

Ep #88 Dealing with frustrating situations: Part one

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This is episode 88. Let's begin.

Smarter Parenting welcomes you to our podcast series, The Parenting Coach for ADHD. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach. Siopa Kinikini.

Hello, my friends. How are you? I hope you're doing great. I'm doing great myself. And today we are going to be answering the question about how you deal with frustrating situations. When you're observing your child and they misbehave, what are some ways that you can deal with that without reacting, or yelling, or screaming? That tends to be the default for a lot of parents when they see something happening with their child, and their child misbehaves, that they become emotionally engaged in that. And then they start in at either asking questions, or pointing, or yelling, or screaming.

[So what we're going to do is give you a very specific skill, and it's a simple skill that you can use, and you can use it immediately.](#) And we're going to discuss how powerful this can be during this podcast.

I received information from a mother that I've been working with and she is a single mother. She has a teenager who is highly difficult for her. She struggles with him. He is not very cooperative. He's quiet, rebellious in his own private, quiet way. And yet, when she doesn't get a response out of him, she begins to yell and scream. And she wants a reaction out of him. I discussed with her what is actually happening in this scenario. And what is actually happening is they have taken on some very specific roles in their family. Mom will react in a certain way, the child will react in his way, and they have become accustomed to this dance. This dance where the boy doesn't respond, and where he's, non-reactive, almost ignoring to a point, and it irritates mom to where she's yelling. And then the boy continues to ignore. And then she is screaming and then he ignores. And so it just continues on until Mom is tired and storms off.

And in our discussion about this, I like to call it the tango, that's usually happening with children who engage with parents this way. [The tango is a never-ending source of frustration for a lot of parents because I move, you move.](#) You move, I move. And it's just this back and forth without actually getting anywhere. So, while I was talking to her about this tango that she was going through with her son, we started to discuss ways that she could interrupt that, and ways that she could control her reaction to his noncompliance and him ignoring her.

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Now, I'll be honest with you, if my child was doing that to me, it is annoying. That is super irritating when you feel like they should be responding to you and they are completely ignoring you. And if that consistently happens, of course, it's going to grate on my nerves. I'm sure it grates on her nerves. To where we start to act out, and we become more reactive rather than proactive in our approach with the children.

So we explored it. We started talking about it. She wanted to know, "In what way can I stop this? In what way can I step away from this, and not react that way, and react the way that I want to without becoming upset?" Now, this is not uncommon. In fact, a lot of parents go through the tango with their children. It's a very common thing that happens. And so, I started to discuss with her where she's coming from and being able to take a breath and relax a bit before she begins the engagement with her son. The ultimate goal is for her to be able to take stock of what is happening at the moment, and by taking a breath, that is forcing her physically to step back and not react immediately.

[So we Role-played that.](#) We Role-played her being able to take a breath before responding to him when she asked him to do something and he ignores. And it's kind of funny to do these Role-plays over Zoom, over a video camera, and yet very, very highly effective. And so we were Role-playing this, and we were practicing it, and having her take a breath, which she was able to learn fairly quickly.

And I started to up the ante a little bit during our Role-play to help her really get a feel for what it's going to be like when it really happens. Now remember Role-playing is a piece that we integrate for parents and for children in learning new skills so they can be prepared for when the event actually happens. So with this mom, I started to up the ante. My goal was to get her to the point where she feels like what we are Role-playing is real, is absolutely real, and that she can take stock in what she's doing, and she can react the way that we've been practicing.

It's one thing to practice something over and over and over again. But until you really feel like it's a real event, that's when the real power comes, when you are Role-playing. So we practiced it, she was able to take a breath, and then she's like, "Okay, I've taken a breath, but now what? He's still ignoring me." And so I introduced to her, re-introduced to her, a skill that we had been using with the other skills that she has learned on Smarter Parenting.

I taught her how to use Observe and Describe while we were working on [Correcting Behaviors](#). But I said, "Now let's just take this skill. It's a very simple skill. And we are going to apply it in this situation."

