



Welcome to The Parent Program™ Week 9 (15 weeks)

Hello and welcome back.

I hope you had fun working on the exercises last week and have learned to see yourself and others from a different perspective.

The lesson this week is one that can make you laugh and cry at the same time.

Be kind to yourself and let your learning guide you in gentleness as you see how we all can put up masks or walls because of our own insecurities. These insecurities don't serve us after a while, nor are they hidden from others (as we may think they are).

We will talk about emotions and how we can let the old ones, stored in our bodies, go, freeing us from the old pains. We will look at our defenses (and those of others) and how they can jump up out of nowhere and surprise both us and those we are with. You may be surprised when you see how many you use, especially when others act as your mirror and tell you!

Thoughts, feelings & emotions are waves of energy

I need to ride the full wave to fully let go of the energy that it carries

I can learn to let go of old energy stored in my body

I teach my children to ride the wave and let go of anger, fear, sadness, excitement and more in a natural way

Thoughts, feelings & emotions are waves of energy

We can see this clearly when we look at very young children as they move through their emotions.

Children can laugh one moment and get into a fit of anger the next, only to be laughing again right after.

And nothing is left of the anger as they let it all wash away.

When we realize that our emotions, thoughts and feelings are waves, this makes sense. The wave starts, grows, peaks and washes away. It is when we try to hold onto feelings, emotions or thoughts, or hold in these emotions and not let them roll their full course, that we get stressed.

Example

As a boy, like with many of us, when I got hurt one of the automatic responses was "Big boys don't cry". I never understood that, but I certainly tried to stop crying. I became concerned about getting hurt, because I would feel pain and not want to cry, because big boys don't cry.

We don't let a thought, an emotion, or a feeling run its full course for different reasons. We may fear that what we feel is not acceptable, that showing our emotions or our feelings is "not done" or a sign of weakness, or fear the reaction of people we are with. What can happen is that we store the energy that is left in our body. And over time it becomes a stiff neck, an ulcer prone area, a weak back. Our muscles, our organs, learn to live with the stress until they get over stretched and give in.

It is when we finally allow ourselves to let go, that at first we can't believe the amount of pain we stored in there. And then we start feeling the relief. At times we may feel insecure at the openness, as we have



hardened our self, our muscles as a defense. The same counts for the joy and pleasure we stopped ourselves from feeling, from fully enjoying. We can feel frozen and function mechanically.

Over time the patterns are formed and we even forget that we have learned to put the tension “away”. These are “survival mechanisms”, things we do, because for whatever reason we feel we can't show, fully ride or let go of the wave, the thought, feeling or emotion.

It is when we are older, in a different situation that we may realize that we don't need the old pattern anymore to survive, to feel safe. Changing the habit of putting the stress, or even the joy away can be hard.

It is essential that we recognize this as parents so we do not automatically repeat the expressions, proverbs or sayings to our children that can stimulate stopping the wave. We almost all do it. It is recognizing it from now on that is our task. When we say those things it can be that it is us who have a fear, not the children.

Example

You are visiting your parents with your kids and they get rambunctious, loud and excited. Because of old issues it can be that you fear that your parents may feel you are not a good parent if you're not enough in control of your kids. And you tell them to be quiet. They are over the top already and just having a ball and can't stop. And you get angry and snap at them.

Example

We all have heard at one time or another that “sticks and stones can break my bones but names can never hurt me” when name calling does hurt. By allowing your child to let the pain go and then show them how to deal with name calling they feel acknowledged (as they did feel pain) and helped.

I can learn to let go of old energy stored in my body

It can be hard to realize how much you have stored away over the years. It is good to appreciate that you did this to protect yourself. It was likely because you didn't know how else to be safe, feel comfortable, or be accepted. So be kind to your self and slowly work at letting go of old issues, pains and joys.

Imagine holding up your arm and making a fist and then holding that for years. When you open up your hand and lower your arm, you can understand that it may be painful to do so, even if rationally this would be the relaxing thing to do. The body needs time to adjust and slowly let go of the rigidity inside. Letting go of old emotions is similar. Over time you will feel the joy of release, but at first it may be painful, strange and you may wonder why you are doing this. You may need help, a massage, a friend to cry and laugh with. Take small steps in letting go and becoming free.

