

Ep #132: Helping your child calm down from a tantrum with Naomi Halterman

We welcome you to the ADHD Smarter Parenting Podcast. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach, Siope Kinikini.

Siope Kinikini: Hey, everybody, how are you? I'm so glad that you joined us. I am here today with a very special guest. Her name is Naomi. Naomi comes with so much experience in the Teaching-Family Model, and specifically working with families and helping to shape and change behaviors.

So, we're going to be talking with Naomi about how we can deal with tantrum behaviors. These are things that you're going to be able to implement by the end of this podcast so, pay close attention because she's going to be able to explain things in a different way, maybe a nuanced way that will make sense to you. I'm so excited to have her here. So, what I'm going to do is turn some time over to Naomi so she can introduce herself, share your information.

Naomi Halterman: Awesome. Thank you so much Siope, that was a very kind introduction. So, as Siope mentioned, my name is Naomi Halterman. I initially started out working at the [Utah Youth Village](#) as an [in-home family modification specialist](#). So what that means is I went into families' homes and helped them reach their goals as families by teaching them the skills that you're learning here on this podcast.

I have worked with probably four or 500 families, all from families with very young children, ages two or three and up to 18 and 19-year-olds. Some of those young children did really just struggle with having tantrums in [Following Instructions](#) and dealing with their big emotions.

Then some of those older teenagers sometimes were on probation, or there were child welfare cases, and the goal there was to teach both the youth and the parents skills so that the family could stay together. So the goal was to prevent child welfare from having to take children out of the home and to help youth learn skills so that they could stay in the home and not go to residential treatment or just other services where they'd have to leave the home. So that was super fun, super exciting. I got to meet a lot of people, a lot of different types of families and worked with just a lot of behaviors.

Then I moved on to become the director of training at the Utah Youth Village, and that's what I do now. So I have the opportunity to teach our new people that we hire to work with families and children, and I teach them all of these skills that you learn here so that they can use those skills with our youth. Then I also get to train our supervisors how to train as well. So, I have a love of teaching, and I especially love teaching other people how to teach other people. That's really my passion.

Siope Kinikini: That's wonderful. Okay, so as you can tell, she comes with so much experience in working with so many families over the years. So, can you give us a general idea of the typical family that you worked with? What were their issues? Where were they? What was going on in a typical family that you would work with?

Naomi Halterman: Sure. So a typical family was probably on the verge of needing some more intensive help. A lot of times the child welfare system, DCFS, or probation was on the verge of making some big changes for this family. Families First, that's the name of the program that I worked for, went into the home, or I went into the home to teach these parents skills so that that next step didn't have to happen. So, these were families with children with really, really intense behaviors.

I can think of one family that had a little boy who was five years old. He had learned that his mom was really, really afraid of the authorities. So, if he just drew attention to her, he could get whatever he wanted.

To get what he wanted, he would put himself in danger. He might hop onto the train, knowing the door was going to close, and take off and leave her there on the platform. Or he might go into the street and lay in the street when cars were coming because he knew that if he put himself in danger, his mom would just give in right away. He'd be really loud in their apartment because she was afraid that people might call the cops.

So, behaviors anywhere from there to teenagers throw tantrums too. That might look a little bit different, like stonewalling or ignoring you or a lot of attitude and sass, but some of those teenagers needed help with attending school or dealing with their own emotions, or getting out of gang involvement.

And really, the core thing that I worked on with them was relationships with their parents so that they could start there and then grow together.

Siope Kinikini: So, it sounds like you've had some very severe intensive behaviors that you had to deal with children, where they would even put themselves in danger. That's scary. Right?

Naomi Halterman: Ideally, it doesn't get there for most of us.

Siope Kinikini: Right. You did mention that there are differences in the way that tantrums manifest. So, you mentioned that teenager's tantrum just a little bit differently than, say, in the child. Can you talk a little bit more about that difference between the two?

Naomi Halterman: Sure. So children when they feel upset and fill their strong emotions as if you're a parent, you know that it can usually be very loud, lots of screaming and crying. And because children really don't know how to handle these emotions, it maybe comes in physical

aggression, right, pounding their hands, or stomping their feet, or screaming and crying, as I've said. And for older teenagers, hopefully, it doesn't look like that, though it certainly can for some.

A lot of those intense behaviors that I've seen are shutting down, or ignoring or being very quiet, or even disappearing for a time, whether that's going to another room, or even disappearing from the home for hours. A lot of times with teenagers, it's very much just not engaging.

