

# CALM --HOW TO GET THERE, AND STAY THERE

*Two Keys to CALM and Five Women's Journey to Get There*



Calmness may be the very hardest part of learning self-government. It is the powerful moment that gets you ready to NOT be offended by behaviors. It is the moment that eases your mind and strengthens your heart to prepare you to reach out to another's heart.

Trying to problem solve or discuss before calmness is achieved will not be productive. Only when all parties have decided to be calm can hearts be touched and changed. And this is after all, the whole point of learning self-government. As you change your heart and learn calmness all your relationships will change because you will have the power of calmness; the power of self-government. With this power comes great influence in all relationships.

If you are the kind of person who struggles with becoming impatient and frustrated with other people, you are not alone. When we have expectations of others and they don't perform as we desire, frustration is very common. Combine unmet expectations with daily stress and the result is often frustration and even anger.

So, how do I keep myself calm when the world feels stressful and frustrating? I have taught myself some skills. Just like the children learn skills like how to follow instructions, I have taught myself skills like how to [\\*correct properly](#), how to [\\*pre-teach](#) a child before an instruction is given, and [\\*how to help another person get calm](#) while staying calm myself. Two particular skills, self-analysis and non-emotional describing, changed my life.

## Life Changing Skills

First, I trained myself to use chaos as a trigger for self-analysis. I took a good look at what I do when I am about to yell. What my fists do, teeth do, and what my insides feel like. Once these things are assessed, we are able to use them as a trigger to calm down instead of a trigger to blow up. When I analyze I ask myself questions. Seeing something crazy or stressful happening, I ask myself, "Am I calm?" If the answer is yes then I move on and describe what I witnessed or am witnessing. But, if the answer is no, I go get calm before I do any correcting, teaching or sorting of the chaos. I even take time to plan exactly what I will say when I handle the situation.

Second, I learned to analyze the situation by describing instead of reacting. I am careful not to put any emotion into the description. I do not assume anything bad about the other person or their actions because this can cause the other person anxiety and often starts a power struggle. Describing in this way keeps me calm. I only talk about the facts. This way, the emphasis isn't on the person, it is on the situation. A situation is just a collection of facts, and is not nearly as offensive as a person who doesn't live up to expectations.

Describing sounds something like this, "Just now I gave you an instruction to do your dishes, and you rolled your eyes and said, 'whatever'." Then, I begin an effective, calm correction which begins with a description of what should have happened. "What you should have done was: looked at me, kept a calm voice, face, and body, said 'okay' or asked to disagree appropriately, done the task immediately, and then checked back..." Learning how and making a habit of doing calm corrections will also help you stay calm.

## Overcome the Habit

Not being calm is often either a habit or a reaction. To overcome any habit - recognition, deliberate choice and practice are essential. While these seem like small things, they are giant steps toward self-government. Once you recognize the behavior has to change (because that is really what it is, a behavior; it's not who you are), only then can you chose to start analyzing and describing instead of reacting. Make a deliberate plan at a time when you are not being anxious or impulsive. Practice what you will do and say when the next anxious or stressful moment occurs. Then, the next time you feel yourself recognize this same kind of feeling or interaction you can deliberately take action to be calm.

I remember one time when my high spirited daughter, Paije, was not accepting a no answer and chose to have an attitude problem. For some reason I reacted, choosing to have my own attitude problem instead of being proactive and governing myself. This was when it hit me: I needed to describe. At this point I said, "Paije, you are not being calm." She retorted back, "Neither are you." She was right. I had noticed the need to correct her and describe what I saw, but I had forgotten to first ask myself if I was really ready (calm) to do a correction effectively. Needless to say, I suggested we both get calm and then talk about the situation again.

It is okay to re-do a situation again. In fact, re-doing situations teaches great lessons and offers

practicing interacting the right way. So, when you catch yourself not being calm, stop and re-do that moment again. Your example of stopping and focusing on the principles you need to follow will set an amazing example for your children. And, example is the best teacher.

### Calm Voice, Face and Body

There really is [power in calmness](#). You truly can use your voice calmly to have the power you feel you need. Once this truth is realized, many people put great effort into making their voices calm. This is a great habit because having a calm voice when correcting or describing will help you calm yourself while calming your children as well. But, if your face or body language is not calm, the voice will not help you as much.

Arms folded across my chest sends an angry or frustrated message. This physical message might overpower the verbal tone and ruin the calmness. So, it is a good idea to also analyze what you do physically when you are not calm and then choose what body language to have while correcting instead.

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## Five Women's Journey to Calm

*The journey to calm is a personal journey of applying principles that work. The 'hard parts' of becoming consistently calm are different for each person.*

*Below, five women share part of their journey to calm.*

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### Cracking the Code to Calm: Weeding Therapy

by Anna McFadden

It was one of those nights when putting kids to bed was like herding monkeys: my six year old was climbing up the side of his bunk bed throwing stuffed animals, my four year old was tumbling off her bottom bunk, and the six month old was sleeping listlessly after a feverish reaction to immunizations. My husband had several consecutive 80-hour work weeks so when his friends invited him to go to a football game, I encouraged him to go and enjoy an evening out. However, a couple of hours later it was a crazy evening to be putting kids to bed alone. Kids were still bouncing up and down

even after the bedtime story was finished. As the antics increased, I asked...and pleaded...and threatened them to be quiet so they would not wake the baby, again.