She didn't get it at first. And I get it. A lot of parents are like, "Wait a minute. What? Is it really this simple?" And in some ways, it actually is, once you know exactly how to respond and what to do. So we talked about [Observe and Describe](#). If you are unfamiliar with the skill, let me tell you a little bit about it. Observe and Describe is really simple. What you're going to do is you're going to observe a behavior, and then you're going to describe the behavior. And you're going

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to do so without any judgment. So it's as if you're taking a picture of the behavior, or taking a film of the behavior, and you just describing it. You're not doing anything more than that. Observe and Describe.

So we talked about it and I said, "Okay, what we're going to do is we're going to implement this simple skill. You're just going to observe what your son does, and you're going to describe it. And that's it, until he becomes more compliant with what's going on." Now, she did not think this was going to work, but we started to Role-play it, again with the intensity that we had before. And she was able to realize that, "Hey, this is a calm way I can interact with my child. And this is a way that I can engage with him without losing my sense of control and without becoming angry, but actually being in a good state of mind."

Now, you may be wondering why would we use Observe and Describe when we are dealing with a negative behavior? [Well, first off, Observing and Describing allows a parent to take stock in what is actually happening in the moment.](#) What is actually happening in this very moment, and being very present. That invites the child to be absolutely present in what's happening as well. It also gives them as a child, this sense of, "Hey, I'm being observed right now." And everything that they are doing is coming to the forefront. Everything that they are doing is now being, whether or not it is conscious or not for a child, it is being brought to the forefront of exactly what they are doing. [And that can be beneficial in a lot of ways, because a lot of times children engage and interact, but they're unaware exactly of what they're doing or what it looks like they are doing.](#)

So I practice this. We practiced this. We Role-played it multiple times. Her being able to use descriptive words without becoming angry or using judgemental words. Again, it's just describing, you have to almost pretend that you are seeing something at a museum and you're just describing it. So you're taking a step back, you're taking a breath, and you're looking at it and you're saying, "Okay, what I see is, boom. What I see is, boom." So you're Observing and Describing it. And you're being very concrete in the way that you communicate this with your child.

She was hesitant to try it with her child, even though we had Role-played it and it seemed to keep her on track, but she agreed to try it for the next week. And she did. She actually went in to her son's room and it started the dance. And she remembered us talking about this dance back and forth that they were doing, and that they were accustomed to doing. And it was almost as if could cue each other on how to do this.

And she decided, "Okay, I am going to take a breath and just Observe and Describe. That's all I'm going to do." And she was able to do this perfectly because what happened was after she did it the second time, the dance changed. Her son noticed that something was different and tried to figure out exactly what she was doing and why she was doing it.

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And so she just continued Observing and Describing. He was like, "What are you doing?" And mom, at this point, felt validated in that she's like, "We're not going to do this dance anymore. We're not dancing like that anymore. We're going to do things differently. "

So, I had her focus in, on just Observing and Describing until he was at a state, and then using the skill of Correcting Behaviors. So she Observed. Described. Observed and Described. Second time, that was the charm. He's like, "Okay, what are you doing? We're not dancing the same dance anymore." Mom changed everything. Mom changed the dance. It was no longer a dance, but it was more of her leading into how to correct the negative behaviors that she was noticing with her son.

Super, super powerful. A lot of people question whether or not simple things like that can make a difference. And I would beg to say that everything, everything that is meaningful or powerful can be broken down into simple steps. Can be broken down into ways that we can use them. And it's in breaking things down and simplifying them that actually allow us to recognize the power behind them. So Observe and Describe sounds so easy to do, right? It sounds so easy to do. And yet it's something that a lot of parents forget to do, or they don't do. The Observe and Describe, brings everyone into the present. It makes everything obvious to the child, of what they're doing. It also keeps a parent grounded if they're able to do it correctly.

Her biggest fear was that she would lose control and become angry and upset while working through this and that they would start to dance again. Parents have to make a conscious decision to not become upset when their child is behaving a certain way. And in fact, that is about yourself as a parent more than it is about your child's behavior.

