Composure: When Your Kids are Making You Nuts

We have all had those moments when it seems as though others are out to derail our day. It seems as though our friends, spouses, and children are intent on destroying any plans or any inner harmony and peace we are experiencing. We mention the word *seems* because while those feelings and perceptions are strong, we are ultimately in charge of ourselves! Our own perceptions regarding of past events plays a big role in how we process the behaviors of others. Think of these perceptions as a CD-ROM, or a tape cassette. This CD-ROM or tape cassette can carry a multitude of negative messages, and those messages can derail us in a short amount of time. The result is that we may often lose our composure and veer further away from problem solving. The good news with the skill of composure is that we can pause, allow the CD-ROM to play, and ready ourselves to communicate what we want our children to do.

Our CD-ROMs begin to play when something sets off, or triggers, the CD-ROM’s switch. Think about some triggers you might have: children and adults who whine, traffic, people who run late, etc… The playing CD-ROM then cues the negative internal chatter which can cause us to feel frightened or out of control. These emotions trigger feelings of actual physical discomfort before the feeling of anger steps in and we lose our cool. When that occurs, we have allowed our trigger and the child to be in charge of our internal state! In these moments, we typically focus on the behavior(s) we do not want to continue! Again, the good news is that our brains are malleable, and we can add new “tracks” to our CD-ROMS so that we are better able to solve problems. Perhaps the best aspect of rewriting our CD-ROMS is that we are able to teach our children how to address anger and upset so that we can move into problem solving mode rather than getting stuck.

When events that trigger your CD-ROM occur, allow the CD-ROM to play while thinking, “I’m safe, I can handle this, keep breathing.” Allow yourself the opportunity to take three deep breaths so that you can access the prefrontal lobes of your brain. This also allows a pause so that you can deliver your message from a composed state versus a state of upset. Incorporating statements such as, “I feel frustrated when you interrupt me.” allows us to convey our message while being in a composed state. I feel statements are powerful tools to use, and our children will notice and will begin to use this language, too! Re-wiring our CD-ROM is truly a gift to ourselves and our children!

References:

Bailey. B. (2015). *Building Resilient Classrooms.* Oviedo, FL: Loving Guidance, Inc.