Ironically, that week I had made the resolution to not yell at them, so in a clenched whisper of frustration, I stomped and kicked my foot, as I demanded, "Be STILL!"

Crunch!

In the darkness, I misjudged where I was and my foot connected with the wall. I cracked the plaster and left a small hole in the wall. I moaned and yelled, "Oh no!" This of course got all of my children's attention AND woke up the baby! My six year old wanted to know what had happened, I told him I had made a bad choice and in my frustration broke the wall by accident.

My son responded that evening, "Well if you repent, God will forgive you." I did not know whether to laugh or cry, so I took the crying infant into another room and did a little bit of both. My son was right—to repent means to have a change of heart and want to change for the better, and I did want that. When I get out of control my emotions take over, I knew I didn't want that.

I knew that I needed to do more to master self control. It wasn't just about not yelling; I needed to learn how to choose—how to consciously act in difficult situations instead of just reacting. I remember clearly when my parents yelled at me, and at times I was quite frightened by my father. I did not want to do that myself, but I was falling into the habits that I saw growing up.

Often with young children I am sleep deprived and I use that as my excuse regarding why I get upset. I realized that I needed to do more mentally and physically to stop my reaction when pushed to the limit. I sat down with my journal and thought about the things that really "push my buttons" and what I could do when I felt myself getting upset. I knew I needed to be accountable to another adult.

When my husband returned home I showed him the damaged wall, explained what happened, and shared my realization that I needed someone to report to at the end of the day. We decided that if I was in a crazy moment when I wanted to yell, and deep breathing and counting to 10 was not working, I would call him and let him talk to the kids for a minute while I pulled myself back together. I also would talk to him at the end of the day and report how I was doing. He offered a listening ear and was very supportive.

One day when I sat outside for a breather after a child colored all over the kitchen table, I noticed several weeds in the garden. I was inspired to use weeding as a teaching experience with my children. We went outside and weeded physical plants while talking about weeding out bad behaviors.

Bad habits and bad choices are like weeds in our lives. We have to stop and pull them out, or they will crowd out the good things in our lives. Also, if we let weeds or bad habits stay, they continue to grow and are much harder to root out later. Weeds are not always bad plants, they are simply plants that are growing where we don't want them to grow. In the prioritization of my life, I have noticed some things take up my time and energy crowding out the time and resources I have for what I really want to cultivate in our lives—my relationship with my family. I

realized that when I spend too much time on the computer, my children will start acting badly. I kept track one day and realized I checked my email and Facebook nine times that day, I knew I needed to set more limits. I instated personal rules regarding when and how often I checked my email and found, as a result, there were fewer angry moments, misbehaviors, and problems because I was more present, alert, and able to monitor them.

When I feel myself becoming angry, I stop and do a little self-reflection. Why am I really upset? Am I calm enough to respond? Am I setting a good example? Do I need to weed out some bad behavior and use this as a teaching moment? As I have asked myself these questions, I have discovered areas I need to improve and have spent some time weeding for myself. Identifying behaviors that I needed to weed out has made a big difference for me. I still have a long way to go, yet I always have a garden on hand for weeding therapy.

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## A Change of Heart, A Change of Habit

by Tiffany Campbell, <http://www.tmckeekeepingchrist.blogspot.com/>



Today I chose to be calm in a very frustrating situation.

I spent an hour making a poster. I was careful to preteach and watch my two-year-old son to make sure he didn't write on it – that is, until I was distracted by a very important issue with my daughter in the next room.

Returning to find the scribbled poster, I was SO angry. I yelled, “I knew it! I knew he would do that!”

Then I stopped yelling. I am finally beginning to check myself for calmness. Obviously still late on the draw but nonetheless, I did it. I clenched the tape dispenser with all my strength. Saying nothing else, I breathed deeply...several times. Clench the tape dispenser (it was one of those really big ones with the foam-covered handles). Breathe. Close eyes. Breathe. Clench teeth. Breathe. What am I going to do? What has truly happened here? Is it really all that important? More important than my children? No.

I opened my eyes. Still with some upset rattling around in my chest, but with a calm (for me) and even tone, I described what my son had done and that he was earning a long time-out and extra chores. Then I gently carried him to time-out.

Still not the Queen of Calm, I warned my daughter that now was not the time to discuss any further what she had done and she needed to accept her consequences immediately and do them. I left her to vacuum the living room and went downstairs to cool down where the yells of my son could not be heard so clearly. I needed some time to calm down.

I paced around with my anger and frustration, my hands scrubbed my face and fingers ran through my hair. I began to pray my usual way in these situations: feebly. "Heavenly Father, please just help me".

