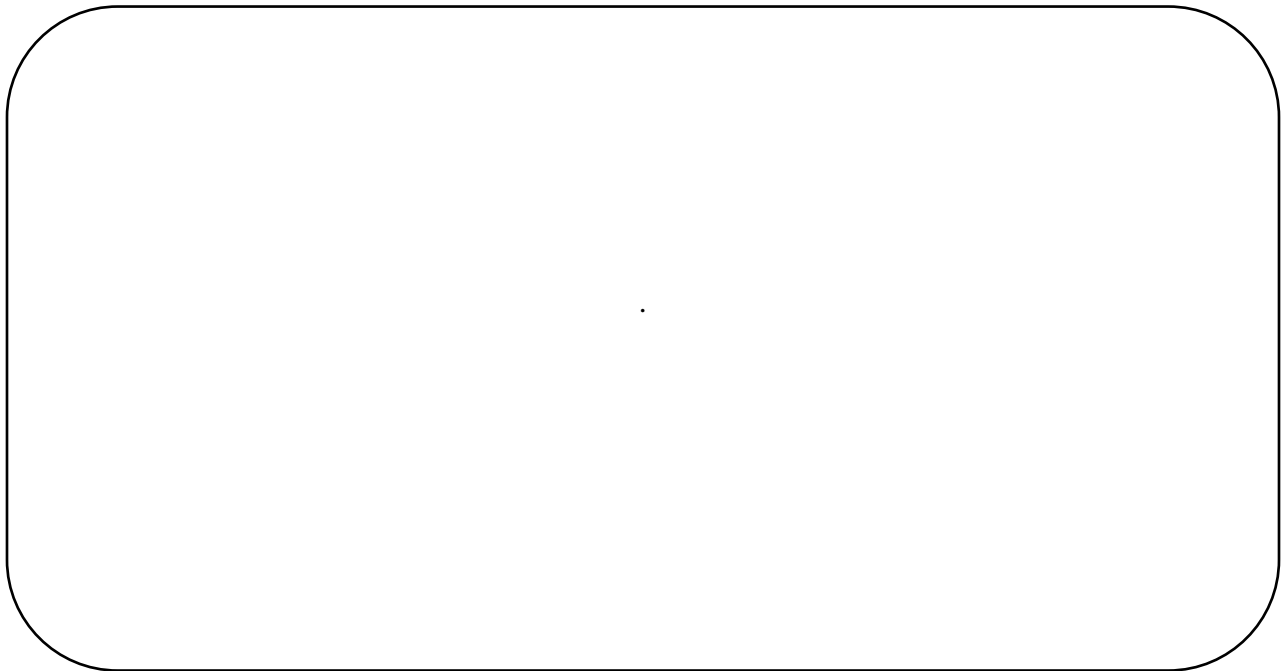
As a parent, do you struggle to “use your words” when you are overcome with intense emotion?



As a parent, do you feel comfortable and believe you are capable of supporting your child to “use their words” to express their emotions? (Remember, using words to express feelings and needs come after safety and calm has been restored enough in the body of the child.)



Do you struggle or experience ease in feeling your feelings, naming them, and verbally communicating them?



# To Hear and Be Heard

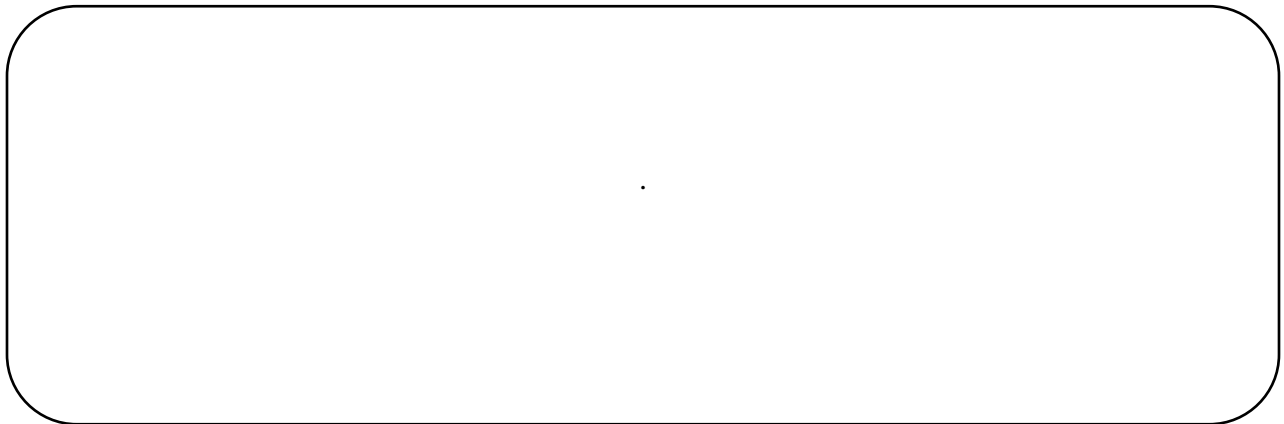
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Not truly feeling heard and being met with verbal and nonverbal empathy in your childhood does not mean that your caregiver did not love you. Remember, every behavior is a person's best attempt to meet a need. For most of us, our caregivers did not have the language, the skill, the support, or the tools to respond to big feelings with physical safety and emotional intelligence. We are here to create a new future for our families, a place where children are supported by caregivers who are capable of courageously feeling, and are willing to understand emotion as messenger, dedicated to expressing feelings in a healthy way through compassionate communication.

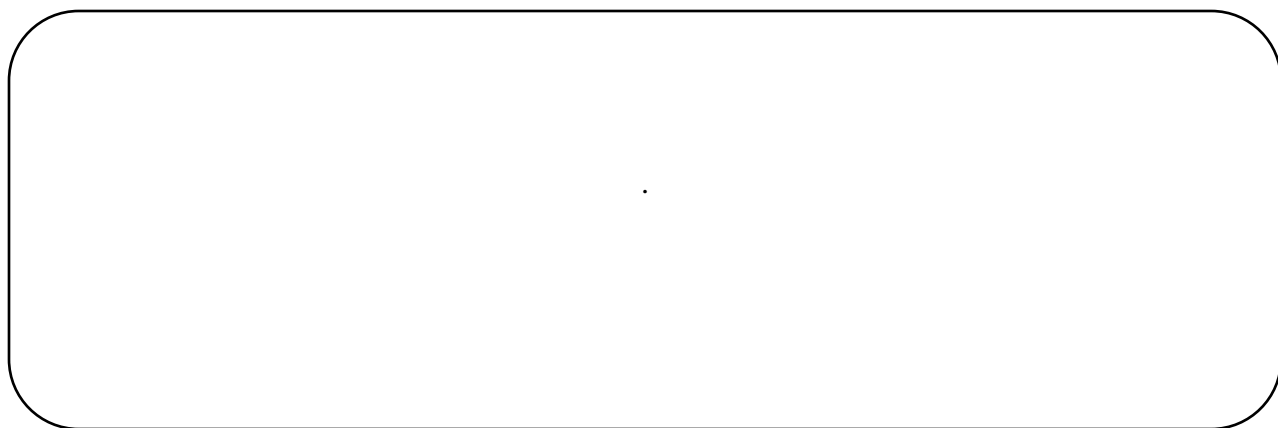
Before we can fully embody compassionate and nonviolent communication, not simply perform it, we must make sense of our internalized and suppressed stories, unprocessed feelings, and unconscious fears about using our voice and being heard. This will support you to have enough space to hear your child and find the willingness to meet their feelings with modeling and empathy.

## **Let's explore your fears about communication and verbal expression.**

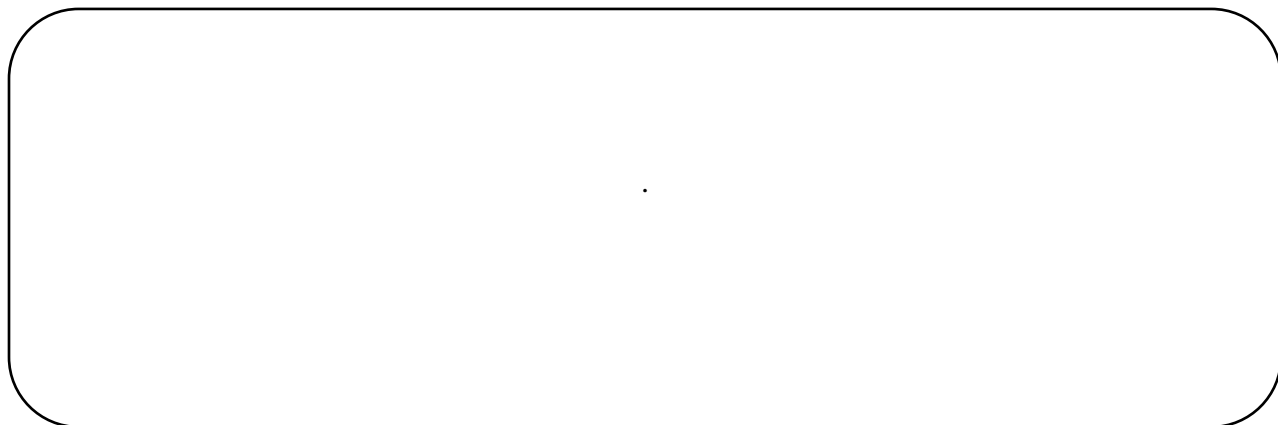
Express yourself as you read through these sentences. You can write feeling words, body sensations, a short poem. You can scribble colors, you can draw patterns or shapes. If I am to stand in my voice's full potential, I will be risking my physical, emotional, spiritual, or psychological safety.



