**Find new ways to communicate**

For most parents, what we feel the worst about after we lose it is how we’ve talked to our child. Too often parents fall into bad communication habits we learned from our own parents when we were growing up. These can include giving our kids the silent treatment, withdrawing from the family, giving overly harsh punishments in the heat of the moment, yelling, saying snide or sarcastic remarks, swearing and name calling. It’s very easy to fall into this pattern, especially when you have a toddler screaming at you or a teenager swearing and getting in your face**. But again, it’s important to remember that you are modeling** how to deal with anger and frustration for your child, not just in their childhood and adolescence but for when they are adults as well. This is not to say that you can’t express anger, disappointment, or frustration with your child. Sometimes it’s important that our kids know we aren’t happy, but we have to find ways to express our feelings in an appropriate manner. When you are feeling overwhelmed and fear you might resort to less-than-helpful ways to communicate your frustration, finding a way to stay calm is key.

**Choose your Battles**

Too often our own tantrums are born out of parents feeling overwhelmed and frustrated, so it’s important to not put yourself in a position of feeling chronically overwhelmed by getting upset over every little annoying thing your child does. One way to combat this is to really think hard about what is important to try to enforce and what you can just let go of in regards to your child. For younger kids, there are a lot of daily behaviours that can be frustrating: at this age kids are messy, they cry easily, they have meltdowns, and they can be grouchy. Older children can be messy, moody, irresponsible and unfocused. Pinpoint what your family values are and decide what to tackle. Is it important that your child completes chores, has a semi-clean room, and is respectful? If so, then make it clear what your expectations are and let the rest (the occasional mess, the roll of the eyes, the moody/grouchy behavior) roll off your back.

**Communicate Calmly**

Healthy communication relies on both you and your child being calm, so do not approach them if they are still raging at you or you are still too angry to talk. For both young children as well as adolescents, keep your comments brief and to the point. **When you are finished, move on to something else. Don’t dwell on what just happened.**

**Apologize when you are in the wrong**

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is knowing when to admit you’ve done something wrong and apologizing. Some parents struggle with this, thinking that if they do this they are giving up their power or showing weakness. But ask yourself what it is you want to teach your child about grown-up relationships. Surely we want our kids to know when they’ve wronged someone and teach them the importance of an apology. There’s nothing more powerful than a parent admitting their faults and offering a sincere apology. Modeling this type of humility shows a child that we are all human and that even parents make mistakes.