Sometimes I pray without really having faith that I can overcome my upset feelings and actually *be* calm and loving. Then, even when I feel peace come to my heart, I proceed to speak with a tone that *still* sounds upset. Perhaps old familiar habits leave me still groping in the dark for that new voice, that new manner. I was afraid I was going to do this again: act out even when I felt capable of true self-control in my heart. So I prayed more sincerely and humbly for the Lord to take away all of my anger and help me deal with this appropriately. I knew I could not do this without Him.

Even after this prayer, I continued to exude upset behavior as I scrubbed my face again and began to clench my teeth again, wondering how in the world I was going to go back upstairs without being hurtful. But then I caught myself. Something was different. I recognized a *distinction* between my body language and outward actions and the inner peace and calm that was washing over my heart. Instead of giving in to my old habits, I *chose* to embrace the peace in my heart. I literally thought, "Wait just a minute, these actions are not me anymore. I don't have to fail at this. I *can* be 'centered'." I remembered that I do have the power to choose to be calm.

I went back upstairs in control and handled what could have been a very explosive interaction with complete calmness and even a few smiles. At first, my daughter was glum. I actually said to her, "This is me trying to be a better mom, okay?" She lightened up after that.

As I led my children through their extra chores, I naturally began to work with them. The work was soothing as I watched my house return to a sense of order and a strange thing happened. I held absolutely no resentment in my heart toward them for the work I was going to have to redo. Clarity and peace washed over me, and increased. I felt empowered, as though I could handle anything. I was free of resentment, contention, grumpiness and failure. I was no longer a victim of, or slave to, my emotions. I didn't dwell. I didn't sulk. I didn't mope. I just went on with fixing dinner and being playful with my children. We had a rather lovely evening together. Victory!

Several months later...

"It feels like you hate me!" my daughter said. She crossed her arms and curled up on the couch.

Piercing pangs of guilt and frustration consumed me as I leaned back in the chair across from her. I had been leaning forward, engaged in a heated correction for the umpteenth time that day. It was late in the afternoon and my energy was absolutely spent. I knew I was speaking too harshly with her, but once again, I felt helpless to change my tone. Over and over, I'd seen the crushing results of my tone in her eyes, but finding the right mix of love and firmness was still like reaching out in the dark to find something completely unfamiliar. Any previous victory from the past year seemed a million miles away from who I was capable of being on this day.

Later that evening, after heartfelt apologies offered to my daughter, yet again I turned to the scriptures for inspiration. I prayed for help and pondered on why calmness was such an elusive

part of self-government for me.

In my journey of self-government, it took me a long time to get comfortable with the mechanics and language of correcting. I would slip back into my old familiar ways of parenting when life was just too busy. But over time I gradually recognized parts of teaching Self-government that I needed to focus on. I learned and practised praising more, and things improved. I focused on making sure to have eye contact when giving instructions - otherwise how could they be expected to look at me and say 'Ok'? To help us practise interacting the right way, we began playing the "Role Play" game on Sundays. I came to notice that when I went to correct them, I was often domineering, standing over them as though ready to engage in a power struggle. Even though my words were not inviting a power struggle, my body language and tone definitely were. I was letting my anger, annoyance and frustration govern the message I was sending.

Even with the progress we were making, I still struggled and still felt like a failure. I was still letting my emotions overwhelm me. My heart still wasn't changing. Why? What was I missing that was preventing me from overcoming my tendency to speak too harshly with my children? As I prayed for the Lord's enabling power, more parts of the TSG program came to my mind and I knew immediately that I must begin to emphasize having '[low tolerances](#)' for miss-behavior and practice [being assertive](#).

My tolerances were too high. I was giving too many 'warnings' and reminders (and even sometimes just looking the other way because I was too drained or busy to handle it at the moment). By the time I got around to correcting them, I was so frustrated that I had a very hard time calming down myself. I also realized I was being too passive at first, then erupting into aggressive tones. Being passive/aggressive in my marriage at times also contributed to my lack of peace.

Reflecting on these principles allowed me to see several threads that run through most of my failures at staying calm:

- I am less able to master calm when I am not nourishing my spirit each morning with prayer and scripture study.
- I am less able to master calm when I am not eating well, getting enough sunshine, or laughing and relaxing enough. I am a hard worker and many times my agenda gets in the way of my family. It took me a while to realize it was getting in the way of me, too. I am more emotionally drained when I am not taking care of myself.
- I am less able to master calm when I am not speaking up assertively with my children and husband.
- I am less able to master calm when I am over-scheduled and distracted from my relationships.

In addition to these daily necessities of taking care of and strengthening myself, a deeper need was revealed to me. A need to be honored as a mother. My sense of self-worth gets trodden upon when my children are disrespectful. I begin thinking I'm not worth being respected or honored, so how can I expect my children to really do it? How can I expect my husband to value my counsel and needs? All of this is so subtle, it's almost subconscious. But I realized if I do not inspire my children to honor me, through living and teaching them self-government, then my own need goes unmet. That's why I need to give the children extra chores when they earn

them, not after their behavior has been allowed to dishonor me repeatedly first.