Let me say that again because I think it's important. Your ability to control yourself is about you. And it's more important for you to be able to do that than it is about addressing the behavior that you're observing. Because if you can come from a place of love and compassion, gratitude, and stability. If you are consistent. If you come from that place, which comes from a calm place, then everything will change for your child. And every engagement you have with your child is going to change. Taking stock as a parent in your reactions is a huge step towards correcting negative behaviors.

So working with this mom, we focused on correcting the child's behavior by having her step back, take a breath, if you need to take a breath. I recommended to her, "If you ever feel like you're losing it, you can always come back and address it later in a more calm state. That's okay. That is absolutely okay to do." The ideal is that parents are always in this positive frame of mind where they're approaching problems and their children at a 100%. Not at 50. Not at 60. Not at 70 or 80, but that they're there at a 100%. And they are dedicated to what needs to change.

Now I have continually coached this mom, and I've been working with her on continuing this change in the dance. "We're not going to dance anymore. I'm leading and I'm going to do things

differently. And now you have to behave differently." The dance is an interesting concept when you think about it, because in order to dance with someone, you have to have some type of communication where it's nonverbal, right? Dancing with somebody requires you to pay attention, and to be aware of what's happening, to be in tune with each other. And by Mom being able to switch it up in her sphere, her son had to switch it up in his sphere, and now they were doing it together.

Let me tell you how this all transpired with this mom. She used Observe and Describe to describe the behaviors. Specifically, "You are looking outside the window." She would just describe it. "You are looking outside the window right now. I'm observing that you are sitting with your shoulders slouched. I'm observing that you are avoiding my eye contact." So she's giving these statements to her child and her son then takes in that information, and he's making sense of the information, and then making a choice on how he's going to respond to that information. And by her being able to Observe and Describe his behaviors, he was able to realize and recognize there isn't a dance, where she's at, and where to meet her.

So when she had mentioned, "You're looking out the window." He would turn and face her and say, "Okay, I'm not looking at the window anymore." "Okay, great." And then there was a praise statement in there, "Thank you for not looking out the window." And then she would ask a question and then he would ignore again. And then she would describe his behavior and he'd have to make a choice in between there. And then the dance changed, because Mom was changing the steps to the dance.

And it's so powerful when you think about how parents can actually do this with a very simple skill, like Observe and Describe. Observe and Describe skill is available on the Smarter Parenting website. And you can watch it. It's a video lesson, and it explains how to use this skill, and the power behind this skill. I highly recommend you jump over there and check it out because this is a skill you can do any time.

Now I'm going to tell you the power of being able to use this in everyday life, not only with your child, but with another person. With a spouse. A coworker. Whoever it may be. If you want to improve your communication with them, you can use the skill of Observe and Describe, just by Observing and Describing. A lot of what people do is not conscious to them, and when you bring it to the forefront, and you make them aware of it, then they have a decision to make. And they can alter it and change it or they can ask questions about it and engage. Now, let me give you an example of what this is like for an adult.

I remember when I first started working in this field, and I had a supervisor that I was working with and we had kind of good communication. And I say kind of good because we had disagreements on the approach on how we would do things. And I wanted to do things my way, he wanted to do things his way. So, we had to come to a collaboration on how to get the work done. Both ways would have been effective, but for me, in the way to get my work done, I felt it was faster for me to approach it in a different way. And that comes from my experience with

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ADHD. I have found through my experience with ADHD that I have to tailor things based on the way that I can make them work and make them happen. And he had a very structured way of doing it, in his own way, that didn't match my strengths or my abilities.

So in our communication with each other we started to talk about these things and about the differences that we were feeling about our relationship as a boss and as an employee. Because in the environment that I was in, we wanted everyone to get along and we wanted a good environment where there's positivity, and feedback, and great rapport with everyone we're working with. In our discussion he started to use Observe and Describe with me. And I was not conscious that I would flip through my folders during our conversation. In fact, I didn't realize I was doing that. But once he Observed and Described that from me, I was able to take stock and say, "Okay. I am doing this behavior. Do I want to continue doing this behavior? Or should I respond in a different way?"

