

Parenting Phrases For Tough moments

For when it's loud, tense, or spiralling, and you want to choose language that protects connection, models repair, and helps everyone grow. You don't have to get it right every time. Just return to calm, and return to each other.

🔥 Anger Moments (Hurtful Words, Threats)

- "I see you're really angry. Your words aren't safe right now."
- "You're allowed to feel mad. You're not allowed to hurt."
- "You can be angry and respectful. Let's take space."
- "Let's pause so no one says something we regret."

(Why it works: Sets a boundary on words without punishing emotion.)

🔊 Big Volume Feelings (Screaming, Shrieking)

- "That's a big feeling. Let's bring the volume down first."
- "You're safe, but your voice is too loud for my ears."
- "I want to hear you—but I need your voice to be softer first."
- "Let's stop and take a breath together."

(Why it works: It validates and redirects without shaming.)

🚫 Boundary Pushback (Sugar, Screens, No)

- "I know you want it. My job is to help your body feel good later too."
- "I'm saying no to the thing—not no to you."
- "You're allowed to be upset about my decision."
- "It's not what you hoped—but it's still a kind no."

(Why it works: Keeps connection while holding the boundary.)



Your Meltdown Prevention Kit (For You)

"I'm not ready to speak calmly yet. I'll try again in a minute."

"This is hard. I'm doing my best."

"Deep breath. My child needs me regulated, not perfect."

"I'm allowed to pause too."

(Why it works: Models regulation and self-kindness.)

Unsafe Play / Physical Conflict (Hitting, Kicking, Biting)

"I'm stopping this now, this isn't safe."

"This isn't safe play anymore. I'm stepping in."

"That's not safe for their body."

"Your brain is in red. Let's find calm before we talk."

"Let's take space to cool our bodies down. Then we'll figure this out together."

"You were frustrated and it came out through your body. Let's find another way next time."

(Why it works: Prioritises safety, uses neutral language, and builds regulation and repair.)

Conflict Repair / Hurtful Words

"That was a strong word. Let's pause."

"Not helpful, not kind. Let's all take a breath."

"That sounded like frustration, not truth. Want help with your words?"

"You were having fun, but now they're not. That means stop."

"That came out mean. Want to redo it, or take space first?"

"You don't have to say sorry yet, just let them know you want to make it right."

"You don't have to be perfect, just kind."

"Can you show me what a better choice would look like?"

(Why it works: Offers a clear reset and emotional scaffolding without forcing shame.)



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Respecting Boundaries & Social Cues

"They asked you to stop. That's a boundary, even if you're still having fun."

"I think you were trying to connect, but it didn't land right."

"Chase games are only fun if everyone says yes. If someone says 'stop,' we stop."

"If someone feels scared, the game's over."

"You were having fun, but they're not anymore. That means it's time to stop."

(Why it works: Teaches consent and co-regulation, not just rule-following.)

Parent Self-Regulation & Emotional Honesty

"I'm too overwhelmed to handle this calmly right now. I need a few minutes."

"I didn't like the way I just spoke. I'm stepping back."

"That tone didn't show how much I care. I'll do better next time."

"What I said wasn't fair, I was trying to feel in control, not scare you."

"You're not in trouble. I just needed a break before we talked."

(Why it works: Models growth mindset and shows kids that adults repair too.)

Not sure where to start?

There are a lot of phrases in this guide, and that's on purpose. Different moments call for different tones, and different parents will connect with different language. But if choosing your own feels like too much right now, I share the top 2 phrases I picked for our house on the next page.

My Top 2 Go-To Phrases (Per Category)

These are the ones I actually reach for in our house. Try them out, or choose your own favorites.

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"You can be angry and respectful. Let's take space."

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"I want to hear you, but I need your voice to be softer first."

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"It's not what you hoped, but it's still a kind no."

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"Deep breath. My child needs me regulated, not perfect."

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You're not a bad parent if you freeze, snap, or say the wrong thing.

You're a parent who is learning to speak more clearly, under pressure, through noise, with kids who feel everything big.

These phrases aren't scripts.

They're starting points for a more thoughtful rhythm between you and your kids.

And each time you pause, reset, or reflect, you're rewriting something important.



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