

Communication Tip No. 6: When You Need To Take a Breather

By [Caitlin Bootsma](#)

When my first son was born, a nurse gave me advice that I never thought I'd need. "If you feel yourself getting angry, or overly frustrated, put your baby in the crib safely and take a minute or two to breathe." I couldn't imagine that I would ever be so upset with my kid that I'd *need* to separate myself from him. However, several years and a number of tense moments later, I've taken that advice more times than I can count.



As caring adults, there are moments where taking a deep breath or a minute to oneself is essential to diffusing frustration and avoiding further conflict. Here are just a few suggestions for creating some needed space when caring for children of various age groups:

- **With babies**, that could definitely involve putting them in their cribs for a minute or two or handing them off to your spouse so you can have a hot cup of coffee or sit down for a moment alone.
- **With toddlers**—who are often exhausting and need constant supervision—a walk with a stroller could be just the trick to give both of you some space and “reset” for the rest of your day together.
- **With pre-school and kindergarten kids**, helping them to focus elsewhere can give you some needed mental space. Parks, or engaging toys such as puzzles or coloring, can even become regularly scheduled activities so you know you'll have some down time during the day."
- **With school-age children**, when you are mutually upset or frustrated (or kids are upset at each other), you can teach them how helpful it is to have space to calm down. Suggest that everyone take some space—to read, play outside, for example—until you're ready to be together again.
- **With teenagers**, it can be easy to say things we regret in the heat of a conflict. Rather, than speak when angry, agree to take sometime apart, letting them know that there will be a discussion about the issue in the near future.