Siope Kinikini: Okay, so let's talk about tantrum behaviors, and let's talk about how you address tantrum behaviors in a home. We're going to talk specifically about giving small instructions and then how we evoke praise in that. So, let's say that we have a young child. Let's start off with a young child, five years old, who's having a tantrum. Let's say his parent is asking him to put away his Game Boy or his video games, and he starts to throw a tantrum. He starts yelling, screaming. He's frustrated. He has bodies all tensed up. What are some things that you would do in order to help this, or what are recommendations you would have for this parent?

Naomi Halterman: Sure. Yeah, actually, as you asked that question, I thought of two podcasts that you gave in the past about observing and describing behavior. That's one thing I would do probably first, before we go into these next steps of giving small instructions and praising the child.

I do that, and then the next step would probably be to give some small instructions. Oftentimes, when children are feeling these big emotions, sometimes as parents, we say, "Calm down," or "Stop it," or "Don't do that." That's really just a very large instruction. That's really hard for a child to understand.

So, specifically, calm down. Oftentimes, when we're feeling these big emotions and really flustered and angry, we don't know what calm down means. Right? Even as an adult, I don't know what calm down means when I'm feeling strong emotions.

We can break that into small instructions. We can say things like, "I need you to put your arms down. Or I need you to sit on your bum. Or I need you to lower your voice. Or I need you to take deep breaths." The last one is a coping skill, and so some of our instructions, when our child is ready to start calming down, actually, we can walk them through the calming down process by giving them small instructions, like, "take deep breaths." Or if it's a five-year-old, we might say, "Here's your teddy bear. I want you to hug your teddy bear." Right?

So, we want to avoid those big instructions that we really can't even understand when we're feeling strong emotions, and just break it down into these smaller ones, so we can just step by step help our child feel in control of themselves.

When any of us are feeling upset, it's hard to de-escalate ourselves, period. Right? So it's just walking a child step-by-step, and the next thing that will help to de-escalate them. Usually, it starts with lowering your voice. Or if someone's pounding their fists, putting their hands down at their sides. Right?

I'm picturing a little five-year-old who we were actually in this exact situation, he was told he needed to get off the computer, and the computer was right next to the dinner table. So he threw himself under the dinner table and was shaking the dinner table from the legs underneath as much as he could and kicking his legs.

So one of those instructions for him was to put his arms at his side so that he wasn't shaking the dinner table, and then the next step would have been to stop kicking his legs and put his legs on the floor. That's something I think that is really helpful too, is to tell children what they should do, rather than what they shouldn't do. Right? So instead of saying, "Stop shaking the table." You can say, "Put your hands at your side."

Siope Kinikini: Yeah. I love that. I love that whole idea of giving children what they should do because it does paint that image of what they should be doing. I mean, if you tell your child not to do something, they're going to remember what you're saying for them not to do and most likely they'll continue to do it.

Naomi Halterman: Right. Yeah, it's the same idea that, "I'm feeling really strong emotions right now and you're helping me step-by-step to calm down. If you tell me what not to do, I don't actually know what you want me to do instead." Right?

Siope Kinikini: Absolutely. Okay, that's fantastic. Now for parents, when they're dealing with the tantrum behavior, usually, a lot of parents will notice that their child's getting out of control and it starts to cause emotions to happen with them. I mean, parents become stirred by watching their children go out of control. So, what are some suggestions you would give for parents in order to do this?

Naomi Halterman: Sure, and to be able to stay calm ourselves, right? Yeah, I heard a quote once, and I can't quote it exactly. Actually, it might even have come from Smarter Parenting. It's something like, "It's very hypocritical to ask a kid not to freak out when you're freaking out yourself." All right? We're modeling inappropriate behavior.

So, it's crucial that when we're giving these small instructions that we can remain calm ourselves, and as I'm picturing this little boy that I was working with who was under the table, and I was coaching this parent at the time to not be right above the child over the table but to be a few feet back. To use just a calm and neutral voice tone. Not to be too loud or too quiet, and not to talk too fast or too slow. And to keep her body language calm and neutral as well.

So we weren't towering over him. We didn't have our arms folded and our eyebrows down. Instead, we were just very calm and neutral. It's important to talk that way as well. Then sometimes, so when we give these small instructions, when we are feeling flustered, it's really important to take a break sometimes ourselves, if we need to. We can tag-team our partner if we have one to step in, or take a break. Those breaks are really important for us as parents so that we can remain calm and neutral, but also really important for our children too because they need time alone to deal with those strong emotions too.

I mean, we're talking about giving small instructions, but sometimes the most powerful thing we can do is step away so that they're ready for those small instructions when we get back.

Siope Kinikini: When would you recommend that a parent step away? What are some signs that are like, "Okay, I need to step away at this point?"

