

## Parenting Wisely Session Five: Role Modeling.



### **Be the change you want to see in your children**

One of the key developmental challenges for children of all ages is learning how to regulate their emotional states. This is a learning process for kids, as they all experience large and intense emotions prior to having the skills for self-soothing and making sense of the feelings through the use of language. As a parent, you stepped in and helped your young children manage those intense emotions through giving them physical comfort (holding them, rocking them, bouncing them) and helping them understand what happened and perhaps naming the emotional state they were experiencing. This is one way that children learn how to manage emotions. Another is through observing you and how you cope with your own feelings. In other words, they learn through your Role Modeling.

With that in mind, let's look at how you cope with your emotions.



What are your challenging feelings? Which feelings tend to make you “flip your lid?”

Frustration     Disrespect

Fear             Anxiety

Sadness         Anger

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are your typical triggers for those uncomfortable feelings?

An untidy house             Use of your things w/o permission

Talking back                 Swear words

Name calling                 Yelling

The news                       Driving

Misunderstandings         Financial concerns

Safety issues                 Personal history repeating (trauma triggers)

Changes in plans             Not knowing what to expect

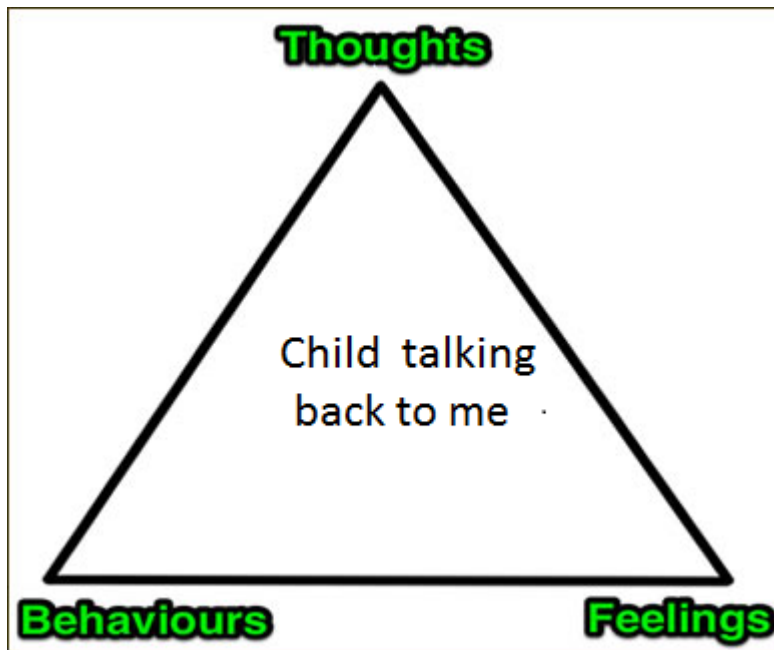
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Now, let’s look at how thinking, feeling and behavior is linked together and how we can use language to help us regulate our emotions. Understanding this concept and implementing it for yourself will provide a powerful role modeling example for your children. Once you have mastered this skill for yourself, you will want to share it with your kids and teach them how to do it both as a response to present situations and as a proactive strategy to address future situations.

*Thinking – Feeling – Behaving are linked!*



Children SHOULD respect their parents!

That's how you talk to me after all I do for you?

Acting Childish

Hurt

Punitive

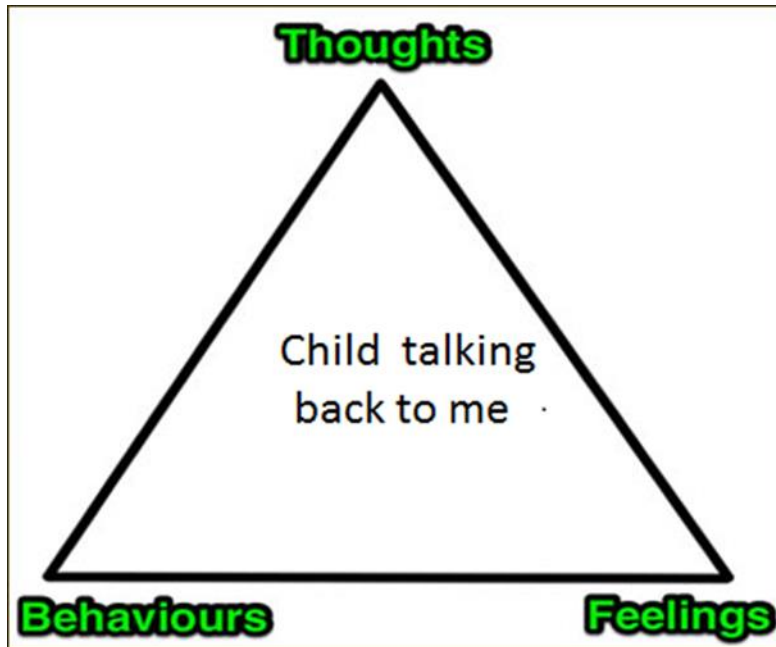
Disrespected

Yelling

Not appreciated

Angry

In the next triangle we decide how we would rather feel in response to having the child exhibit the same behavior. Next, we ask ourselves what thoughts we need to drive those feelings. These new thoughts and feelings make room for better parenting behaviors.