As I've worked on these principles, I can feel my heart changing. As I choose to stay calm, I am better able to feel love for my children as I correct them and teach them the right way. I know these new behaviors will become a habit for me. It is a process that takes time and effort, but it is well worth it!

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## Wanted: Confidence and Peace

by Natalie Fluckiger



When I was little I used to get spanked. Although it was not frequent, I still remember fearing it. I can recall the hatred and darkness that grew inside of me after the fact.

When my first child Wyatt, was being diapered he would twist and turn as I was trying to change him which was infuriating to me. There were other things that also caused me anxiety or frustration because I felt a lack of control. Like, when I would try to tell him not to climb on the counter. He would look at me with a little grin and do it anyway. How was I supposed to get him to mind?

One day when I was changing his diaper the thought came into my mind that I should spank him. So I did. Unfortunately it didn't help at all. He didn't magically stop and let me change him, if anything he just became more anxious and that didn't help me to finish the process. What did change was the feeling in my heart. Even though spanking is pretty controversial in society today, I had thought that my parents were good people so if they spanked, it must be okay. But after this experience, I had this overwhelming feeling that it was wrong for our family. I felt guilty doing it and I knew that it hurt my relationship with my son.

Fast forward a year. I might mention that I had been somewhat inconsistent in my parenting. I had tried time-out, but didn't really understand exactly how to implement it. I couldn't get my son Wyatt to listen or stay in one place. So as you may imagine I was getting more desperate and frustrated with the whole parenting process. I asked my mom for advice, but she said that it was so long ago she didn't remember what she did. I continued instigating power-struggles with my two year old. He wouldn't stay in his room so I would sit and hold the door knob until he gave up. Let me mention here that my son is extremely determined. So I would sit outside his door for at least 5-10 minutes waiting for him to give up so that I could win this contest. The anger building in my stomach, like boiling lava, wanted out. Yelling would release this tension allowing the explosion to occur. Remorse, immediately to follow. Yelling is addictive. It gave me a sense of power; however, it didn't improve my relationship and it definitely didn't help my son want to make good choices. In fact, having that strong independent personality, he instead would become more insubordinate and defiant. In return for my explosion, he would become violent - hit me, threaten me, or yell and scream - letting his volcano explode. It was starting to become a cycle and I really wanted to stop it before it got out of control. How could I have more children if I always let my emotions get the best of me? I wanted a strong relationship with my son. I was supposed to be that peaceful mom that was laughing and playing with my children. Not like this.

All the coping mechanisms that I knew or could think of weren't working. I asked for advice from other mothers, one told me they got a door with a lock and turned the handle around

backwards. At the time, that sounded like a pretty good idea because then I wouldn't have to sit and hold the door anymore. Thankfully, I chose not to go that route. However, I did choose to try spanking again. I mean, let me justify here, he was a year older now and he knew how to listen. At this point it was just defiance, right? I convinced myself that the first time I had tried spanking him But I would get anxious and instigate power struggles with my child. I didn't want to be angry, I didn't want to feel guilty, I wanted the calm peaceful feeling I felt when I listened to Nicholeen speak. must have felt wrong because he was so little and didn't have enough understanding yet. One day I spent about five minutes trying to get Wyatt to do something and each time he didn't I would spank him. Ironically he was less motivated by the spanking. That didn't make any sense. What was I supposed to do? How was I supposed to get him to listen? Scrap it. Spanking just plain did not work. He continued to do whatever he wanted and was more determined not to obey because he was getting spanked. My heart filled with sorrow. How could I have been so wrong? The first guilty feeling I had had a year before must have been the proper one. It truly was wrong, and luckily for me it was ineffective with my child.

As I worked through the Implementation Course and listened to the Support Calls each week, I felt myself begin to change. Instead of my old reactions I was now confident and my perspective changed. I learned that pre-teaching helped me to be calm. "Wyatt, I am going to give you an instruction..." Describing helped me to be calm. "Just now you spilt juice all over the floor..." Instead of exploding or reacting I could choose to describe. The peace in my heart as I described, was amazing. I was mastering myself. There were still the occasional relapses, "Wyatt, if you don't pick up your toys you will have no dessert for the rest of the day" I'd threatened. And just when I thought I had it all figured out, up to a whole month temper-free, something would happen or my hormones would be off and I'd have to apologize again, "I'm sorry Wyatt. I shouldn't have yelled at you."

Though I am still on my journey to remain calm, I now know that it is possible and know that there is help available. I have felt the amazing confidence that comes from choosing to be calm. My relationship is improving and I feel more peace and love in my home. The most profound thing that I have learned in helping me remain calm, is when Nicholeen shared that *"there is nothing that is more important than the relationship with your child"*. He could make a huge disgusting mess or break something important or very expensive, but my relationship is more important than all of that. Granted I still need to correct him and he still needs to earn consequences. But I am in charge of the delivery of my corrections. I can do it with calmness and love. The important thing for me is to immediately admit my mistakes when I'm not being calm and try again. I won't let it ruin my relationship; I can apologize, and do better.