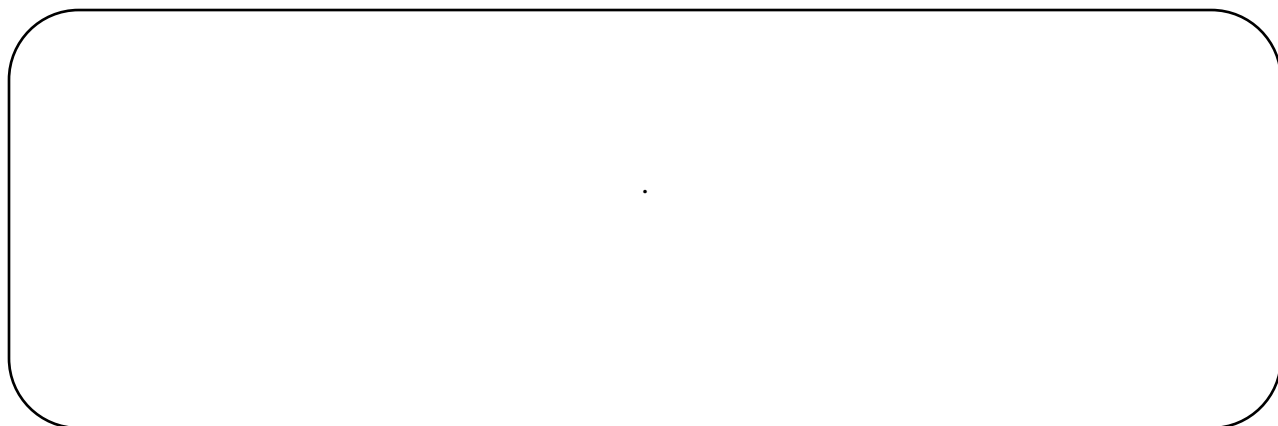
If I am to speak my voice's full truth, I will be rejected, abandoned, and ostracized from the people I love and need the most.



I fear that I am not worthy of knowing, embodying, and speaking my voice.

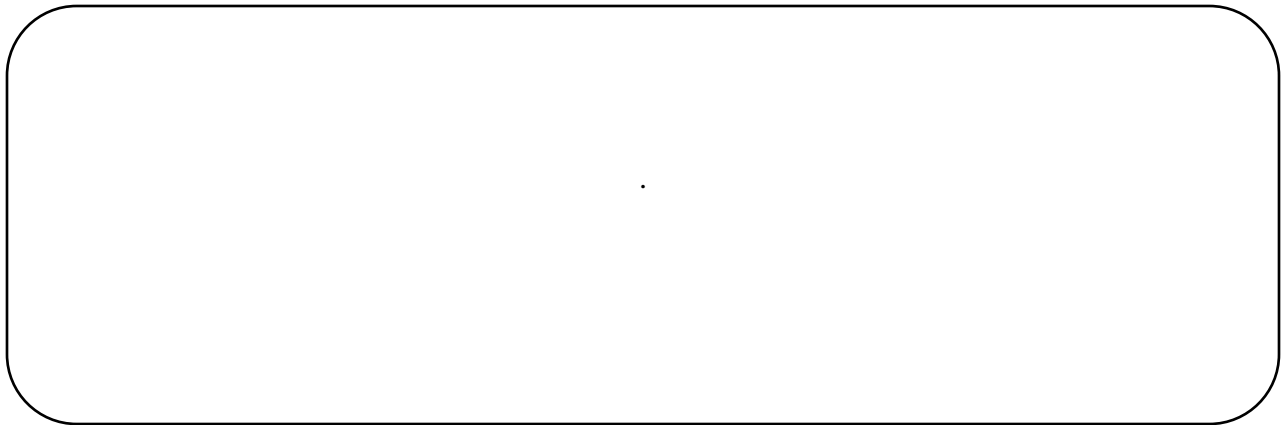


I fear that I am a liar, incapable of knowing and speaking truthfully.

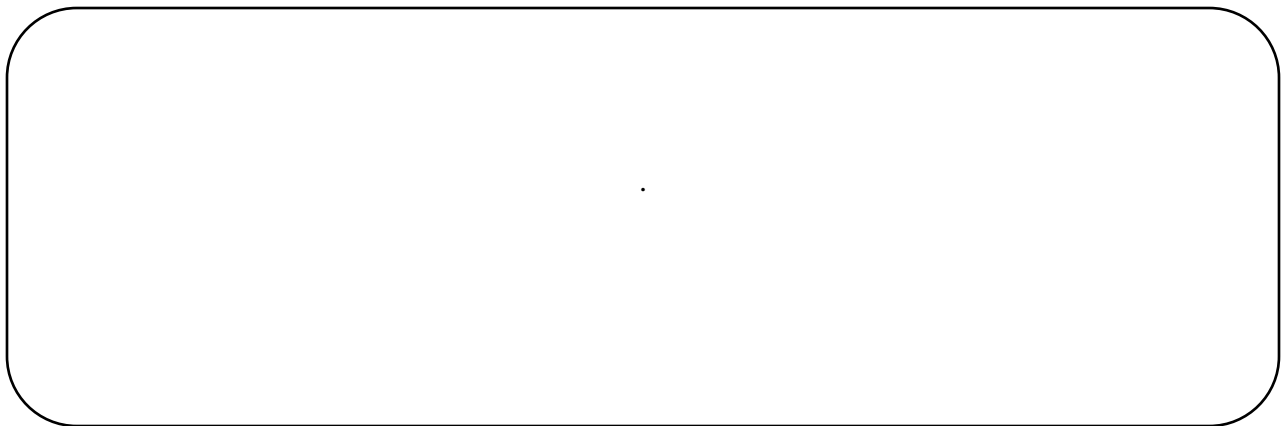




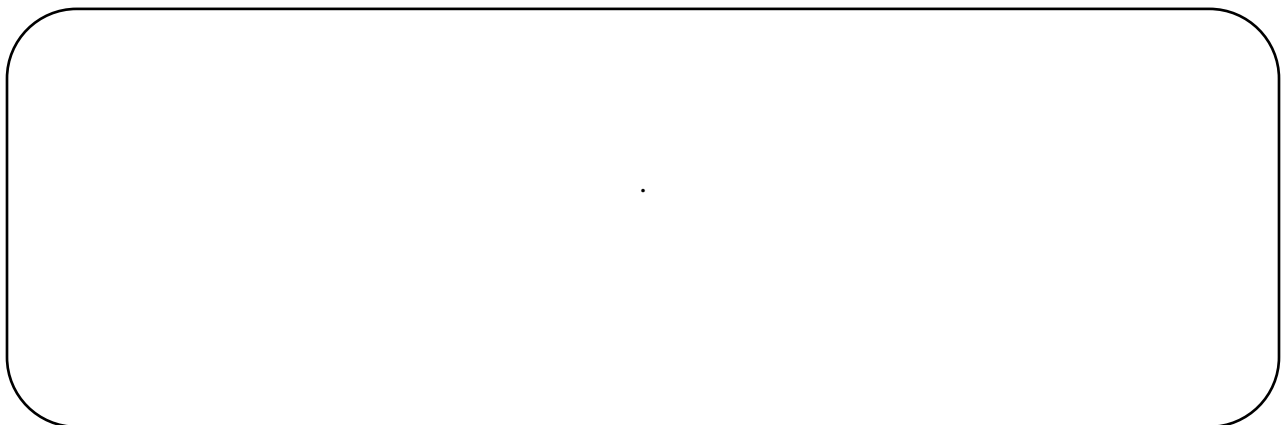
I fear allowing others to know how I feel and what I need, because then they could manipulate me.