My child does not understand why we have this rule.

I need to provide a reasonable explanation.

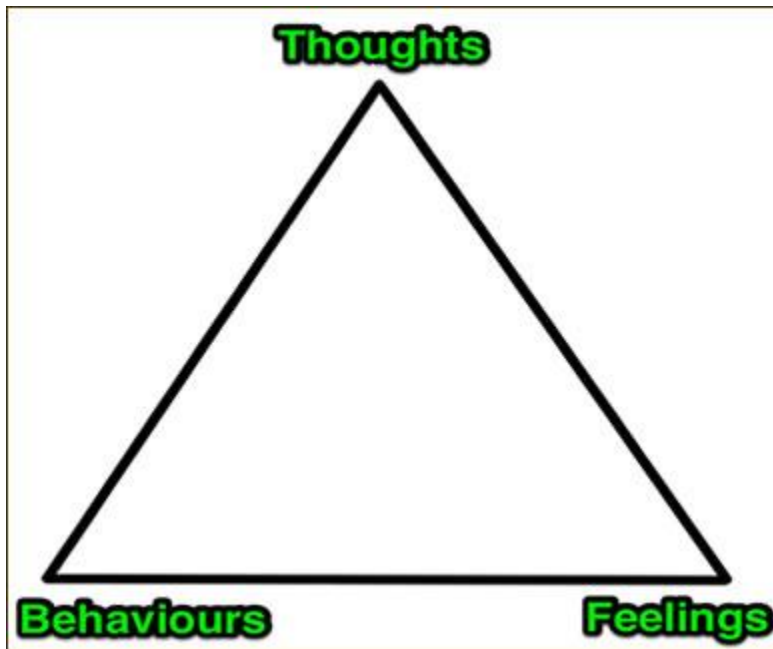
I need to set my trigger aside and stay calm

I can use active listening to defuse the possible conflict

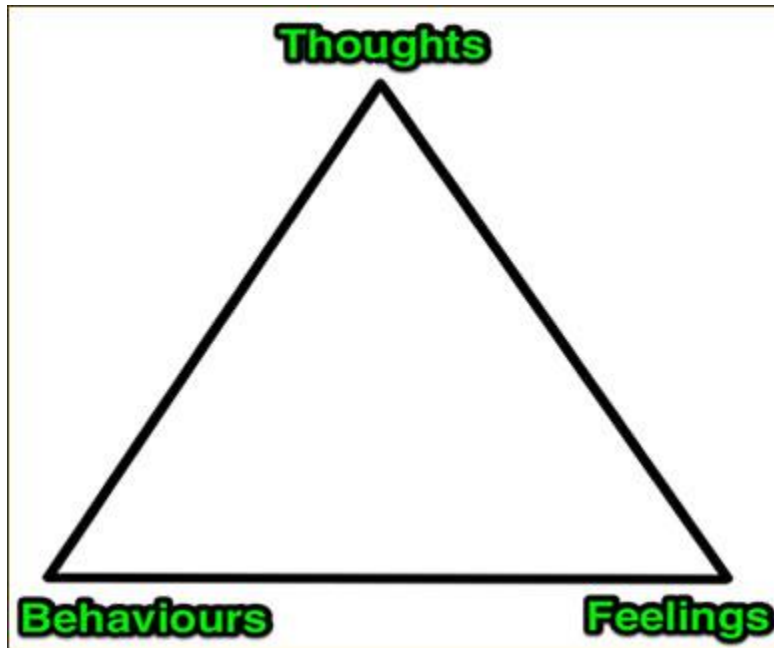
-Patient explanation of boundaries.  
 -Empathy  
 -Negotiation  
 -Giving child reasonable choices and opportunities for input.

Compassion  
 Understanding  
 Frustration

Now it is your turn! Take one of your trigger situations, put it in the center of the triangle and outline how you would typically respond by defining your feelings, your self-talk thinking, and your behavior. Don't be worried about being judged! We've all flipped our lids in front of our kids. Seriously!



In the second triangle, choose a better set of feelings that you would rather have (slightly better is okay – don't leap to happy, that's unrealistic). Then write out the thoughts you would need to think in order to drive those feelings. Finally, imagine how the new thoughts and feelings will change your behavior.



Once you can do this process in your head, you can model it for your kids. For example: Someone cuts you off in traffic, you might say, “Wow, that seemed really rude and I feel annoyed by that. But you know, I guess I don't really know what is going on for that driver. Maybe he is late for work and is worried about getting fired. Or maybe he didn't shoulder check and didn't see our car. I guess I don't need to be angry about that. I'll just give him the benefit of the doubt and a little extra space so we stay safe.”

