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Picking up the Cues: BEFORE the Meltdown

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Trust your gut!

Two thirds of our “sensing cells” are in our gut – that’s why when your child wakes in the morning and you know before he’s even gotten out of bed that it’s a going to be a lousy day you get that “kick in the gut” sensation. You might hope you are wrong or even consider ignoring that punch hoping if you do it will slip away, but your gut picks up the “red zone” giving you warning. “Heads up, be on alert.” The challenge is to stop, listen and respond while things are still in the “rumble stage,” BEFORE the full fledged meltdown. Just think about it. If you intervene when the voices first begin to get louder, rather than waiting until your children have hit one another you catch it while they can still “hear you” and work with you. It’s so much easier!

There are 3 categories of "big cues" you'll commonly see when intensity is going up.

Striking out	Shutting down	Gathering in
Blood goes to the muscles	Can't stand stimuli – noise, lights, smells	Don't want to be alone
Meltdowns	Refusing to walk, eat etc.	Experience anxiety
Hitting /throwing/yelling	Hot and itchy	Want to sleep/stay with you
Arguing	Not trying	Clinging
Wild	Sullen	
Refusing to do work	Not trying	

The reality is that by the time you see these "big cues" your child is already past the rumble and either in or very close to an over the top meltdown. That's why it's critical to catch the "rumbles" the "little cues" when your child is just beginning to struggle to "regulate his emotions" and calm himself.

Before the "big" cues there are little cues.

BEFORE Striking out you'll see...	BEFORE Shutting down...	BEFORE Gathering in...
Irritable/voice tone changes	Fingers/objects in the mouth	Wanting to be held
Can't make decisions	Go off to a quiet spot	Seeking contact
Wired /jittery	Not listening	Going for lovies
Silly	Glazed look	
Picking on others	Can't eat or sleep	

Who cares?	Roll on the floor	
Bit of resistance	Nothing is quite right	

So stop and think.

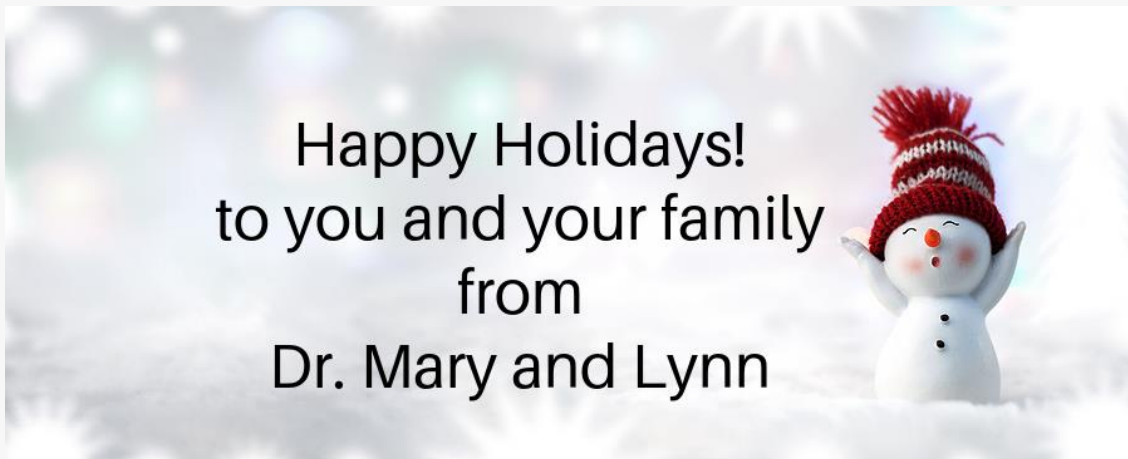
- What do you hear, see or sense that first tells you - things have just changed?
- Your child's "internal volcano" is beginning to rumble?
- If you respond when your child first gets silly or starts to get wild it is so much easier to bring her back to the green zone of calm energy where she can work with you.
- This is when the effective emotion coach steps in – not waiting until you are in the midst of a foot-stomping power struggle.

And then be honest.

- What keeps you from being fully present and picking up and responding to the little cues?
- Are you texting? Talking on your phone? Seeing what your friends are up to on Facebook? Are you reading this blog! No one is a perfect parent. No one is going to be totally focused 24/7.
- So take note of the "danger times" like first thing in the morning, before moving from one place to another, at the end of the day when you are picking up the kids or before beginning bedtime.
- Stop and ask yourself – would you bet Lynn and me \$100.00 that your child is going to get through the next 30 minutes without losing it?
- If you're not willing to bet us then trust your gut and take time to give that

hug, listen, calm or maybe even decide to just go home. Your response truly will change your child's if you move in to connect when your child is merely at the "little cue" stage.

We wish your family peace.



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