Naomi Halterman: Sure, that's a great question. So, I keep going back to this little boy under this table because that's just the example I've got in my mind. Sometimes when we would give him a small instruction, eventually, he actually was not slamming his fist anymore and kicking his feet, he was actually sitting on his bum, but he was still under the table and had his arms folded.

But every time we praised him for that and let him know he was doing a good job and headed in the right direction, he actually went back to shaking the table. Right? Because we would say, "Hey." We'll call him Johnny. "Hey, Johnny, thanks so much for folding your arms." He'd unfold them and start shaking the table again.

That's a good time when we know that we can just step away and that maybe this child needs to deal with their own emotions a little bit more on their own, right, when the things we're saying are escalating the child again, instead of de-escalating.

Siope Kinikini: So, there's kind of this dual thing going on when tantrum behaviors happen. I mean, the child throws a tantrum, the parent really needs to assess where they're at themselves and whether or not they can control themselves in order to model the appropriate behavior. And then giving these small instructions that a child can do in a tantrum state to bring them into compliance. So, we've talked about giving small instructions. Do you have any recommendations for parents on how to know what to say in those moments?

Naomi Halterman: Sure. Yeah, this is very individual, depending on the situation. Right? Whatever the first step is going to be to help this child regulate themselves, and so we might start with the biggest behavior, the biggest thing that is evidence of these strong emotions, right?

I'm not going to ask this little boy who's under the table to go from lying to sitting because that's a big jump. Right? But if he's slamming the floor and kicking his legs and crying and screaming, I'm going to start with the easiest thing that will be easiest to change. Right?

So for him, it was probably screaming. It takes less effort to stop screaming than it does to put your hands at your side when you've got them above your head, and you're pounding. Right? So, it'll be easiest to give instructions when you start with the easiest thing to change, rather than a big jump in transition, like laying to sitting or laying on the floor to standing would be very hard. We want to go step-by-step. If someone's on the floor, we could go from the floor to maybe on their knees to on a chair to standing, if that's what you want it to happen.

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Siope Kinikini: That's wonderful. Now, there is this idea of, "Wow, how many instructions am I going to give my child then? Because if we're only focused on a small instruction, and the child is freaking out, how long is this going to take me as a parent?"

Naomi Halterman: Right, right.

Siope Kinikini: Yeah. I mean, how long does it typically take to make the adjustments in the change?

Naomi Halterman: Sure. Well, it depends on the child again. Sometimes it could be anywhere from five minutes to depending on the child. It could be up to an hour or more. It really depends. But I do know in Smarter Parenting and in your podcast, you've talked a little bit about preventing these behaviors through [Role-plays](#). So my thought about that is, the more that we can Role-play beforehand how to deal with our big emotions, the shorter these things are going to be.

As I think about our little boy that we've been talking about, his tantrums, in the beginning, could last up to 30 minutes. Then it was actually a combination of these steps we're talking about here and the preventive Role-plays that really helped. By the end, he had maybe a five-minute tantrum every other week, once mom could apply these little steps for tantrum teaching, as well as the preventive Role-plays.

Siope Kinikini: That's wonderful. Okay. So kind of a mash-up of the different skills that you can use to implement and intervene using that [Preventive Teaching](#) piece, in order to prepare your child for the tantrum behaviors to minimize the amount of time they may be in a tantrum state.

Naomi Halterman: Absolutely. Then earlier you asked about how a parent can control themselves as well.

Siope Kinikini: Yeah.

Naomi Halterman: I was just thinking too that, when we're giving small instructions, I want to discourage parents from giving rapid-fire small instructions. Right? A bad example might be, "Stop screaming. Put your hands at your side. Put your feet down." That's not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is a fairly slow pace, speaking calmly, "Johnny, I need you to lower your voice and stop screaming." Then give him time to do that. Right? Then once he does, you can praise him for it. We don't even need him to do it perfectly, we can praise any compliance that he gives. So if he's still screaming, but he lowered his voice, we could still praise him for that.

So there's going to be some small instruction and then some praise and reinforcement, and then some small instructions, but it is a very calm, slowly paced process because we want to model for our child how to be calm. Right? If we are rapid-fire giving instructions, we're not modeling that calmness.

Siope Kinikini: Right, right. It's an interesting dynamic because what we're doing is guiding our child towards de-escalation by providing the small instruction. Then we're reinforcing the good things they're doing, right, which helps them want to repeat those behaviors. And then continually bring them down into a state where the child can deal with their really big emotions.