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## Taming the Volcano Within

By Monica Isaacson, [Trainingourhearts.blogspot.com](http://Trainingourhearts.blogspot.com)



I was just sitting down to enjoy reading a book while my baby was down for a nap and my four other children were playing nicely outside. I had been reading for about five minutes when I heard someone moving around in the kitchen. I disregarded the noise, knowing one of the children must have come in to get a drink. I continued reading but after only a few minutes more I heard a cup tumble and some kind of fluid dropping and splashing. I quickly jumped up and ran to the kitchen where I found at least half a gallon of milk cascading from the counter onto the floor, my three-year-old son sitting on a stool in milk soaked clothes and tears streaming down his cheeks. My chest tightened and my mind started to think, *'How*

*many times have I told him not to pour his own milk?!*

Before I finished processing the scene, my daughter came in screaming, "The boys don't want to play with me anymore!" All my muscles tensed up and my nerves start to rattle, another thought crossed my mind, *'Will she ever learn to stop whining and tattling?'*

Then my two oldest boys came tumbling in the back door still engaged in a playful wrestling match that looked to be on the verge of a real fight. I felt my heart beat picking up and my mind spoke again, *'I told them that they could get hurt when they wrestle. Why do they keep doing it?'*

Then...cries coming from the baby's room...my personal reading time, over. My temper was pushed to the limit and came crashing over the edge. I yelled, "How many times do I have to tell you children to be quiet when the baby is taking a nap?! My afternoon is ruined and it is all your fault!" Everyone bursted into tears, including myself. I forcefully escorted a couple of kids into their rooms for a time-out. Then I started to clean up the spreading puddle of milk with a baby on my hip and regret settling in my heart from my reaction.

Does this scenario sound somewhat familiar to you? Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever acted this way? I have, and I am on a journey to change myself.

When I was sixteen years old, I was personally advised to always avoid raising my voice to my children when I became a mother. I was surprised by this advice because it wasn't in my general nature to be contentious or overbearing. I was an obedient youth, generally willing to perform the tasks my parents asked me to do. I didn't get in shouting matches with my parents or siblings, although I had my occasional outbursts with my pesky younger brothers. But I generally thought of myself as the peacemaker in the family. Besides, I was only sixteen and marriage was still far off in my future, not really on my radar. Only time would tell what kind of mother I would become.

Just four short years later, much earlier than I had expected, I met and married my best friend and we began our family. Soon I had a beautiful baby boy to cuddle and shower with kisses. He was such a good baby and so delightful I could hardly wait to have more children. So sixteen months after my first born son I had another son. It was wonderful to see the loving interactions between the two boys but I soon found it was hard to teach them to stop the mean interactions. A volcano of emotion began to form deep inside me. The pressure and stress of trying to make my children act the right way and present myself as a perfect parent slowly but surely churned inside of me, building up the heat and activity of this volcano. Everything my children did to each other or others became a personal assault on my self-perception as a parent. With the addition of more children and responsibilities toward them, the volcano became quite volatile and unpredictable bursts of steaming lava mingled with constant bubbling and churning inside.

The advice given to me as a naïve sixteen-year-old started to haunt me and my quest to tame the volcano within me began. I started reading parenting book after parenting book, trying to find the best way to discipline my children and teach them the proper way to behave. The principles of one method would resonate with me and I would put them into practice. The appearance of a calm and loving life would enter our home, as if a cap was placed on top of the volcano to keep any warning signs or signals that an eruption was imminent, but deep inside the volcano the lava was still bubbling and churning and building up pressure. Before long, the built up pressure would blow off the calm cap and I was back at the drawing board with another parenting book in my lap.

I know throughout all my studying and practicing that God was trying to show me true principles and light to govern my family, but His way took so much more work and effort. I even read Nicholeen Peck's book '*Parenting: A House United*'. I loved many of the ideas and principles and saw how it worked for her family, but it seemed way too complicated for my family, especially compared to other parenting methods I was reading at the same time. So I gleaned the ideas that I loved the very most and added them to the mosaic of parenting techniques I was collecting; trying to piece them together to create a picture of calmness. Still, nothing seemed to be working, and the search continued.

Finally, when I went to a Teaching Self Government Couple's Retreat in May 2013, I was humbled enough to receive greater understanding. Nicholeen gave a wonderful presentation about [the heart](#), or will\*, and how it related to the mind and the body. I learned that inside each person a battle of control is waging between the heart, which desires everything of light and truth and good, and the body, which desires pleasures and things of a carnal or animal nature. So when a person reacts with anger or emotional outbursts they are letting their bodies have control. But, if they choose to act deliberately with calmness and a desire to understand, they are giving control to their heart or will. (\*For more details read the article, "[Heart, Mind and Body Connection](#)".)