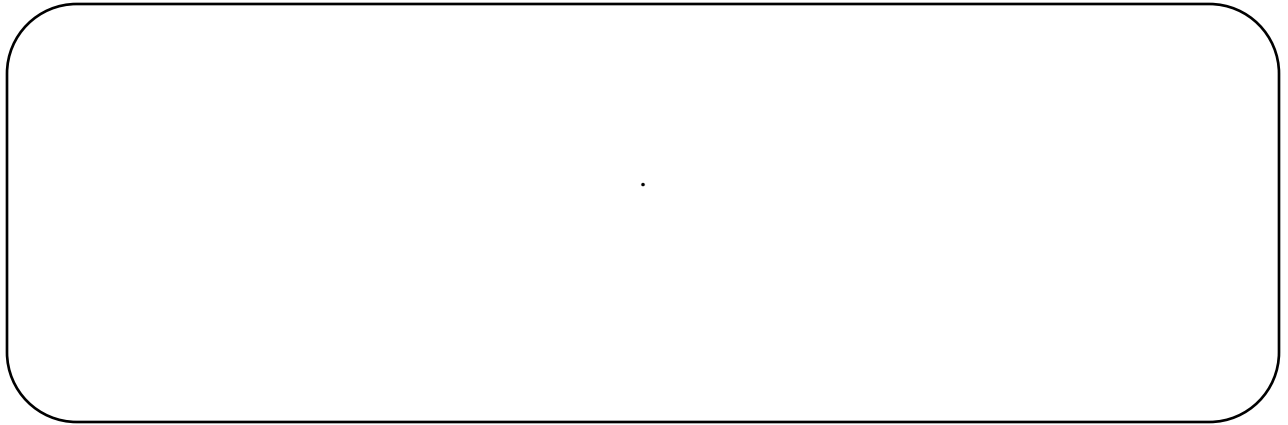
I fear speaking my feelings and needs because I will come off like I am better than others, "holier than thou."



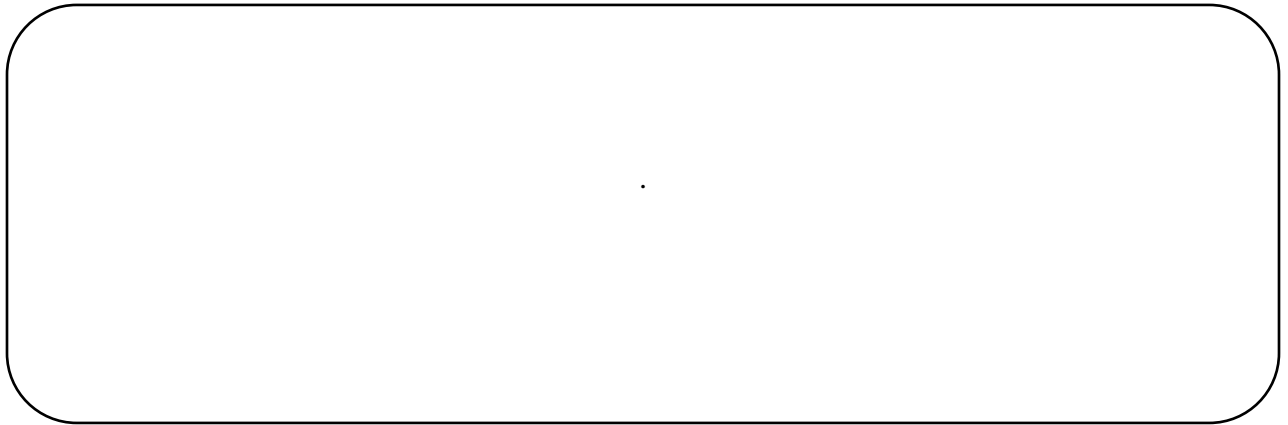
I believe that I am here to please others, and communicating feelings and needs does not matter.



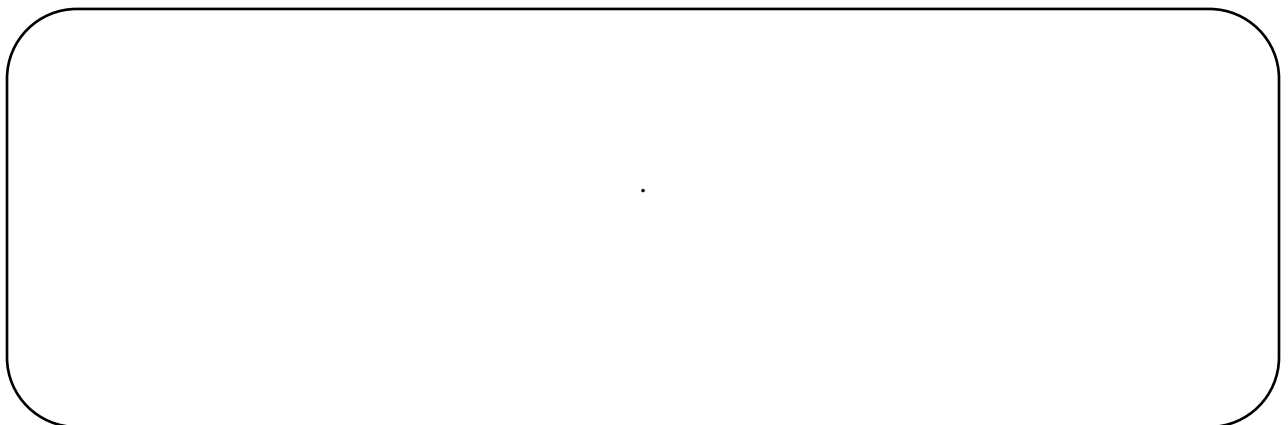
I do not feel connected to myself enough to proclaim what I truly feel and what I long for.



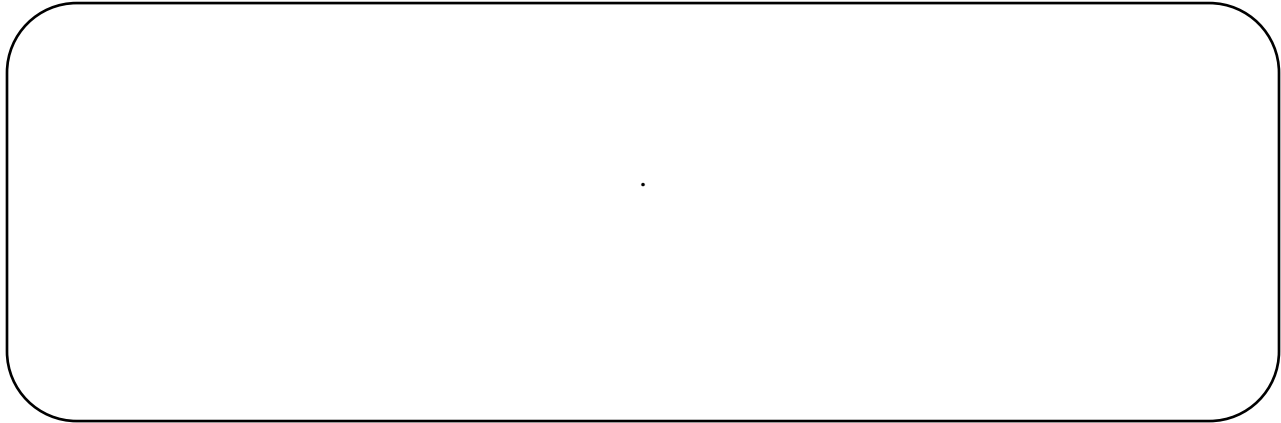
When I try to communicate what is true for me, no one listens anyway.



When I attempt to communicate my feelings, needs, and requests, people tell me I am bossy, stuck up, or controlling.



If I communicate how I feel and what I need, the people I love most will leave me.



## Rewrite Your Myths

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Let's practice creating conscious commitments to your voice to express how you feel, what you're longing for, and what you want.

What are some expansive beliefs that you could be intentionally cultivating?

My voice is \_\_\_\_\_

My feelings are \_\_\_\_\_

Having needs is \_\_\_\_\_

Communicating how I feel and what I think is \_\_\_\_\_

My child's voice is \_\_\_\_\_

My child's feelings and needs are \_\_\_\_\_

Everyone's feelings and needs in our family are \_\_\_\_\_

My commitment to my voice is \_\_\_\_\_

My commitment to expressing how I feel and what I need is \_\_\_\_\_

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Which of these fears are most alive in your parenting?.

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What fear keeps you from practicing Empowered Parenting?.

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# A Empowered Conversations

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*The ten-step process to resolve conflict, repair disconnection and solve problems creatively.*

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Empowered parenting believes that conversation matters. We believe that the success of a conversation comes from the quality of security within the connection to self, and between the people involved in the conversation.