So, it does take some time, it's almost like, in a way, a dance where, "Who's going to lead the dance? Is it going to be the kid or is it going to be the parent?" If the parent is well-positioned, they can actually help their child de-escalate. Do you have any recommendations then for parents who may see a tantrum behavior out in public or somewhere that is uncomfortable, do you have recommendations for parents in helping to address that?

Naomi Halterman: Sure, certainly, those are the most uncomfortable and something we all want to avoid as parents. My thought goes to a situation where I was with a parent at a gas station, and she really wanted her child to put on her seatbelt, and this child would not put on her seatbelt. So every time mom clipped the seatbelt for her, she unclipped it and sat there and refused to put it on, and mom obviously couldn't drive until the youth put on her seatbelt.

So fortunately for her, this was a mom whose main job was to be with her kids, and so she did have some time. That actually took four hours at the gas station, and she did these things that we've talked about. [She Observed and Describe like you've talked about previously](#). She gave small instructions, like we're talking about now. Then she praised any small compliance that her child gave.

And unfortunately, it took a really long time, and the mom felt very embarrassed. [She felt very frustrated, but she continued to do that](#). Then at the end, the child eventually put on her seatbelt, and they were ready to go. But the mom came to me and said, "I can't do this every time she wants not put on her seatbelt. I just can't do this all of the time." But the child did get a consequence for this tantrum moment. Right?

I think it's really important too that we give consequences, Negative Consequences that are effective, like you've talked about in the past, for the tantrum behavior. Then what we can do is Role-play what the youth should have done instead. So they get a consequence for what just happened, and of course, this has to be in a neutral time, then we're going to Role-play what the youth should have done instead, and then this youth is going to be able to maybe have a lesser consequence because they practice with you. Then they're going to learn what should happen next time, and the more and more we do this, the less time this is going to take, and parents will be able to avoid those public embarrassments, which we're all just so terrified of.

Siope Kinikini: [Yeah, it's funny, because when I have talked to parents about the time when they're dealing, how much time it takes initially, some of them get shocked that they may be doing this for a really long time upfront. But I always emphasize that this is an investment. I mean, you are investing upfront in preventing things from continuing that way in the future.](#)

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If you're willing to put in the work at the beginning, you're going to have less to deal with later on. So, you can spend the time upfront or you can spend the little bits of time throughout time, which will compound over time and be more than the time you would if you just focused upfront.

Naomi Halterman: Right. Exactly. The time and the work is going to be there. Do you want to do it upfront just a couple of times, or do you want to do it all the time everywhere for the rest of your child's foreseeable future?

Siope Kinikini: Yeah, yeah. Right. My whole thing is like, invest in the time that you're doing this, because it really does make a difference, it makes a difference in the long run. That's fantastic.

[You've mentioned, giving these small instructions to children, one thing I do recommend that parents do is, before a tantrum behavior, and a calm and neutral time for themselves, is to really assess what are some small behaviors that I can have on hand, so they don't, in the moment, have to really use energy that you're in short supply of. I mean, we all know that we're already exhausted, and a child throws a tantrum, we become even more exhausted.](#)

Siope Kinikini: If they have some go tos of things that they can do, then that'd be great. Whether it be, take a deep breath. Just a couple of things in mind, and keep them in mind based on the behaviors of their kids and what they know their child can do. So, small instruction.

Naomi Halterman: Yeah, I actually wanted to add, I recently saw a tantrum teaching moment where the parent asks the child to drop their shoulders and to unsqueeze their fist.

Those might be things that we can think of ahead of time, anything that our child is showing that they are just really wound up and angry, dropping your shoulders, lifting your head, making eye contact, and loosening your muscles. Right? Those are all things that we can be prepared with ahead of time.

Siope Kinikini: That's wonderful. Then with the instructions, once they comply in any way, we want to be praising. So we want to stick in that praise because even though it's a tense moment, your child when they're complying in any small way, they need to be reinforced. Right?

So it really does take some discipline on the parent's part to notice everything that's going on, which is why, with tantrum behaviors, I love it in one way because parents have to be present. You really do have to be 100% present in what's going on in order to apply, giving a small instruction and then using praise in there. They kind of feeds off of each other. Compliance with the small behavior. You're going to praise whatever compliance they've done. Then you're going to give them another instruction. Praise. Another instruction. Praise. Then it starts to snowball from there.

Naomi Halterman: Yeah, and I'll just add to that praise, Siope has said a few times any compliance, but we don't have to wait for that behavior, the small instruction that you've given, we don't have to wait for them to do it perfectly, and praise them even if they kind of do it.

So we've talked about them lowering their voice even if they're still screaming. We've talked about maybe squeezing your fists, but now they're a little bit looser and not as tight. Right? Any compliance is what we want to praise. We don't have to wait for the whole thing to be completed.