This newfound understanding gave me the strength to free my heart from the bondage of my body and its natural reaction to erupt during stressful situations. I also realized that it was my responsibility to free the hearts of my children by correcting and teaching them how to govern their bodies and their minds *with* their hearts. I was able to analyze my children's behavior and separate it from their desire to please me and do what is right. I left the conference looking at all people in a new way. I came home with a stronger desire to implement the principles and skills of Teaching Self Government.

Today, the landscape of my emotional volcano continues to change. There isn't a cap keeping the *appearance* of calm, there may even be a little rumble here and there and an occasional stream of steam rising out of the opening, but the danger of an eruption is dissipating rapidly. The greatest change is occurring deep inside the volcano where it is slowly turning dormant and cold. But there is something new taking its place; a fountain of glistening clear waters that spreads joy and understanding when it bursts forth, healing and nurturing the paths of sadness, destruction, and despair created by the rivers of molten lava.

Now, I am by no means perfect and I am still getting plenty of practice teaching my children, but my confidence in staying calm gets stronger every day. I don't take the reactions of my children personally anymore, which helps me keep from reacting. It has been a great challenge that I would encourage anyone to begin. Is it worth it? Let yourself be the judge by the way I would now handle the situation described earlier beginning from where the baby starts crying:

I am about ready to blow my top when I close my eyes and take a deep breath, giving control back to my heart. I let my heart speak through my mind, *'Just now my children are reacting to their bodies' desires. What they need now is someone to listen, teach, correct and love them.'*

Then I speak out loud, to each child in turn, "Wow buddy! Just now I see that you were trying to be a big boy and pour yourself some milk. I am so glad you want to grow up and be a good helper. Now I need you to be a great helper and help me clean up this milk. Okay?"

"Okay, Mommy."

"Sweetheart, I see that you are very upset about something but I need you to sit on the couch and calm down so we can talk about it. Okay?"

My daughter takes a deep breath and says, "Okay, Mommy."

"Boys, a little while ago I gave you an instruction to be quiet in the house so the baby could take a nap. Just now you came in wrestling and playing very loudly. You have both earned an extra chore. I need you two to help your little brother clean up the milk. I am going upstairs with your sister to talk to her and help the baby go back to sleep. Then we will come down and all have a practice session in being calm. Okay?"

"Okay, Mom." They reply.

Peace is restored once more (until my next opportunity to teach comes up).

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## Calm During THAT Time of the Month? Is it possible?

by SherLynne M. Beach, [www.successfamilies.com](http://www.successfamilies.com)



Before my babies came, I experienced PMS and my monthly cycle mostly in physical symptoms of aches and ouches. Since giving birth to my first however, ‘that time’ turned a surprising and difficult corner. For at least a week out of every month, I became an angry, emotional, scowling crazy woman —feeling out-of-control and deep into self-beat-up and self-doubts, pushing everyone away.

Sound familiar? To some (you lucky souls) it is not, but for many I believe it is painfully familiar. During that time each month our emotions and bodies purge. The emotions get messy and seem to stick painfully to everyone. Maybe you’re like me, wishing for a small isolated cabin in the mountains to go and hide in till

‘normalcy’ returns.

Searching for parenting help, I came across *‘Parenting: A House United’* after my third was born. I found real parenting hope in the clear and simple way of thinking and the attending techniques. Even so, it didn’t take long to realize that training my heart may be more complex than I thought. Month after month I fought my cyclical craziness, wondering if things would ever get better or if I was destined to be a volatile mommy my whole life.

I remember one time feeling so crazy in the head, after yelling angrily at my family, I escaped into the cold snowy weather and burned off steam, crying and restacking our whole woodpile with a vengeance. Could I ever be as calm as I dreamed of being? What if I was this way the rest of my life? What could I do? I knew I needed help, but what?

I had to get very proactive. I took steps. I had to. To be the woman I want to be, I had to. Here are seven things I have done that have helped me be more calm, more consistently:

1. Commit to proactive action, then pray for guidance. This has been key. In the past many heartfelt prayers have been offered when I didn’t feel ‘right’ and felt the plunge into hormonal depression. I knew I needed help. Before answers and guidance came though, I had to get committed to taking action!
2. Tracking my pattern of craziness, talking about it with my husband, and even mapping it out on my calendar so that we could anticipate when I was not going to be thinking clearly, when I would be predictably more insecure, on-edge, and needing time alone.
3. Preparing absorbing projects for the kids to do (like playing with new clay and hitting up the library for books on making clay figures, in the morning laying out new crayons and coloring books, or setting a stack of construction paper, scissors, tape and a stapler on the table). Anything that would involve the kids for hours, where I could simply set down snacks for them to munch on and we would all stay calm and happily absorbed in the project before us.