I teach my children to ride the wave and let go of anger, fear, sadness, excitement and more in a natural way

We need to help our children to (re-) learn to ride their full wave of thoughts, emotions and feelings in the present. As with us, this can be a step by step learning process and they need to trust that it is ok to do that. It doesn't mean we or our children end up being constantly weepy emotional beings. It means that we can feel, think and have emotions, go through them and let them go. So we can be open and ready with a free mind, spirit and body to see what is coming at us. Not with fear and holding back, but with excitement for the miracle of being alive.



Example

My child has learned (from me) that being angry is “wrong”, as I was afraid of confrontation. Now I teach her to feel the anger and let it get out. In a good way, not destructive, but in a way that works for her, not against her. Not to be afraid of anger, but to realize something was triggered in her and that’s ok. Just let it get out and look at what is was. It can be screaming in a pillow, throwing a basketball or kicking a soccer ball, cry out your frustration to let the energy of the anger flow through and out.

By recognizing what your child does; has learned; you can help them re-learn.

By seeing how they are still free and uninhibited, you may learn, just by watching, the joy of letting the waves flow their full course. Then you can freely move on to the next thing, without any lingering fear, resentment or stored up joy and pain.

Defensiveness: I get defensive when I am feeling threatened (often without knowing why)

When we, unconsciously, feel threatened, we can get defensive. Often we don’t see it until we get a reaction, are being told about it, or reflect on what just happened. Our mind is creative and we find many reasons. Some we apply more than others and refine our defensiveness to an art, or to a mask we have a hard time taking off.

Example

I can feel insecure and not feel competent at times. At those times I can get impatient with others when they just don’t get it. I can react from my impatience and insecurity and become angry, start preaching, go my own way to get the job done.. Once I become aware it is my old insecurities playing up, I can step back and look at how I can do it differently.

Defenses can be tools to survive (for some of us literally) in hard situations. They may have served you to get through things in one piece. It is a challenge to see whether you still need to hold on to that defense. Over time you may have created patterns, habits that are hard to break, emotionally, mentally or physically. Stepping back and seeing that and taking a different approach, step by step, can be very hard work. Recognizing it and continuously making the choice to do it differently is courageous and worth applauding yourself, every time you stop, think and break the cycle.

Following is a range of signs of defensiveness. I have used them all and many of us use a variety of them regularly.

It can be fun, enlightening and at times painful or embarrassing to realize, hear which ones you and others use. The schedule *is part of the exercises* to get some feedback and to see how you see others. Make sure you and they are comfortable to give and receive this feedback. People may get, yes, defensive!



Signs of Defensiveness

Loss of humor		Confusion	
Taking offense easily		Sudden tiredness	
Sudden drop in IQ		Being too nice	
Wanting to be right		Selective deafness	
Endless explaining		Excessive attacking	
Preaching		Excessive anger	
Making fun of others		Withdrawing into silence	
Sarcasm		Trivializing with humor	
Obsessing		Holding a grudge	
Refusing to negotiate		Addiction	
Blaming		Awareness: <i>I know that</i>	

Defenses are a tool. Sometimes it is hard for us to see or be in a situation. In my work I have seen many kids and adults who had very good reasons to avoid situations. It is when we are out of those situations that we need to work on our abilities to be stronger and better equipped to handle them differently when a similar situation arises.

Example

I was bullied at elementary school. I didn't seem to fit in and had whole groups of kids chase me calling me names like "teachers pet". I closed myself off and told myself it didn't bother me. At the same time I took candy to school, trying to "buy friends". Which didn't work well and I felt lonely. As I grew up I used this "telling myself it didn't bother me" and developed it into a sharper "I don't care". Later on, I learned to see my true feelings about it. And slowly let go of my pain and insecurities. Until I realized that I did have friends and that the opinions of others really didn't bother me (as much) anymore. I had learned to cope and didn't need to be defensive anymore.