So I chose to respond in a different way. And he continued, "I'm observing that you are not making eye contact with me when I ask you a difficult question." And that also brought something to the forefront because in my mind, I was not even cognizant that I was doing that. And so I altered some of my behavior based on the feedback, on the observations and the descriptions that he was giving me, during our discussion. And then I started to pick it up too. And I started to use it with him. And I will tell you my relationship with that supervisor ended up being probably the best relationship I had while I was working there. We were able to overcome our differences, and it was no longer two people trying to dance different dances with each other. It was almost as if we were working together to make things happen, and make things work really, really well.

We maintain contact till this day. We're still friends. And I remember that it was this skill that made the difference in my life. And in my approach with people who there may be a block in the communication, or where we may feel stuck. Where I feel like, "Hey, I don't know what to do or how to respond to this." This is something you can absolutely do. Take a breath, Observe and Describe what you're seeing, and then let the assessment happen with the other person and with yourself. Do some assessing of what's going on and in what way can we change the dance to where the dance is mutually beneficial, and it's working for everybody involved.

It was a super powerful lesson for me to learn to Observe and Describe. I'm so grateful for the opportunity that I had to learn it from him. I didn't realize he was doing it initially. In fact, he would just do it during our conversations. And then as we continually progressed and our friendship grew he told me what he was doing. And I was like, "Oh my goodness. I know Observe and Describe. Why didn't I pick it up?"

And it's largely because we're not cognizant until we make things cognizant. We're just unaware sometimes of the things that are happening. So he described to me, "Hey, I was using Observe and Describe. Just describing what I was seeing. No judgment. I wasn't making any type of

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judgment or anything, but just observing your behavior and describing it to you. And then you had a choice. You had a choice of where you could go with that."

And then we continually built our friendship. The important part of using Observe and Describe is being sure that you are leaving all judgments out of it. So in when you're Observe and Describing, if the mama I was working with, if she were to say, "Hey, you're looking out the window and you were ignoring me because you hate my guts." That's a judgment call. Instead of just describing what he's doing. "Right now, you are looking outside the window." Very simple.

It doesn't have to be long. It doesn't have to be huge. But just describe what you see. Remember, you're witnessing this. Describing it. Bringing it to the forefront so the child can be in the present and you can be in the present. And then you can make choices about where to take things.

Take some time. Take some time to use it. I would highly suggest you use it with somebody in your life. You can use it with your child or with your spouse or with your partner, whoever it may be, but use Observe and Describe, and see how it helps to develop your relationship with each other and actually make each other more aware of each other. Like on a deeper level. Try it out. Try it out. It's actually fantastic.

So the mom that I've been working with, we continue to talk about Observe and Describe as an integral part of her being able to build communication with her child. And I'm super excited for the future for her. This all happened because she signed up for our individual coaching.

So if you are wondering how to take the parenting skills we use from the Teaching-Family Model, which is on the Smarter Parenting website. [Sign up for coaching](#). Because we can make this laser direct, based on what's happening with you and your family. And implement these skills in a way that it will work for you. Save you time. Save you energy. And actually increase the bonds of friendship and of love between you and your family.

I am super grateful for all the opportunities I have to share this message with you. Believe it or not, being able to share something this valuable with people for free through this podcast is a dream come true. Because really we're here to help as many families and as many children as possible. And we can do that with simple skills like Observe and Describe. It's much deeper than what it sounds like. It's the top of the iceberg, but there's just so much more underneath it. I could talk about this topic forever, Observe and Describe, because it really is a game changer for a lot of parents. And it's so easy to use. It's something you can use immediately.

So that's it for me. I will talk to you again next time. Don't forget if you want to individualize the skills that we teach, sign up for coaching. That's what we're here for, is to help you. I'll talk to you again next time.

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[Ep #47: Mastering Observe and Describe](#)

RESOURCES

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