4. Asking for help and support BEFORE my 'crazy days' hit makes a big difference—playdates for my kids, or dad-led movie nights or outings, leaving me alone to burn off steam in healthy ways.
5. Planning a deep-cleaning or big organizing project that would absorb my full attention seems to help me feel more at peace because I can contribute to the family while isolating myself, in as healthy a way as possible.
6. Simplifying meals during that time has helped as well—frozen pizza, peanut butter and jam sandwiches, hot dogs, canned soup and crackers. Whatever makes it easy and things my kids will love and not complain about.
7. Last of all, research. I did lots of research for answers to questions like: What causes such hormone imbalances in me? Can the crazy-making imbalance be 'repaired'? If so, what do I need to do? While searching for answers I ran across articles about 'Natural Fertility' that seemed to have many clear answers. I felt there was possible hope for me. I had to support my parenting changes with hormonal support—nutrition, specific supplements, hydration and exercise, and it seems to be helping—I am calmer and my crazy days are shorter. Maybe over time, with choosing to be calm and supporting my body, I can feel calm all the time...or at least a lot more than before!

Through involving God, proactively seeking help and answers, making an action plan, and sticking to it, my CALM is not such a far reach away.

\* \* \* \*

## Conclusion

### Calmness Tool Box

I hope you have been inspired by these women's journeys. The insights and strategies they shared may prove to be powerful tools for you too, consider adding them to your calmness plan:

- **Weeding and working in the yard** as a calm down place. Putting your hands in the dirt may be very therapeutic.
- **Reporting to someone** when trying to conquer a behavior or have a change of heart. This is one reason parents should teach children to check back from simple instructions and add meetings into the family government for the family, couple and individuals - to have check up times. A person who reports to someone else is analyzing themselves with two sets of eyes instead of one.
- **Patiently learning line-upon line**, one victory after another. Sometimes we want to have the full self-government picture at home immediately. But, the truth is, learning these and other self-government skills takes steady practice; even deliberate practice. Learning calmness and self-government is not a quick fix. It is not complicated, but it takes a life-time of effort. As we constantly analyze ourselves we will keep from relapsing back into our old relationship habits as often.
- Recognizing the healing and calming effect of **connecting with others**. The usual stressful things aren't such a burden as you allow yourself to connect with another person. Work along-side your children, practise being playful with them. When most people get stressed out, they are also often times completely disconnected from the

people around them. Choosing to connect could change everything.

- Understanding that parents are supposed to **teach their children to honor them**. If a parent waits passively for a child to honor them, the child has a chance of never understanding what honoring really means.
- Using **pre-teaching and describing** instead of reacting. You will not only be pre-teaching your children, but yourself too. Spanking, yelling and power struggling with our children does not work.
- **Apologizing - immediately**. No one should be ashamed to apologize. That simple action opens your heart by speaking the truth and offers a fresh new start for your calmness goal. And, relationships are the most important thing. No mess or thing is ever going to be more important than the familial bonds we create each day.
- Visualizing your anger as a volcano. The pressure deep inside waiting to explode is a perfect parallel to what it feels like right before we make statements, give looks and perform actions we often regret later.
- Learning how to **listen to and lead with the heart**. The frustration and emotion can trick us into thinking that the situation at hand is bigger than we are; bigger than we can handle. But, those emotions don't speak truth to us. The truth is, our hearts are infinitely more powerful than our bodies and practising leading from the heart brings freedom from the emotional chains we wear.
- **Refusing to take the reactions of others personally**.
- Understand the workings of our bodies and hormones so that we can prepare the body to best listen to the heart. **Working together, having open conversations and proactively planning for success** during difficult days of the month creates family unity. Being a supportive spouse or family member can help those who struggle with PMS to be patient and calm too.

## Calmness Is Possible

*Concluding comments by Nicholeen Peck*

When I was fourteen years old, if someone told me that one day I would focus each moment of my days, and each interaction and relationship I have, on principles of calm communication I would not have believed them. I was not a calm young person. In fact, at times I would get myself so worked up I would do and say awful things to people. There were times when I ruined relationships and said things to family members that I wouldn't have dared say to my enemies.

Many young people, when they learn calmness, often start learning it for selfish reasons. They see that they can get more of what they want if they keep themselves in control. This is the reason I chose calmness at first. After making myself be calm for a month or so, my heart changed. I saw calmness as a power. Not just a power to manipulate, but a power to love, to connect, to bond and unify with others. I recognized that my calmness helped me be more honest with myself and with others about my relationships and myself. And an honest heart is a free heart. When my heart was free and honest, it was then powerful enough to lead my body and mind to freedom too.

When you teach your stubborn children, or your stubborn selves to be calm, remember that at first the student may need to approach the calmness from a selfish place. Be patient. The change of heart will come.