Siope Kinikini: So, I can hear one of my parents that I'm coaching right now ask this question. "Am I only going to praise what I'm asking them to do? Or if they do something and self-correct on their own, do I praise that?"

Naomi Halterman: Yeah, that's a great question. We are going to praise anything that our child is doing that is headed in the right direction to de-escalation. Any positive behavior we see we're going to want to reinforce.

Siope Kinikini: It's also important for parents to understand this is not a time to lecture. This is actually a time to de-escalate to a point where we can work with the child on changing the behavior.

So, don't give a lecture, don't give them a big long speech. You just want to give the small instruction. You want to praise. Small instruction. Praise. And keep it focused in that like really narrow space, rather than expanding into something much larger, which is a lot more difficult to handle.

Naomi Halterman: I'd like to just back that up by saying I want you to think about yourself when you're upset. Are those good times that you listen to your partner, or your mother-in-law, or your boss, or whoever it is, when you're feeling angry or upset, or you haven't gotten what you want, and then somebody tries to correct you or teach you, how much of that actually sinks in and how effective is it? It's really not at all. Right? These two steps that Siope has talked about of giving small instruction and praising any compliance really has no teaching or lecturing, or what we should have done instead or next time. There's no lesson here, we're just trying to de-escalate so we can get to a point where we can teach and talk through and learn.

Siope Kinikini: Wonderful. So giving small instructions. Praise. Small instructions. Praise. Small instruction. Praise. Guide them along the whole process, which is fantastic. So, for people who are listening right now, we want to give an example of what this would look like. How about I be the child, I could be the child and you get an idea of what this sounds like when a child is starting to tantrum.

Now, obviously, you can't see me physically because you're listening to this, but I'll give you clues on what I'm doing. So you know what's happening, and then we'll have you intervene by giving a small instruction and then the praise. Does that work?

Naomi Halterman: Then I do want to just give a precursor that, it is really hard for me to not [Observe and Describe](#). So even though we want to show you specifically giving a small instruction and praising, I may observe what Siope is doing and describe it to him as well sometimes, which we've learned previously.

Siope Kinikini: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. So, let's do it. Let's do it. Let's help parents get an idea and get a feel for what the rhythm of something like this would be, so they can apply it in their own homes.

Naomi Halterman: All right. So I loved your example earlier that I asked you to get off the video games and you did not like that. I feel like that happens often with children.

Siope Kinikini: Okay. So, let's say that you came in and you asked me to put away the video game. I'm going to behave exactly like one of the kids I'm coaching right now. He did this last week. It's funny because we Role-played it. But I'm going to just do exactly what he did.

Naomi Halterman: How old is he?

Siope Kinikini: He is about eight years old.

"I don't want to do it. No, no. Why do I have to put it away? Look, I only. 15 minutes, just give me 15 minutes."

Naomi Halterman: "Siope, I understand that you're feeling frustrated right now, but I see that you're rolling your eyes and you're rocking in your chair. I need you to just sit still in your chair and put your hands on your lap."

Siope Kinikini: "I'm not listening. I'm not listening. I don't want to do that. I want to finish my game."

Naomi Halterman: "All right, you're telling me that you're not listening and that you want to finish your game, and I know that you really do."

Siope Kinikini: "I'm not listening."

Naomi Halterman: "And that would be really fun, but I need you to just rock a little bit less."

Siope Kinikini: "I'm not listening."

Naomi Halterman: "Hey, thanks so much for not rocking anymore and lowering your voice. That's awesome."

Siope Kinikini: "Because you told me not to rock."

Naomi Halterman: "All right, but I do appreciate that you lowered your voice."

Siope Kinikini: "I'm going to talk loud now then."

Naomi Halterman: "Actually, I really appreciate that you're not doing that, and I see that you're still rocking, but I appreciate you've got your voice lowered. So what I need you to do is just keep your back on the back of your chair."

Siope Kinikini: "I don't want to do that. Let me finish my game. I'm almost done."

Naomi Halterman: "Hey, I see that you almost had your back on your back of the chair. Siope you're doing really great. You're quiet right now, and I really appreciate that."

Siope Kinikini: "I don't want to be quiet. I want to finish my game."

Naomi Halterman: "I know you want to finish your game, but I see that you're sitting still. Thank you so much. Now what I want you to do is put your hands on your lap."

Siope Kinikini: "If I do this, can I finish my game?"