Our ten-step communication process, Empowered Conversations, will unpack and highlight the essentials of non-violent communication.

You can use this process in your own way. We showcase a process that you can pick and choose from, creating your own style of communicating. It will be based in:

- Self security
- Expansive beliefs in your voice, feelings and needs
- Ability to communicate to connect and understand
- Non-attachment to an outcome or agenda
- Spaciousness to actively listen vs. prove that you are right and know more
- Communication occurs after internal and external safety has been established

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## THE TEN STEPS OF AN EMPOWERED CONVERSATION

- |                |                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Connect     | 6. Responsibility     |
| 2. Consent     | 7. Feelings and needs |
| 3. Intention   | 8. Empathy            |
| 4. Affirmation | 9. Clear request      |
| 5. Concern     | 10. Appreciation      |
-

## **Step 1: Connect**

Before a conversation begins, connect without an agenda. Enjoy spending time with your child, partner, or whoever you intend to speak with. If that's not possible, spend time connecting to yourself before you begin the conversation.

## **Step 2: Consent**

We are not forcing another person into a conversation. Successful communication happens when there is consent. We ask our children, partner, co-parent, or whoever we are intending to speak to if:

1. Now is a good time?
2. They are “up” for this conversation?
3. They are willing to actively listen and possibly reflect back what you're saying.

## **Step 3: State Your Intention**

You can do this out loud or in your head. Your intention is your “arrow” for the conversation. It will direct your energy and help you stay focused. If you find the conversation spreading out of context, you can bring the conversation back by reminding yourself or the other person of the intention.

### **Example of intentions:**

- I'd really like to talk about what happened today at breakfast. My intention is to understand your point of view.
- Thanks for being willing to chat. My intention is to apologize for how I reacted last night.
- I'd really love to focus on how to figure out a way to make our schedules work more smoothly.
- I am hoping you and I could focus on talking through why our mornings are so rough.

## **Step 4: Affirm What's Going Well**

Make a “slow entry” into your concern by focusing on what is going WELL in the relationship between you and your child, partner, co-parent, or parent.

### **Example of affirmation:**

- I've been having so much fun with you at the park this week.
- I've really loved the meals you've been cooking this week.
- I'm inspired by the artwork you've been creating lately.

- I'm thankful for your constant willingness to check in.
- I'm thankful you're open to listening, and speaking to me about this topic. I appreciate your willingness to work through this together.

### **Step 5: State Your Concern Clearly**

Share with your child or conversation partner your concern. Do not embellish or overdramatize. If possible, state as objectively as possible.

#### **Example of stating concern:**

- I'm nervous about how late we've been leaving home in the morning. We've been late for school four days this week.
- I'm concerned about the words you've been using with your sister.
- I'm ready to work out our struggle around dinner time.
- I'm concerned about the amount of time you've been on your phone. I noticed this week you've been up until past midnight every night.

### **Step 6: Take Responsibility For Your Part**

Taking responsibility for your part means that you may apologize.

#### **Example include:**

- I apologize for not addressing this sooner. I dodged a direct conversation with you.
- I'm really sorry about how I responded to you in the car. That was not gentle.
- I'd like to apologize for how grumpy I've been this week.
- I acknowledge how I've been gone at work so much, and not able to be with you at bedtime. I see your sadness and I want to find ways to spend lots of time together.

### **Step 7: State Your Feelings And Needs**

Clearly make a feelings and needs statement. Be sure to take responsibility for your feelings and needs and express them in a way that does not put any weight on the other person to fix your feelings or take care of your needs. Speak in the "I" statement. This may feel uncomfortable or unknown. Your child or partner may be used to blame, shame, and criticism, and you may find yourself stuck in a communication pattern of defense and shutting down. Be patient with this step. You can ask consent first, to be sure that the person hearing you is ready.

Asking for consent to share your feelings: Would it be okay to share how I feel and what my need is? You don't have to DO anything about it. I would feel supported just being heard and witnessed.

Sharing your feelings and needs example: I'm feeling really sad about how often we have been arguing. I am really longing for us to be communicating clearly and calmly."

### **Step 8: Offer Empathy For The Other Person's Feelings And Needs**

After you have shared your feelings and needs, without putting ANY responsibility on the other person to fix them, take care of your feelings, or change how you feel, you then open a path to vulnerability. You can invite your communication partner to show how they feel and what needs are coming up for them. You may notice that the fourth step is a little bit easier. The eighth step is to offer empathy for the other person's feelings and needs.

#### **Example of offering empathy:**

- I imagine you are feeling stressed, also, I remember how you do not like being late to school. Can you share more?
- Can you help me understand what feelings are coming up for you right now?
- Do you need support with screen-time boundaries? Maybe it's too difficult to turn the screen off. It's really hard for me, too.
- Are you feeling overwhelmed right now?

### **Step 9: Make a Request, NOT a Demand**

Making a request is clarifying how you both can move forward from this point. One sentence that works superbly well in making a request, is "Would you be willing...?" Then, arriving at a plan together will lay the groundwork for clear communication moving forward. Remember, the other person does not have any responsibility for saying YES to your request. They get to say no. It is your responsibility to care for your disappointment if your communication partner says no to your request. Then, practice resiliency about continuing to negotiate a request that works for all.

#### **Requests are:**

1. Specific, not general. Potential answers: who, what, when, where, how long.
2. Do-able and positive, not discussing what you do not want.
3. Not attached to the outcome; holding space for your request to find a different form to best serve everyone.



4. Clear that the person is not being “hooked” by your request. They get to say no.
5. An invitation for the communication partner to give an honest answer.
6. NOT stuck on strategies.

**Example of connection requests:**

- Would you be willing to repeat back what I’ve said so I know I’m communicating clearly?
- I’m so curious about how you feel right now. I would feel more at ease if you could share a couple words about your experience right now.

**Example of action requests:**

- I would feel so thankful if you would be willing to support me with the laundry on Saturday afternoons. You could put your clothes away, and I can do the rest.
- I am really hoping for support and ease in our mornings. Would you be willing to wake up about 15 minutes earlier? We could set an alarm, and make a chart for you to follow so you know exactly what to do.
- I would be so excited by your help with the kids when I get home from work. Could you play with them while I cook dinner? It would be from 5:30-6, then we can all eat together.
- I’m hoping for your help in the mornings with breakfast. I’m thinking about you taking the kids outside while I cook, what do you think? Do you have another idea?
- Understand how to separate requests from demands.

**Demands are:**

1. Are attached to one single outcome being what you, as the parent, want.
2. Do not allow the other person to speak honestly. There is an unspoken agreement that “you better say yes to me or else...”
3. Are attached to “because I said so.”
4. Do not consider the bigger picture of the other person’s needs.

**Example of demands:**

- I need you to pick up your room right now. It’s unacceptable for you to have your clothes all over your room. Now, or no iPad.
- You need to help me with dinner. I can’t do this all by myself. You need to step it up.
- I need you to listen. You never listen. You need to listen right now.

According to Dr. Vanessa Lapointe, the quickest way to make a child tune out is to say, "I need you to..." Children aren't "wired" to be concerned about our needs. We are in charge of meeting our own needs, not our children.

### **Step 10: Share Appreciation**

Share appreciation for your communication partner's willingness to speak with you. Even if you didn't get what you wanted in your request, or if the conversation wasn't perfect and needs another round or two to find conclusions, express appreciation regardless.

#### **Example of appreciation**

- Thank you for listening to me. I trust that we will work this out.
- I appreciate you.
- Thank you for your willingness to get creative for me.
- I love you. I love how well you hear me.

## **What Keeps Us From Empowered Conversation?**

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### **Insecurity**

To the extent that you are unsure about the validity of your own feelings and needs, you will tend to shame, blame, lobby, analyze, minimize, dismiss, criticize, defend, use "shoulds," and compare. You may need empathy from someone outside of the situation in order to access a sense of honor for your own feelings and needs.

### **Lobbying**

Trying to convince another of your viewpoint by showing you are right and they are wrong.

- Ex: "Well, let's Google that to see who actually is right."

## **Shaming**

Using language that implies that your child is “bad.”

- Ex: “You always ruin the fun with your whining!”

## **Blaming**

Attributing your experience as something that was caused by your child.

- Ex: “If you hadn’t done that, I wouldn’t be feeling angry!”

## **Analyzing**

Pointing out patterns you see in your child or partner as a way to explain their behavior.

- Ex: “You always think my ideas are boring. You’re just like your mother/father!”

## **Dismissing/minimizing**

Using words to attempt to decrease the intensity of your child’s experience.