## Discussion Questions:

1. For each of the stories, discuss:
  - a. What was their trigger(s)?
  - b. What was their process of analysis? Did they have any epiphanies or truth that motivated a change of heart?
  - c. What deliberate actions did they chose in order to be calm?
2. In the 5 stories, did the source or nature of the trigger make a significant difference in the solutions they discovered? Is analysis of our triggers a helpful strategy in becoming more calm? Or, does it just give more ammunition for self-justification? Are you the type that this analysis will help or not?
3. What tools help you in your process of self-analysis? I.e. Journal writing, discussion with spouse, friends, moments of solitude, time in nature, during or following physical activity, meditation, self-help exercises or assessments, prayer.
4. "Am I calm?" Nicholeen uses questions to analyze whether she can respond to a situation or needs to get calm first. For each person, the process of getting calm may be different. What calming strategies have you found successful? Add to the list of calmness from Question 1 and brainstorm additional ways of getting calm.
5. Your anger and reactions are "just behaviors, they are not who you are". How does this truth feel? Would believing and holding on to this truth make one's self-mastery journey any different? How would believing that of others, change your capacity to be calm and help others be calm?
6. What emotional payoffs are you choosing over relationships (with your children / husband / others)? What behaviors are triggered by those emotions?
7. In what ways can you relate to the imagery from "Taming the Volcano Within" Pg10 and "Weeding Therapy" Pg 3?
8. "Weeds are not always bad plants, they are simply plants that are growing where we don't want them to grow." Are there things that use up your time and energy and crowd out the time and resources you have for relationships you want to cultivate?
9. Compare your nature as a child or teenager, to the type of mother you are. How is it similar? How is it different? What can you learn from your childhood experiences that will help you be a better parent.

## CHALLENGES

*Create your own, or choose a challenge from those listed below to help you become more consistently calm. Tell your Circle about your choice and ask for the support you need to succeed.*

- Make a conscious effort to note your patterns and personal hot buttons and triggers to losing your calm center. Can you see any commonalities in your triggers?

For instance do you most often react to:

- unmet expectations,
- hormonal triggers,
- interactions between family members,
- things you want to control (including other's perception of you)
- undesirable change or uncertainty,
- the way you saw your parents react.

Is your tendency to react rooted in your own emotions (feeling overwhelmed, used or unappreciated, discouragement)? Are your feelings of self-worth tied to your children's behavior? Are you more reactive at different times of day or times of the month? How does your degree of busy-ness, noise-level, cleanliness of your environment, amount of sleep affect your reactivity? Are you reactive with certain people or situations more than others? Why?

- Using knowledge about your nature, your triggers and your life, create a Calmness Plan. What will you do when you feel yourself about to lose control? Detail what set of strategies, self-talk, or questions you will use when you need to "go get calm". Use ideas from the article or from your group discussion (Question #4).
- Write this affirmation down, hang it where you can see and repeat it often, "I immediately admit mistakes when I'm not being calm and try again. I won't let it ruin my relationship; I apologize and do better." Or decide on a routine and mantra that you can repeat in tense times, something like this, "I close my eyes and take a deep breath, giving control back to my heart. I let my heart speak through my mind, *Just now my children are reacting to their bodies' desires. What they need now is someone to listen, teach, correct and love them.*"
- Identify behaviors that need to be weeded out in yourself. Can you describing these behaviours without any emotion? As a collection of facts. What does it look like from an uninvolved observer? How do you move your body? What words do you use? Choose one behavior to consciously work on changing for the next 30 days. Write down specifically how you will do this and what additional \*self-awareness you need (\*Pg1).
- Identify someone who you can call on for support-share your goals and observations. Report your progress and slips, seek their support in those tense moments when the body has taken charge.

- Complete these sentences for yourself: “I am less able to master calm when \_\_\_\_\_” and “I am more able to master calm when \_\_\_\_\_.” Keep a journal of your experiences as you become better at self-government in your heart and home. Celebrate and hold on to your victories!
- Make calmness your goal and always keep in the front of your mind. When you react or explode, consider what payoff are you choosing over the relationship.
- If hormones seem to play a part in losing your calm heart, make a plan for that time of the month with low stress activities and commitments, then get online and read, read, read. Research to find out how you can physically support being calm (help your hormones balance and reduce hormonal swings) then start taking action. (You could start with searching ‘natural fertility’ or ‘natural ways to balance hormones’ etc.) What you find may be simple and life changing.

## EXTRA RESOURCES

### On Being Calm

- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/store/power-calm>
- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/article/video-gem-recognizing-power-struggles>
- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/weekly-gem-4-26-13-4-keys-self-government>
- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/article/how-children-disagreeing-appropriately-taught-one-mom-self-government>
- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/article/chaos-getting-children-out-door-calm-way>
- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/they-keep-getting-angry-90>
- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/newsletter/tsg-weekly-gems/weekly-gem-dealing-negative-emotions-healthy-way>

### Proper Corrections

- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/how-stop-nagging-help-parents-748>

### Pre-Teaching

- [https://teachingselfgovernment.com/unruly-child\\_944](https://teachingselfgovernment.com/unruly-child_944)

### Calming a Child Through Pre-Teach and Proper Correction

- <https://teachingselfgovernment.com/article/my-child-wont-listen-me-parenting-tips>

### Women’s Hormones --One Place to Start Research

- <http://natural-fertility-info.com/pms-5-natural-ways-to-feel-better-now.html>