Naomi Halterman: "You know what? We're going to talk about your game after, but I love that you took a deep breath. You've got your hands on your lap, and you got your back against your chair. Thank you so much for doing that. So now what I want you to do is I want you to just look at me in the eyes, and when you look at me in the eye. Hey, look at that. You're doing it. You're doing awesome. All right, you're even smiling at me a little bit. You're doing so good. So, let's see, you're still rocking a little bit. I will know that you are ready to talk about this video game when you're not rocking, and you've got your back against your chair."

Siope Kinikini: "Okay, can we talk about it?"

Naomi Halterman: "Okay, cool. I need to just give you one more thing to do just so I know you're really ready to talk about it. Okay? Will you just come sit right here next to me? If you sit here next to me, then I will know that you're ready to talk."

Siope Kinikini: "Okay, let's talk about it."

Naomi Halterman: "Okay."

Siope Kinikini: That was really good. Good job.

That was exactly how the Role-play went when we were practicing it, and I was like, "Okay, okay." I had him raise the intensity. I'm like, "Let's kick it up a couple of notches, man." Just so he got the feel for what that sounded like, what it felt like and parents could understand how to do it.

That was really good. If you noticed during the whole tantrum, trying to shift attention to something else was a strategy that this young man used, and then talking over the parent and then hearing the parent and then negating what the parent was saying. Very, very typical behaviors for children who throw tantrums.

What I noticed you did, though was, you were very consistent in paying attention. This is where Observe and Describe is so essential because you really do need to be paying attention. Then you need to be praising for even small things that they're doing well because it's reinforcing to hear that, "Oh, I'm doing something well, okay. Let me rethink this because that made me feel good when you recognized that I'm doing something positive."

Naomi Halterman: Then I'll just note some other things that parents might do naturally, that I certainly have done naturally, that we want to avoid, is let our youth derail the conversation. We could have gone into what he wanted to do and why he couldn't do that, and how he never listens. It could have been about the video game, but it wasn't, right, it was just about the de-escalation and the small instructions and the praise. We never veered from that trap, no matter what you said, Siopo.

Then sometimes he spoke over me and I continued to talk. Then sometimes he spoke over me and I stopped talking, so that he could hear me. So those are some tools too, stopping to listen, right. Because the more we talk over someone, the more intense the situation will be. But I was calm, sometimes just to finish my sentence, but a lot of times just stop talking as well.

Siopo Kinikini: Yeah, yeah. It's a very powerful approach. I mean, when we think about being able to help our child, guide them through this very difficult emotion that they're feeling, it's comforting to me to know that, "Hey, I'm not doing anything that would damage the relationship at this point."

What I'm doing is just guiding my child along and helping them calm down, and letting them know, "Hey, I'm still here, and I'm here with you, and I'll help you through it, but I'm not going to be affected by the whole tantrum behavior."

This is going to be so great for families because those of you who are listening right now, this is exactly how you'll would do it. Okay? You need to be present. Use Observe and Describe. Give a small instruction, any small instruction, and then praise for any compliance.

Guide your child along to de-escalating, so then you can start to teach them. You can start to teach them, "This is what you need to do when you have those difficult feelings and you're struggling with."

So, we're going to be talking about where you go from here. [So we're going to talk a little bit about consequences and applying consequences to tantrum behavior.](#)

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Your child has thrown a tantrum, obviously there needs to be a consequence on that, because they cannot continue to behave in this manner, and nothing happens. Then how can you help your child learn a new behavior? What is it that they should do when they're feeling these really big emotions? Right? So go ahead, Naomi, tell me a little bit more about consequences.

Naomi Halterman: Sure, for my own purposes, and for the purposes of our parents, so I want to just go to the fact that we have just helped our child de-escalate, and what we did is we Observed and Described. We gave small instructions. We praised and we went through this cycle. Right? Multiple times until the energy level diminished. Then once our child is completely calm.

I think one thing that is really important for parents to know is what are the signs that our child is completely calm, right? Because what we're about to talk about, giving a consequence for this escalation, or this tantrum should not happen until our child is completely calm.

So, whether you talk about it with your partner, whether you write some notes on your own, or just make some mental notes in your head, I think it's really crucial that you know what it looks like that your child is 100% calm and neutral and ready to learn.

Then once we see those things in our child, then we can talk about the thing that just happened. So in our previous example, Siope was asking me over and over, "Can we talk about the video games now?" And once I noted that he was completely calm and teachable and ready to learn, we could talk about video games.

But rather than talking about how he can play again or not play again, I'm actually going to give him a consequence for this tantrum that he just had. And so, for Siope in the situation, it might look like, "Siope, we are going to talk about the video games. Unfortunately, you did earn a consequence for not turning off the video game when I asked you to and then yelling at me."

Well, that's what he did. He didn't turn off the video game, and he yelled at me.

