



## When Parenting for Confidence, Independence, and Resilience, Build Self-Management Skills

### What Is It?

The skill of self-management (a.k.a. self-control, impulse control, or emotional regulation) is the ability to control impulses and express emotion in socially appropriate ways that do no harm to yourself or others.

### What Does It Look Like In Everyday Parenting?

In the checkout line at the grocery store while waiting behind three sets of customers, Julia's child, three-year-old Marcus sat in the cart feeling overstimulated by the new sights, sounds, and alluring objects at the store. It only took a glance over at the shelves of candy just beyond his reach to prompt an emotional explosion.

He began, *"I want candy!"* with a sudden burst of tears as he anticipated his mom's *"No."* As she mouthed the word and shook her head, his tears exploded into a stream down his red face as he extended his arms and hands toward the candy. Not reaching it or gaining his mom's help, his voice erupted from sobs into screams, shrieks, and pants. He started kicking and flung out his hand to hit his mom's face. He was fully out of control.

Mom Julia, an educator and psychologist, understood what was going on at a cognitive level but her own emotions took her over. She became upset when a neighboring customer criticized the yelling child. She was losing her ability to think straight. She looked around and felt trapped in the line sandwiched between disapproving customers.

### What's a Parent to Do?

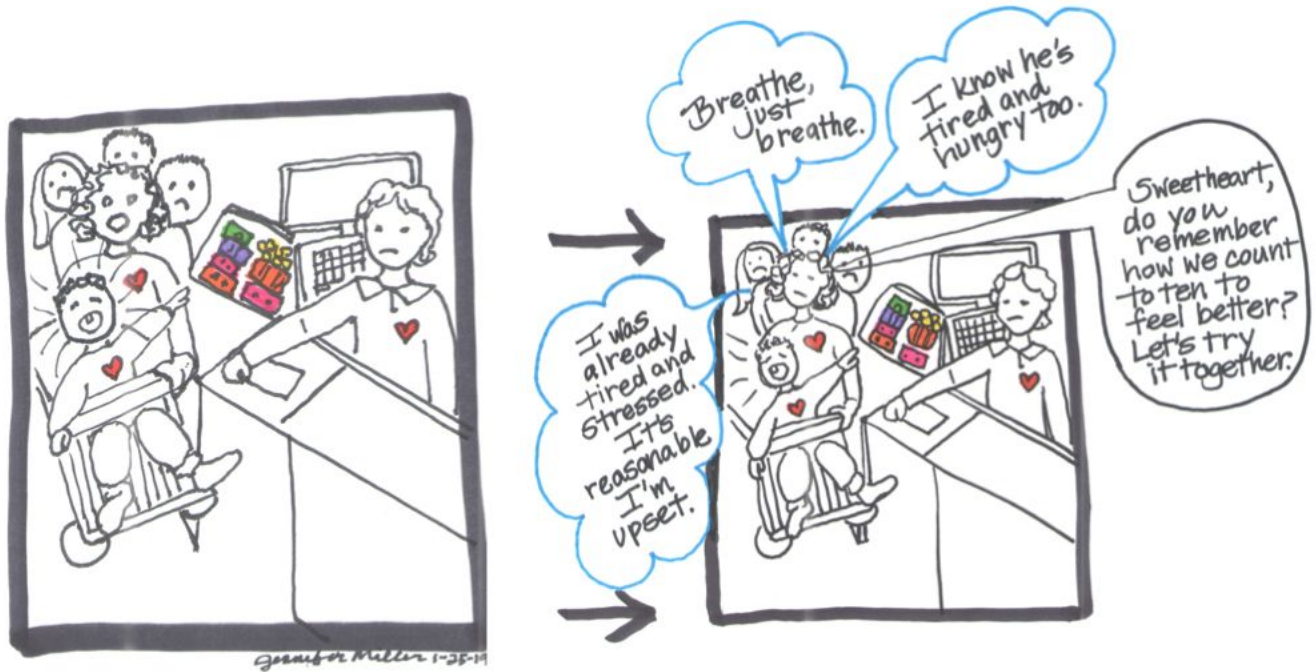
**Step One:** Julia can ask herself: *"What's going on for me that could be making my emotions right now feel so intense?"* (e.g. work stress, time pressures, sleep deprivation)

**Step Two:** Julia can consider: *"How can I calm down and have self-compassion in the moment?"* (e.g. How can I accept my feelings as reasonable? Take deep breaths and consider the following before responding.)

**Step Three:** *"What's going on for my child that could be making his emotions right now feel so intense?"* (e.g. tired, hungry, end of a stress-filled day)

**Step Four:** *"How can I help my child calm down and show compassion for needs not being met in the moment?"* (e.g. help calm down, offer positive reassurance of loving connection, express ways you will care for their needs, suggest a healthy behavior like, a game of eye-spy or talking to a kind cashier).

**Step Five:** When back home, reflect with child on the moment and consider what other choices they might have had. How can they practice at home? (e.g. practice with dolls or role play how to deal with intense feelings, decide on a few coping strategies like counting to ten or pretending to blow bubbles or wiggling each toe individually inside your socks. When a tough moment occurs, remind child to try it out.) This step will increase the child's skill in self-management.



Miller, J., Wanless, S.B., & Weissberg, R. (2018). Parenting for competence and parenting with competence: Essential connections between parenting and social and emotional learning. *The School Community Journal*, 28(2), 9-28.

For more, check out: <https://confidentparentsconfidentkids.org/research/>