- Ex: “You’re making a big deal out of this! It’s really not that important.”

## **Criticizing**

Finding fault in your child or partner and pointing it out to them.

- Ex: “I told you I wanted it done this way, and you did it like that again. You literally NEVER listen to me.”

## **Defending**

Explaining your behavior to your child or partner.

- Ex: “Well, I cleaned up your toys because I knew you wouldn’t do it and I didn’t want anyone to get hurt. If you’re upset about that then you should have picked up your toys in the first place. It’s not my fault.”

## **Using shoulds**

Using the word should in a sentence that describes something you wish your child or partner did or will do.

- Ex: “You should have let the dog out, and then we wouldn’t be in this mess.”

## Comparing

Judging your child or partner against other people in your life.

- Ex: “Jessica’s son doesn’t act like this at restaurants. Or, Joe’s wife never speaks to him this way.”

## Using absolutes

Attributing the words “always” or “never” to describe your child or partner’s behavior.

- Ex: “You always say that!” or “You never do what I ask!”

## Reactivity

Holding on to your story based on past events to such a degree that you cannot take in new information is a form of reactivity. Perceiving threat when none is present is another form of reactivity. When you are unable to separate past painful events from painful events in the present, you are stuck in reactivity. Ways reactivity might show up: attaching to opinions, rushing, competitiveness, getting stuck in one spot.

- **Attaching to opinions/competitiveness:** Acting on a compulsion to be “right” when talking with your partner.
  - Ex: “But I am right!”
- **Rushing:** Urgency to get a word in or interrupt your partner when talking.
  - Ex: “Let me finish!”
- **Getting stuck in one spot:** Feeling urgency to revisit a particular part of a dialogue again and again.
  - Ex: “You made a mistake there and we still need to talk about that.”

## Fear of disharmony

When you fear disharmony, you likely don’t trust that dialogue is possible. You then choose to ignore certain interactions, allowing disconnect and resentment to grow. This leaves you disconnected from your own feelings and needs as well as those in another. Dialogue is very difficult to create from this disconnected place. You may need more support before you can approach repair in a self-connected way.

1. **Some ways fear of disharmony might show up:** going blank and minimizing/dismissing.
2. **Denying:** This usually involves attempts to move away from feelings and needs by expressing how something shouldn't be a problem or insisting that others would think it is not a big deal. This might include subtle things. When your child says, "I was terrified when you wouldn't let me sleep with you," you reflect back, "I hear that you were nervous." Phrases such as, "You have no reason to feel that way," are common with denying someone's experience.
3. **Going blank:** When one partner reaches their capacity to continue a dialogue, it usually shows in phrases like, "I don't know."

## **Lack of skill**

When there is a lack of skill, you have good intentions, but don't know how to create repair without falling into the old model of blame and shame. You may need learning and practice to integrate new skills.

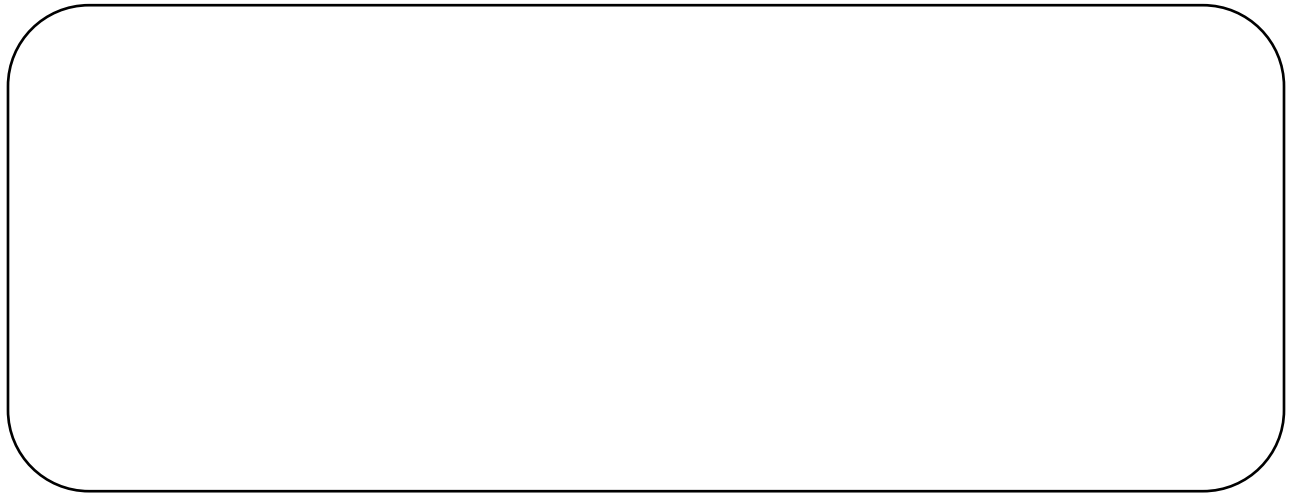
Of the above barriers, which are your top 3 disconnecting habits within conversation with either your child or partner/co-parent/parent?

1.

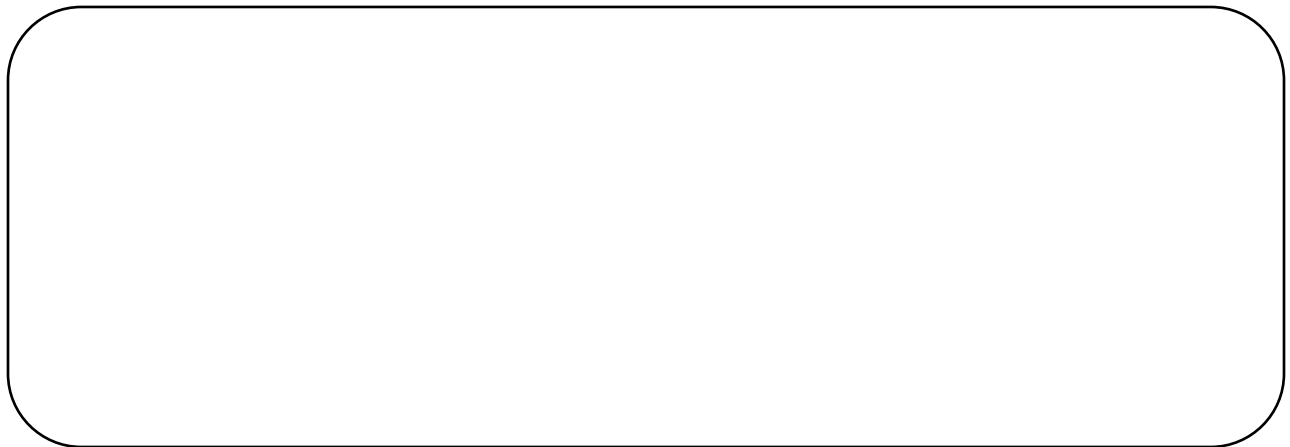
2.

3.

Can you remember a time when your child mimicked these same communication behaviors with you?



Can you remember a time when your parents displayed these same communication habits with you?



If you could make a new commitment, right now, to communicate with empowerment, what would your new commitment be?



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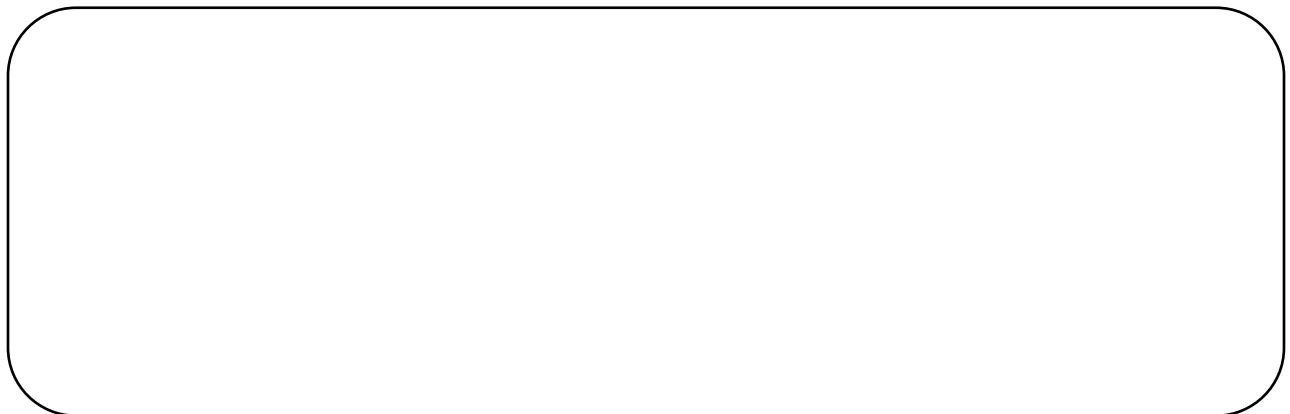
## **Design Your Empowered Conversation**

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Practice communication compassionately and mindfully before you go into a conversation. Design your conversation so you feel prepared, confident, and clear.

