

What to Do When Your Child Does NOT Want to Do School...

 by Kami Harris



Accessing Calm

To learn, children must be able to utilize their prefrontal cortex. When they are upset, children are functioning from the amygdala or lower part of the brain, also known as the survival brain. The goal is to diffuse the situation and get to a calm place. How can you help your child feel safe, loved, and secure?

Relationships First: Why Connections Trump Checklists

It is tempting in a situation where your child is upset to force your way through your normally scheduled school day. I have learned from sad experiences this rarely turns out well. The principle that relationships trump tasks or checklists being completed has always served our family much better. It may take more time in the present to act from a loving place and diffuse a current volatile situation but in the long run, it will save you time and make you a more effective teacher and parent.



Remember

- Relationships are more important than completing tasks
- Taking time now saves time later
- Acting from a loving place makes you more effective

Emotional Rescue Toolkit: Simple Strategies for Calming Upset Moments



Physical Comfort

Sometimes a child needs to be held. Let them know they are loved and safe. Sitting by them with your hand on their back can help calm their nervous system. For younger children, simply holding your child in your arms and swaying gently can be calming. Invite your child to wrap their arms around themselves and give themselves a gentle hug. Invite the child to hug a stuffed animal or pillow and just feel their emotions. If children are older, staying calm and reassuring rather than mirroring their emotions helps them feel the comfort of a secure environment. Of course, parents have their limitations too, so as needed, take time out to get calm and access Heavenly Father's love and strength.



Proactive Teaching

Be proactive in teaching children how to deal with their emotions BEFORE their emotions become overwhelming. Doing a brief breathing or meditation exercise as part of your school day will allow your children to exercise more self-control and access this ability to breathe deeply and feel their feelings when their emotions feel "out of control."

Name It, Feel It, Tame It: Mastering Emotional Awareness

When your child is upset, invite them to take a deep breath. Invite them to feel their emotion. If possible have them name their emotion. There are many emotion lists you can download to help a child to do this. Naming the emotion gives your child leverage over the emotion. Help your child to describe what the emotion feels like in their body. Does it feel tight? Does it feel heavy? Is it prickly? Where do they feel the emotion? In their chest? In their tummy? In their head? Continue to invite the child to breathe and feel the emotions. According to Dr. Joan Rosenberg, strong emotions come in waves and dissipate in 90 seconds if we just allow them and feel them.

Move to Mend: Physical Activities for Emotional Release

- Sometimes it is beneficial for children to move their bodies when they are feeling overwhelming emotions. Invite them to punch a pillow, run around the yard, jump on a mini trampoline, throw ice outside, or do jumping jacks.
- You could encourage your child to express their feelings through drawing or coloring. Provide art supplies for them to create something that represents their emotions.



Listening with Love: The Art of Validating Your Child's Feelings

Make sure you are taking regular time to listen to your child's concerns and validate their feelings. Ask questions such as:

Questions to Ask

- How can I help you?
- What is worrying you today?
- Do you need to take a break?
- What is going on for you?
- Is something bothering you?
- How can I best support you?
- If you could learn anything you want, what would it be and why?
- What is one thing I could do for you to help relieve this build-up of pressure?

Messages to Send

- I love you.
- We are in this together.
- You matter to me.
- I only have your highest and best good in mind.

Tell Your Child

- I am here for you.
- I promise to just listen and understand your feelings.

Building Blocks of Learning: Breaking Down Tough Subjects

Break up harder subjects into more manageable chunks. Often when children are unwilling to do something hard, it is because it overwhelms them. If you teach your child the value of doing a "floor" (a consistent manageable tiny habit) consistently, they will reap exponential benefits and continue to grow their capacity for doing hard things. Once children realize they can accomplish this hard task, you can encourage them to increase these chunks of time by small increments. This will allow them to experience the power of self-validation. They will realize their capabilities by witnessing their own success.

Empowerment Through Choices: Fostering Autonomy in Learning

Give your children lots of choices in their learning. There may be specific learning tasks you do each day, but allow your children to have as much choice as possible. This gives them a sense of autonomy and control. When children are younger, I have found it is better to structure time--not content. This is a principle I learned through studying *A Thomas Jefferson Education* by Oliver DeMille. As children become older, help them create their own learning goals and help them to take more responsibility for their learning. Your role changes to becoming more of a supporter and facilitator.

Structure Time, Not Content

For younger children, focus on creating consistent time blocks rather than dictating exactly what they learn.

Offer Meaningful Choices

Let children choose between acceptable options to give them a sense of control over their learning.

Transition to Self-Direction

As children mature, help them set their own learning goals and take increasing responsibility.

Clear Expectations, Peaceful Learning: Preventing Contentious Situations

- Creating a consistent daily routine teaches children what to expect and prevents resistance.
- Establish clear expectations. Communicate what behavior you will allow and what you will not allow. Pre-teaching desired behavior when children are calm prevents potentially contentious situations.

Celebrating Progress: Fostering a Positive Learning Atmosphere

- Make sure to create a positive learning environment that honors children's learning differences and preferences Celebrate the small victories and make sure your children feel that you see their innate goodness and efforts.
- Practice a habit of daily personalized affirmations that empower your children to create habits and desired results in their lives.

If you want specific help with one of your current homeschool challenges, go to my website coachkami.com and click on the "Coach with Me" tab coachkemiaharris@gmail.com to set up a free 30-minute coaching call. You don't have to do this alone.

Copyright 2025 Kami Harris Coaching

coachkami.com

Podcast: The Joyful Homeschool

Facebook Kami Harris Coaching

Instagram @KamiHarrisCoaching