"So Siope, unfortunately, you did earn a consequence for not turning off the video game and yelling at me. Then what we're going to do is we're going to give him an opportunity to practice what he should have done instead."

So in this situation, for Siope, it is just turning off the video game and saying, "Okay," is probably what I would have liked him to do. Right. So I'm going to give him an opportunity to. Oftentimes children need some kind of reason that they want to practice. Right? So I might say something like, "I want to give you an opportunity to decrease your consequence if we can practice what we should have done instead."

Then for this child, this may be something new he's learning or something he's not super good at yet. I'm going to show him first what I wanted him to do. I'm going to pretend to be Siope and

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Siope is going to pretend to be me, and he'll tell me as the pretend parents to turn off my video game, and I'm going to show him by saying, "Okay." And turn it off.

Then I'm going to let him practice. We're going to do that multiple times. We're going to do it as many times until he can do it really well until we start building some muscle memory. Right? Then I am going to decrease his consequence for doing that practice with me and remind him that that's what he can do next time.

Siope Kinikini: All right, let's practice it, so parents have an idea of what it sounds like, what it feels like when they're doing this and actually giving a consequence to their child for the tantrum behavior.

So, let's say that things have de-escalated, and now I'm sitting beside you like we practiced, and we're talking through this. Right? How would you proceed after that?

Naomi Halterman: All right, so I'm just going to talk to you like you're our eight-year-old Siope.

Siope Kinikini: Yes, yes.

Naomi Halterman: All right.

"Siope, thanks so much for coming to sit next to me. I can see that you're ready to talk about this now because you came over here, and you're sitting down on your bum and your hands are in your lap. So thanks so much for doing that. Unfortunately, because you didn't turn off the video game when I asked you to, and you did yell at me, you have earned a negative consequence. Because of that, you're not going to be able to play video games until after dinner today. I know, I know. However, if you want to practice what you should have done instead, which is just say, 'Okay,' and turn it off, you can play video games for 15 minutes before dinner. How would you like that?"

Siope Kinikini: "How about half an hour before dinner?"

Naomi Halterman: "15 minutes."

Siope Kinikini: "How about 20 minutes?"

Naomi Halterman: "Siope, if you'd like to earn these 15 minutes, we can practice. But if not, that's totally up to you."

Siope Kinikini: "Okay, I'll do the 15 minutes."

Naomi Halterman: "Okay. So, what you should have done instead of saying no and yelling at me is just say, 'Okay,' and turn it off. Okay? So what I'm going to do is, I'm going to show you first what that looks like, and then we'll just switch roles. So I want you to be mom, and I want

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you to tell me it's time to turn off the video game, and I'm going to show you what that looks like and I'm going to be you. Okay? So, go ahead and tell me as mom to turn off the video game."

Siope Kinikini: "Okay, you need to go turn off the video game."

Naomi Halterman: "'Okay, click.' All right. Siope, did you see how I just said, 'Okay,' and I turned it off right away?"

Siope Kinikini: "Yep."

Naomi Halterman: "All right. So I want you to practice that now, I'm going to be mom now and you're just going to be you. I'm going to tell you to turn off that video game. Sound good?"

Siope Kinikini: "Okay."

Naomi Halterman: "All right. 'Hey, Siope, it's time to turn off the video games. Will you turn it off, please?'"

Siope Kinikini: "'Okay,' click."

Naomi Halterman: "Awesome. Thank you so much. Hey, I love that you said, 'Okay,' and you did it, and you were even looking at me when you did that. Thanks for doing that. Okay, let's practice another time. Just to make sure you really got it. So you're prepared for the next time I ask you. Okay?"

Siope Kinikini: "Okay."

Naomi Halterman: "All right. 'Hey, Siope, will you turn off your video games, please?'"

Siope Kinikini: "'Okay,' click."

Naomi Halterman: "Awesome. You're doing great. Thank you for looking at me and turning it off right away. That's what I want you to do in the future. Okay? When you do honestly, I'd love to give you some extra time on your video game for just saying, "Okay "and turning it off when you're supposed to. That sounds good?"

Siope Kinikini: "Yeah, that sounds really good."

Naomi Halterman: "Okay. So, because you practiced, you get to play your video game 15-minutes before dinner tonight."

Siope Kinikini: "Awesome. Gosh. Awesome, awesome, awesome."

Naomi Halterman: "Thanks so much."

Siope Kinikini: That's fantastic. It's funny because, in going through the process, there is this warmth about engaging and interacting and learning the right thing to do. That happens when you do it that way, when you're able to really communicate and say, "Hey, I'm willing to work with you and guide you along, and if you can make corrections, I'm 100% behind you." What a powerful message when you're correcting a child?