When we develop a pattern of defensive reactions they can become a mask. It is helpful to recognize our own and others' masks as the signs of insecurity and feeling threatened. It is good to know that the person who is defensive, is likely not aware of their behavior right then. So be kind and clear, with your self and them when it happens. You/they may or may not be ready to hear that you/they are defensive. But hearing it may give a hand, a step up to solving the fear and insecurities.

Following are six categories of defenses you may recognize in yourself, your (ex) spouse/partner, your kids, parents and colleagues, bosses, politicians and more.



I can become a

- 🌈 **Critic:** If I comment on everything, maybe nobody will see my many faults
- 🌈 **Demander:** I keep demanding you tell me I am ok, because I don't feel it myself
- 🌈 **Victim:** I am a self declared victim of everyone and everything, so I can blame others for my life
- 🌈 **Masochist :** I blame myself for everything so nobody else can point out my weaknesses
- 🌈 **Denier:** I deny that there is a problem, any problem, so I don't have to deal with feeling inadequate
- 🌈 **Helper:** I would rather help you than look at myself

My defense works only temporarily, because it doesn't solve the fact that I am feeling threatened.

My increased awareness is crucial to starting to solve my insecurities and deal with issues in a less defensive way. As when talking about truth and openness, once we are aware of what we fear and look at whether we can cope, we can change.

Following are the exercises and print out sheets for this week.



Following are the exercises for this week and two pages with “Thoughts, feelings & emotions are waves of energy” and “Defenses”. You can print them out and hang them up if you’d like.

The Parent Program™ Week 9 Exercises

Attitude: Start the day and end the day thinking about something you like about your child. Before you do the exercises think about how you like something today or in general about your child. Something they did, said, how they looked, a feeling you had. Anything positive will help you get into a mood that will help you embrace learning for and with your child

Learning:

Your learning investment: Input = output.

The more you practice, the more you experience: the deeper your learning will be. When you speak/write about what you are learning and share experiences with others, you will retain more and increase your understanding. When you complete it with celebrating your successes on a daily basis, you will feed your brain the positive recognition it needs to truly change behavior.

1. The minimum: Once a week reading the email and listening to the audio file (together about 30 minutes), do the minimum daily exercises of 10-15 minutes.
2. The little extras: Take the time to reflect during the day on your thoughts and actions as related to the content and exercise you did today. Hang up the print out sheets and look at them. Answer your kids’ questions about them.
3. The sauce on top: Sharing: Find a buddy, create a learning community, by sharing with others, either your partners in parenting or others who are or want to learn. A supportive learning community increases your learning as we all need the little boost from time to time. Parents at the courses enjoyed sharing with others as much as the course itself.
4. The full meal deal: Creating positive memories by writing 3-5 successes everyday. Get a little notebook to enjoy, look back at when you feel less confident and as a memory of your learning, write down stories.

Exercises:

✦ **Every day:** Think of something you like about your child at the start of the day and at the end of the day so you embrace the whole day in positive thoughts about your child. Before you start the exercise, reflect on how you like something in your child.

✦ **Day 1.** 10-15 minutes: **The Wave.** Think about your body, feel your body and sense whether you have spots that are stiff, tense, sensitive. Are their thoughts, feelings, emotions you haven’t fully let go? (Almost 100% of us have some or lots of those!) Think about some of them and try to let a bit go. Talk with your children about how thoughts, feelings and emotions are a wave and that it is good to let it all flow through and out of their body.

(Extras) Notice when you are not letting everything flow through and out today. Just be aware. Watch others and see what they do. Do they let it flow or stop themselves?

✦ **Day 2.** 10-15 minutes: **The Wave. I can learn to let go of old energy stored in my body.** Today consciously work on letting go of something stored in your body. Think or feel an old pain or joy that you didn’t allow yourself to fully experience. Remember that you had good reasons not to and that it may be hard and even painful at first. Be kind to yourself as you do let go of more. You can sit and relax and feel or think through the



issues, the moment, thought or feeling. You can also do it as you run, stand on the beach, in the shower and cry, scream, or simply feel the old wave run its course.

(Extras) Notice how you feel throughout the day. Watch others: how does their body look, does it flow, or is it holding on? As they talk, move, sit, and walk. Become aware of what the body looks like when it flows, when it is stifled, holding back. Watch children and see how it works for them, as some are still free, others have learned to hold in already. Try to let go of a tiny bit of old stored up waves/energy every hour.