Imagine a conflict you've had recently within your family where an empowered conversation could serve greater connection, trust, and problem solving?

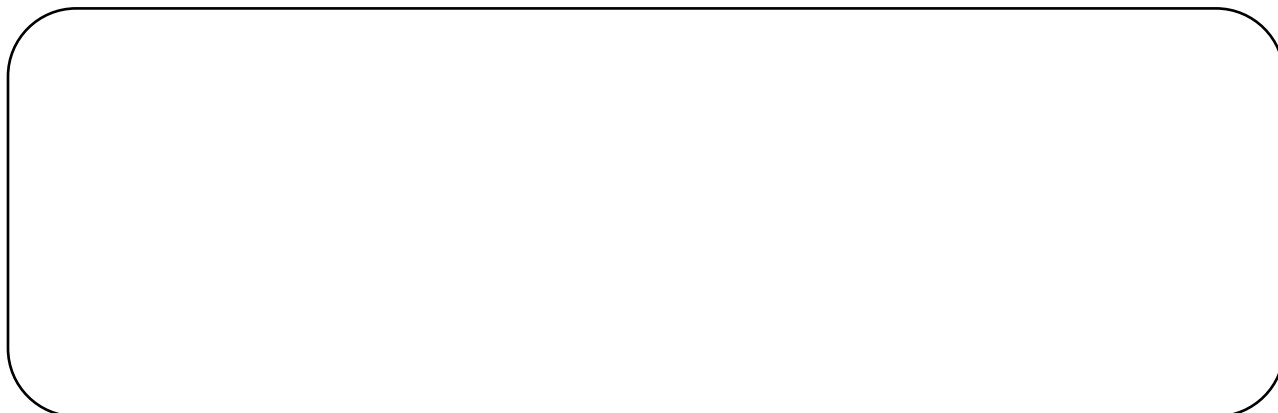
Scenario:



How you handled your communication in this scenario:



How you wish you would have responded within this scenario:

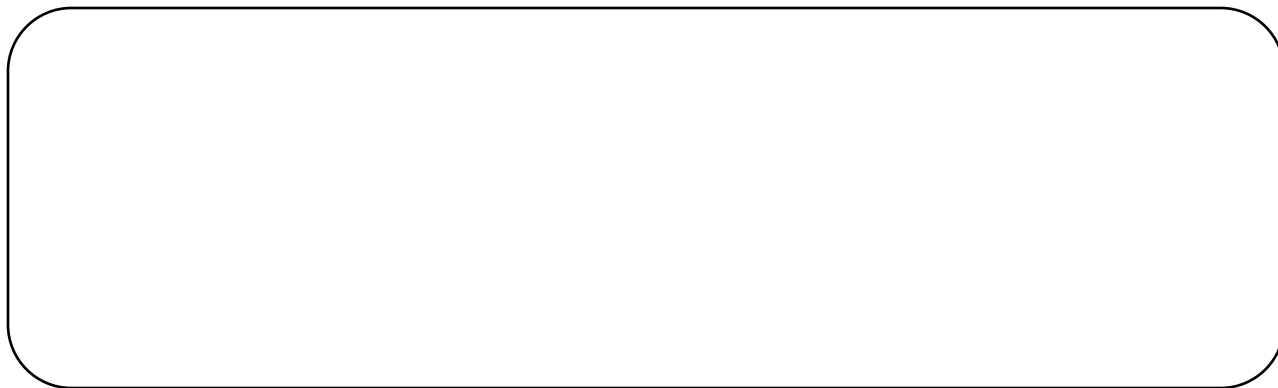


## **Your Empowered Conversation Practice Script**

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### **Step 1: Connect**

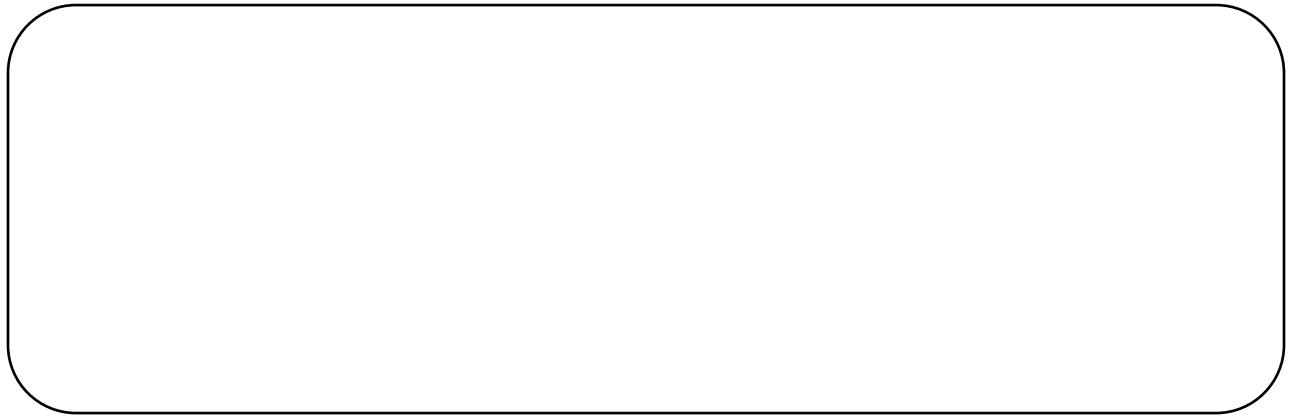
How you wish you would have responded within this scenario:





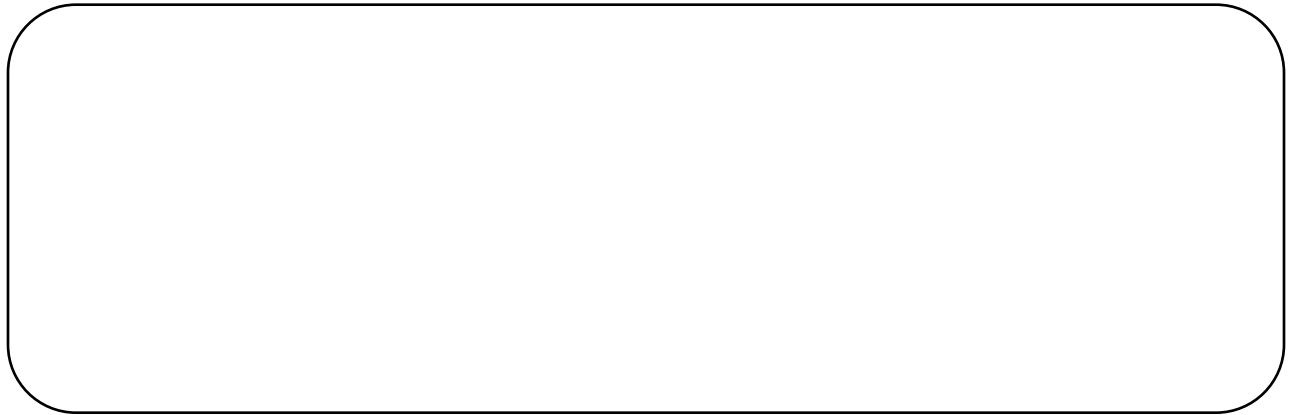
## **Step 2: Consent**

How will you ask permission to have a conversation?



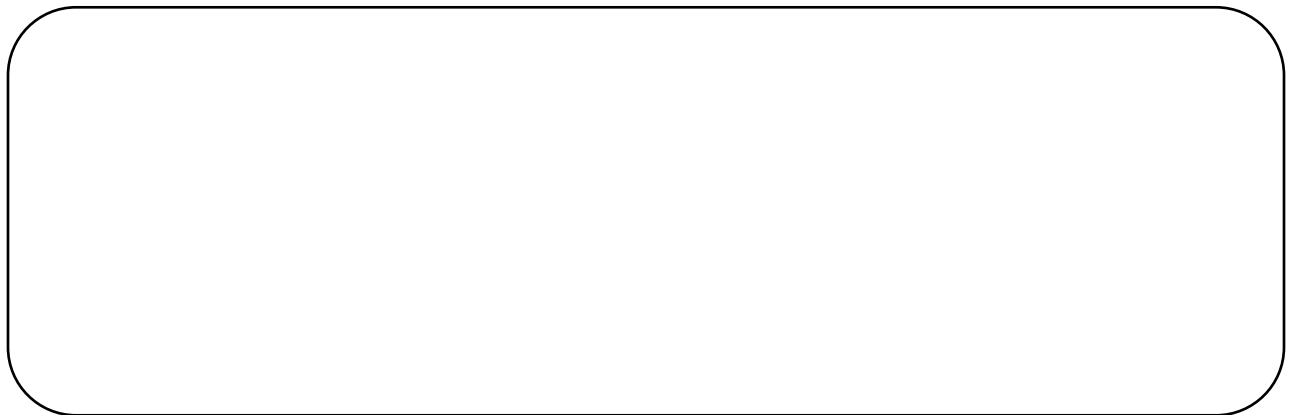
## **Step 3: Intention**

What will your intention be?



