

# Compassion

## *The Parenting Superpower Most Mums and Dads Aren't Using*

Every interaction with your child is either building connection or creating distance. Most parents are unknowingly choosing distance without realising the long-term emotional consequences.

In the daily grind of managing the household, getting children to and from school (and other commitments), regulating their emotions and our emotions, and navigating the everyday realities of life: it wears us out. We're flustered. Exhausted. And... let's be honest; sometimes we are impatient.

We *want* to be great parents. We know that connection is key. But now it's 5pm, and our children are done for the day. The energy is shifting. Tempers are fraying. They're bickering. You've asked and asked, but their school bag is still in the doorway.

When our willpower is at its lowest, our children are likely to be most challenging. At this point, us trying to get things right is like trying to start a campfire with wet matches—frustrating, energy-draining, and seemingly impossible. It's easy to fall into a cycle of correction and direction that misses the most important aspect of raising children: connection.

Compassion is the answer. I know... It feels like a sharp command, a clear consequence, and a stern face will get you where you want to go faster: maybe it will. But you're playing a longer game.

## What is Compassion?

Let's get clear on definitions. *Compassion* comes from two Latin words. In our English translation we'll say that:

*Com* means together, with others. (Think community, communicate, combat, common.)

*Passion* doesn't mean what you think. It's Tony Robbins saying, "*Believe in yourself! You can do it!*" The word literally means *to suffer*.

So *compassion*, at its core, means *to suffer together*.

## In Real Life

Consider a typical scenario: Your child is upset because a friend has moved away over the Christmas break. The natural response might be to minimise their feelings by saying things like, "You'll make new friends" or "Stop moping around." There's the classic Aussie response: "You'll be right." But these responses tell children that their emotions are inconvenient or invalid. It feels dismissive.

Instead, true compassion means sitting with their pain. It means saying things like:

- "It must be really hard to miss your friend."
- "Being apart from someone you care about is tough."
- "I can see how much this is affecting you."

## The Power of Validation

Validation doesn't mean agreeing with everything or solving every problem. It means acknowledging the emotional experience. When children feel heard, they feel safe. When they feel safe, they're more likely to communicate openly and work collaboratively with parents.

This approach transforms discipline from a power struggle into a collaborative process. Instead of creating resistance, compassion builds connection.

## 5 Practical Ways to Practice Compassionate Parenting

**1. Listen Without Judgement:** Create a safe space for your children to express their feelings. Put away distractions, make eye contact, and hear what they're saying. Avoid immediate advice or correction. Sometimes, feeling heard is the most powerful intervention.

**2. Name the Emotion:** Help children develop emotional intelligence by naming their feelings. "It seems like you're feeling frustrated" or "I can see you're feeling disappointed" gives children language for their internal experiences. This helps them understand and manage their emotions more effectively.

**3. Set Boundaries with Empathy:** Compassionate parenting isn't about eliminating boundaries. It's about setting those boundaries with understanding and respect. Instead of "Because I said so," try "I understand you want to do this, and right now, we need to do something different. Here's why..."

**4. Model Emotional Regulation:** Children learn emotional management by watching their parents. When you handle your own stress, disappointment, or anger with calm and reflection, you're teaching them a powerful life skill. Show them how to process emotions constructively.

**5. Repair and Reconnect:** No parent is perfect. When you make mistakes—and you will—take responsibility. Apologise sincerely. Show your children that it's okay to be imperfect and that relationships can be healed through honest communication and genuine care.

## The Long-Term Impact

Compassionate parenting isn't a quick fix. It's a long-term investment in your child's emotional development. Children raised with this approach are more likely to:

- Develop strong emotional intelligence
- Build healthier relationships
- Communicate more openly
- Handle stress more effectively
- Show empathy to others

Discipline will always be part of parenting. But when discipline is rooted in compassion, it becomes a tool for teaching and connection rather than a weapon of control.

Remember, you're not just raising children. You're nurturing future adults who will carry the emotional skills you've taught them into every relationship and challenge they'll face.



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