- ✦ **Day 3.** 10-15 minutes: **The Wave. I teach my children to ride the wave and let go of anger, fear, sadness and excitement in a more natural way.** Watch your children today and help them get it all out. Make them aware of how it feels when it is all gone. Say little things like "How does it feel now it's all gone?" "Just let it out; it is good for you."

(Extras) Be aware of your children or others as they go through thoughts, feelings and emotions and help them finish their waves. By listening and not interrupting, asking them if there is more. Holding them if that is necessary/helpful, giving them a place to laugh, cry.

- ✦ **Day 4.** 10-15 minutes: **Today is for you.** Focus on how you feel, what you think, your emotions today and give yourself permission to go through it all freely as much as possible. You may need to create a safe environment to do so, with a friend, by yourself, in a bath. It doesn't matter, just allow yourself to experience a thought, a feeling, an emotion and go through it fully. And see how it feels, how your body reacts as you do.

(Extras) Today just be aware of your thoughts, feelings and emotions and see them go by. Attach as little as possible to them, whether they are nice or awful. Just let them go by and relax.

- ✦ **Day 5.** 10-15 minutes: **Defensiveness.** See the signs of defensiveness chart below and make two copies if you can. Fill one in for yourself, identifying what you recognize as defensives you use. Ask others about what they see you do (they can fill in your blind spots!) Take it with kindness and as a gift to you, to help you, not to attack you.

(Extras) Listen to yourself and your kids today, with the list in mind. Do you recognize any as you go through the day? Remember: they are signs of defensiveness and point to someone feeling threatened and/or insecure. Be kind with that information in hand.

- ✦ **Day 6.** 10-15 minutes: **Defensiveness.** Take the second copy of the signs of defensiveness chart below. Fill in what defensive ways others use. When a moment with your kids comes up, gently ask them what is bothering them and what they are insecure of or feel threatened by (if that works at that moment!)

(Extras) Resolve for your self not to react defensively today and to act instead. As you look ahead to your day, is there anything you need to be afraid of or insecure about? What is the worst that could happen? Move through your day as aware as you can and choose to be rather than to defend.



✂ **Day 7. 10-15 minutes: Defensiveness. Six types of defenses.** Look at the list of six defenses, masks that we create. Do you do one more than another? What do you recognize for other people? Do your kids do this? As you recognize them in yourself or others, be kind and aware that our defenses mask feelings of insecurity, feeling threatened over a longer period of time. Speak in kind words when you recognize someone doing this.

(Extras) Be kind to yourself as you recognize that you may have defenses like this. Try to figure out whether there is still reason to be cautious and concerned (yes, that can be!) and become aware of what you are insecure or fearful about. Try to clean up your own side by letting go of old feelings, thoughts and emotions and deal with what is there (not what you imagine may be there). And if there is a need to be cautious, be aware of that. If not and it's old and not relevant anymore, take a deep breath and start working on letting go of your mask.

End of week 9.

Take a moment to review all the things that have come up this week. How was that for you? Did you handle it easily or with some feelings of fear, insecurity? How did it go with your kids?



Signs of Defensiveness

Make two copies: 1: What I think myself. What others say of me. 2. What I think of others.

Names:

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Taking offense easily					
Sudden drop in IQ					
Wanting to be right					
Endless explaining					
Preaching					
Making fun of others					
Sarcasm					
Obsessing					
Refusing to negotiate					
Blaming					
Confusion					
Sudden tiredness					
Being too nice					
Selective deafness					
Excessive attacking					
Excessive anger					
Withdrawing into silence					
Trivializing with humor					
Holding a grudge					
Addiction					
Awareness: <i>I know that</i>					



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(often without knowing why)



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Demander (I keep demanding you tell me I am ok, because I don't feel it myself)
- 
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Masochist (I blame myself for everything so nobody else can point out my weaknesses)
- 
Denier (I deny that there is a problem, any problem, so I don't have to deal with feeling inadequate)
- 
Helper (I would rather help you than look at myself)

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 (Because it doesn't solve my feeling threatened)