Naomi Halterman: Right, it turns me from a punisher, a mean mom who's out to get you to somebody who's on your side, right, and wants to help you succeed, and wants you to have the good things that you want, like your video games.

Siope Kinikini: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's wonderful. It creates that connection, connection with parents and the children, which is fantastic. That was great. That was really great, and really doable for parents. This is absolutely doable.

Naomi Halterman: Then I'll just note that I only practiced with Siope twice, that was because he did it perfectly both times we practiced. If he was struggling with those steps that I had given him, we would have done it more.

Siope Kinikini: Yeah, yeah. You want to do it until they're very comfortable and they're able to do it automatically. One thing I do recommend because you're hearing us and you're not seeing us is that, during this practice, you have to physically be doing what it is you're asking them to do.

So, don't sit on your couch and tell them what to do, you have to show them. So stand up, walk over to the game, turn it off and come back and sit down. They need to see it, they need to see it, feel it, know how much time is taking to do it, they need to have that whole experience, because kids learn through experience.

Naomi Halterman: Right. It's that muscle memory we're trying to build. Right? The more we do it, the more Siope is just going to know that that's what needs to be done. But when a basketball player learns how to shoot hoops, he doesn't just do it in his mind, right, from his couch, he actually shoots 1000s and 1000s and 1000s of hoops, and then that's how that muscle memory is formed. So we have to actually get up and do it just like Siope said.

Siope Kinikini: Yep, yep. That's great. So, for the parents who are listening, absolutely, we want to connect the behavior with the consequence, so they're connected and the child understands, "I behaved this way, so it affected this in my life. I can fix some of that, but not all of it by practicing what I should have done instead." And reinforcing this idea that, "Hey, I'm going to make mistakes, but I can make corrections, and I'll still receive a consequence for it, but it may not be as severe if I make the correction."

So again, this whole idea of just teaching, teaching, teaching, teaching, and the approach to teaching a child, that's fantastic. This takes a lot of brainwork for parents. Right? I mean, dealing with tantrums, it really does suck up quite a bit of energy from parents.

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The more the parent can do up front in preparation for this, the better off they're going to be Role-playing how they're going to do it, coming up with the small instructions, if they can, on things that they can say, in order to help de-escalate. Practicing. Praising. Not being upset. Taking a break if they need to, as you mentioned earlier. And then, implementing a consequence in there. So, trying connecting all those things, very, very intense process, and yet at the same time, not as intense as I'm making it sound.

Naomi Halterman: Not as intense as an out-of-control child all of the time. Right? This sounds intense for the time that we're doing it, but the more we do it, the less it's going to happen. So we could have that intense behavior all the time, or we could have it for just the next little while until we've really got it down and help their kid what to know to do instead, and then it won't happen anymore.

Siope Kinikini: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely, absolutely, making that investment. This is all fantastic information for parents, very doable for the parent who is feeling exhausted and tired. Really take some time to contemplate all of these different approaches that we're presenting to you because they all work together. They all work together.

This is an introduction to a skill that we have coming up, which is called Tantrum Teaching. So, that is coming up. There's going to be a lesson video all about it. We're super excited to have it released because this is something that parents have been asking for and that they need in order to help their children with their behavior.

So, super, super fantastic. Is there anything else you want to share, Naomi or talk about?

Naomi Halterman: The only thing I might add is, the more that we Role-play preventively, the less we'll have to use these skills that we've talked about.

So, if I know Siope's struggles, when I say he has to get off the computer or his video games, I'm going to preventively in a neutral time Role-play that behavior as much as I can, but I don't have to do these steps very often.

Siope Kinikini: Yeah. It's funny because as Benjamin Franklin wisely said, "Prevention is worth a pound of cure." If you can take the time upfront to do preventive things first, you really are going to minimize what you're dealing with later.

Medical professionals will tell you the exact same thing. They'll be like, "If you're willing to do things up front, you're not going to deal with big things later on." So, it makes absolute sense—the same thing with parenting.

I want to thank Naomi for joining me today. Thank you so much for the wisdom and for the information that you've shared with us. It's been super, super helpful for the parents who are dealing with tantrum behaviors daily on what they can do.

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Siope Kinikini: You'll find more information on the Smarter Parenting website. [And for those of you who want a more direct path in how you can implement this with your family, go ahead and sign up for coaching.](#) Which is available on the Smarter Parenting website as well. Okay.

So, you go and apply this parents, start off with Preventive Teaching, but when your child throws a tantrum, we've given you steps on what you can do in order to address those behaviors.

That's it for me, and I will see you again next time.

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