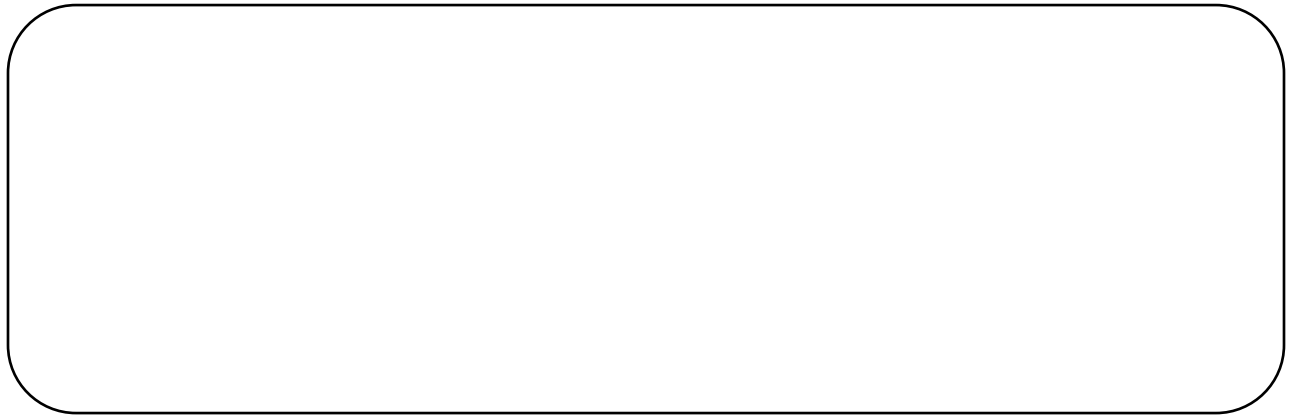
## **Step 4: Affirmation**

How can you affirm what's going well?



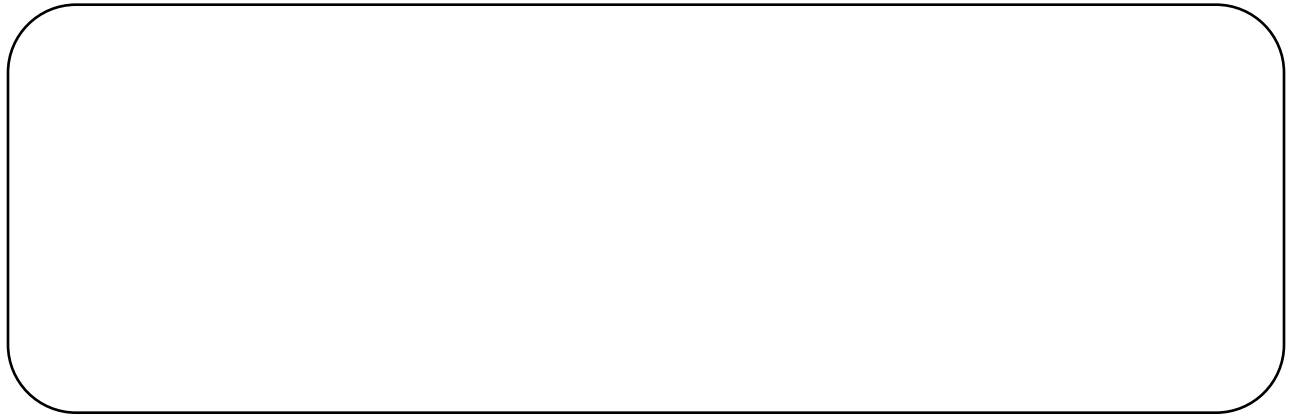
**Step 5: Concern**

What is your clear concern?



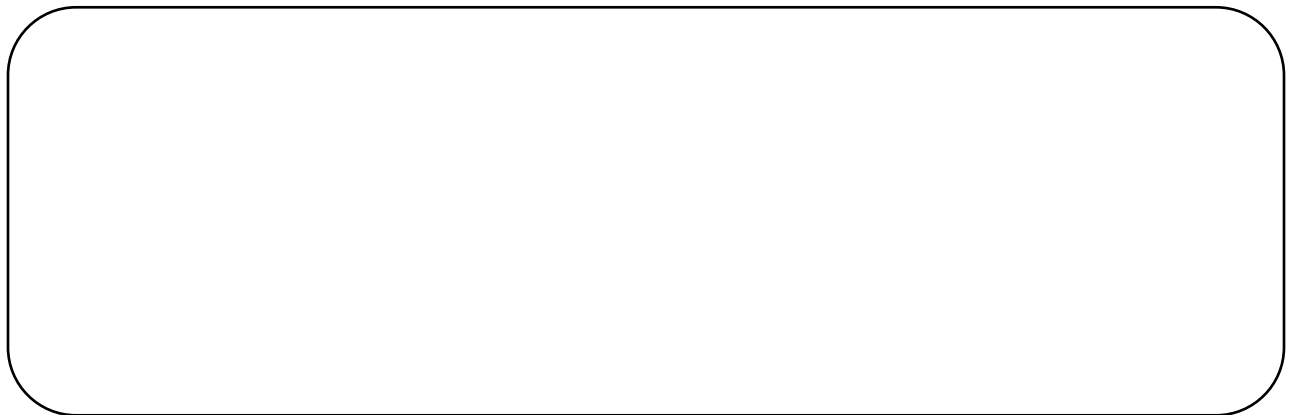
**Step 6: Responsibility**

Is there anything you could apologize for or own up to?



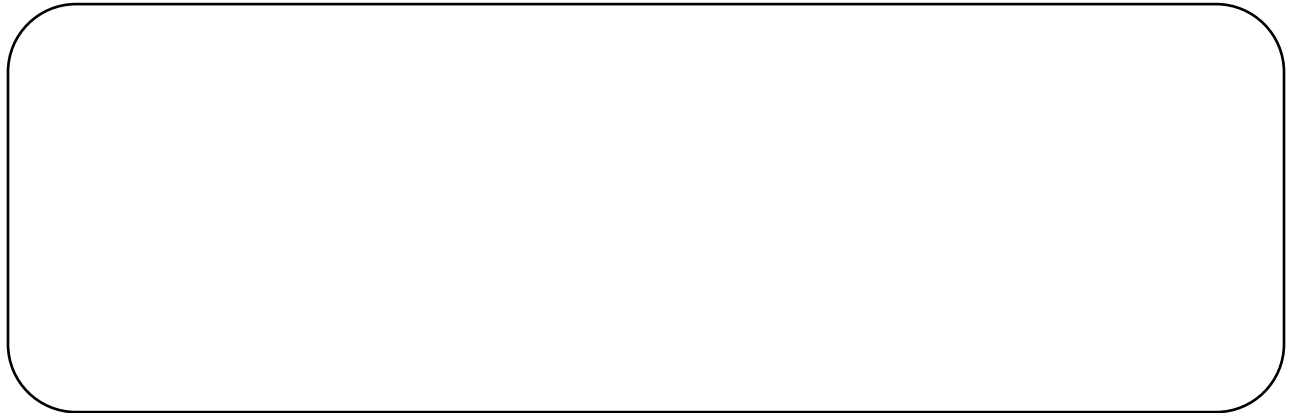
**Step 7: Feelings and needs**

Name yours.



**Step 8: Empathy guesses**

Guess the other person's, or make space for them to share.



**Step 9: Clear request**

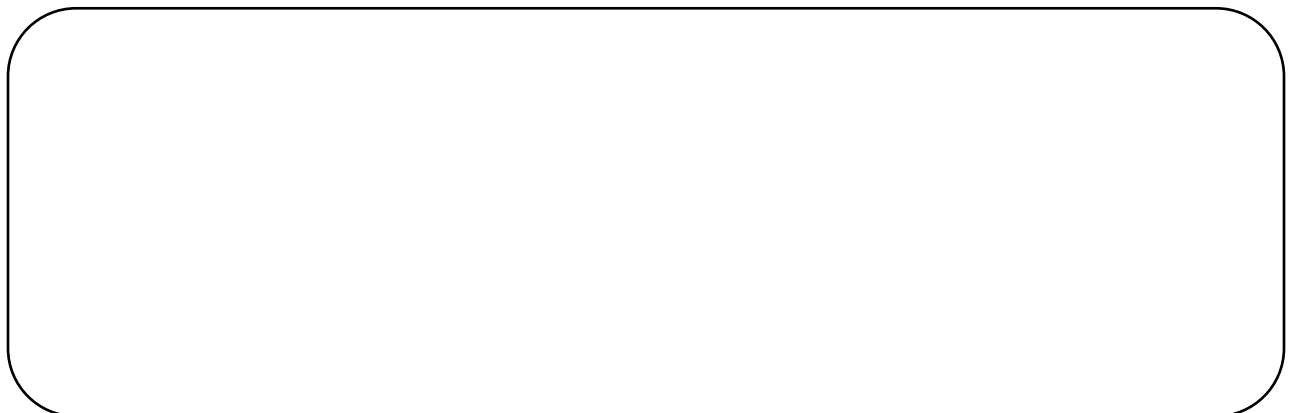
What is your request?

Remember it should be very specific, and leave room for a “no” or something else.



**Step 10: Appreciation**

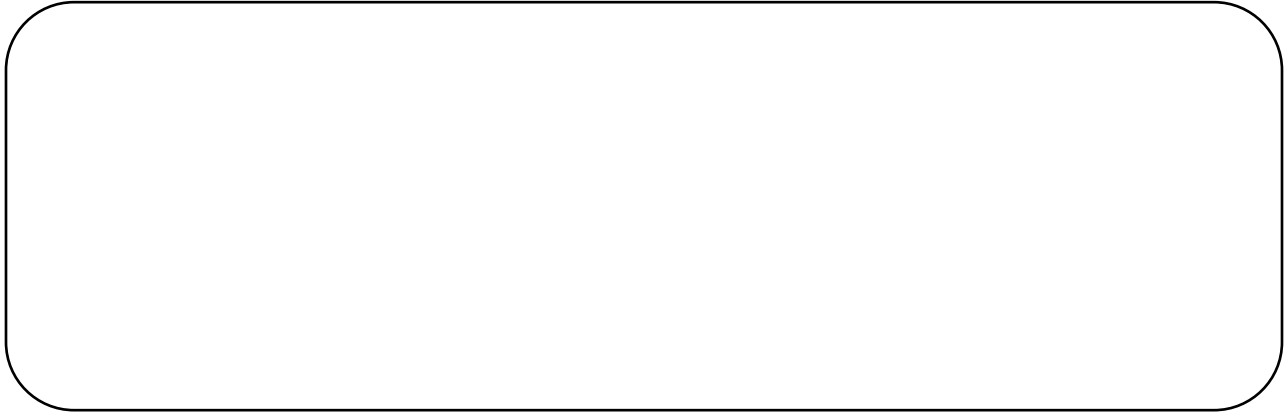
How can you offer appreciation?



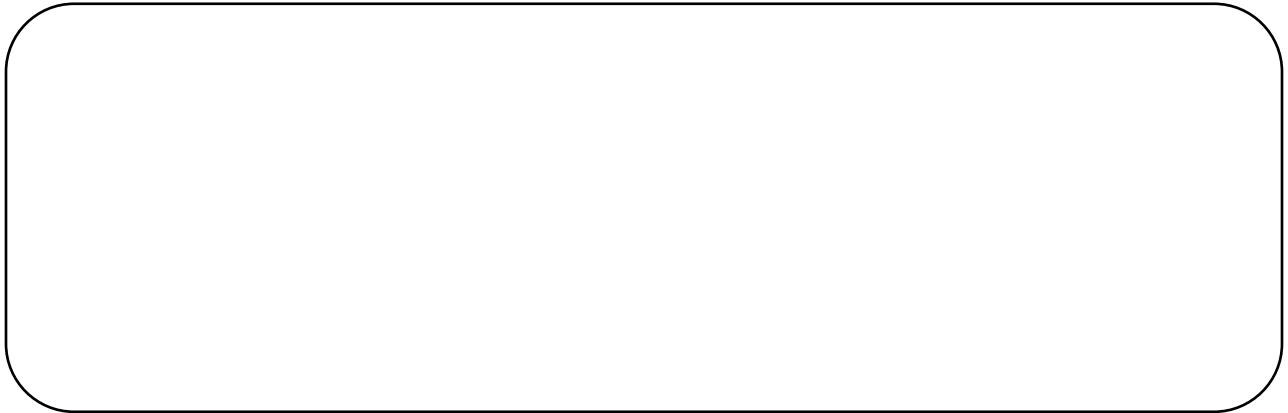
# Take-Away

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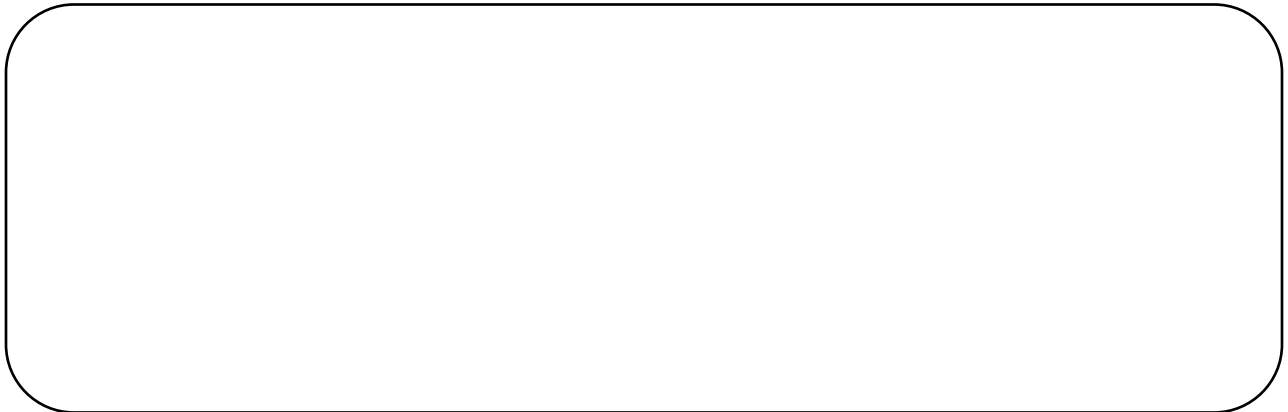
What has been your greatest take-away from this week's lesson?



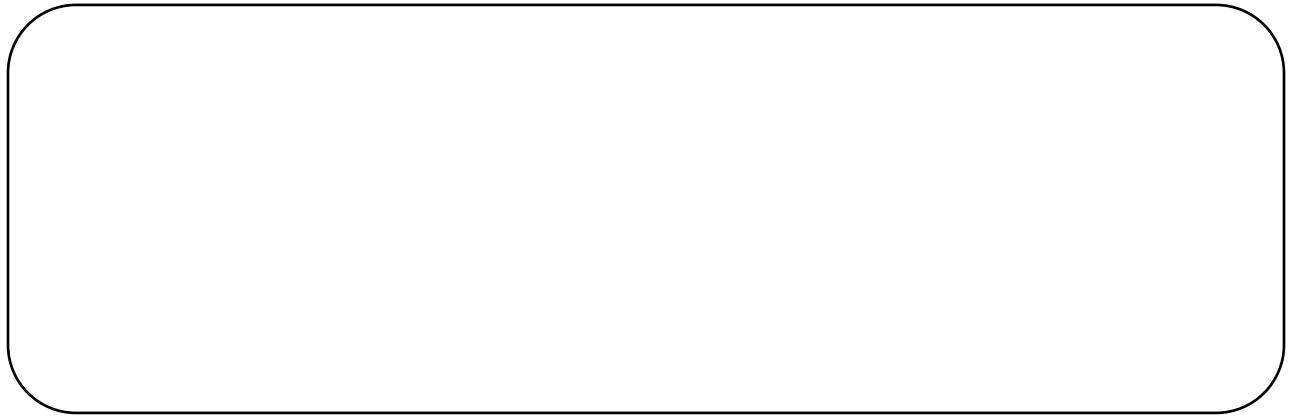
What communication pattern have you identified within your relationship with your children or spouse/co-parent that you would like to shift?



Can you imagine yourself having an empowered conversation?



Do you have any fears or resistance to practicing nonviolent communication?



IF you have any questions about how to bring these concepts to life, your coach is here for you.



**Feelings checkout:**

Name one feeling you're experiencing right now \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name one need that is being met or unmet right now \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_