

# SESSION 8

## EMERGENCY BRAKE



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The emergency brake should be used to manage conflicts that are escalating and at risk of becoming dangerous. These are battles you cannot refuse to fight. You must stop the situation immediately – pull the emergency brake. The emergency brake is always based on reducing the attention related to the argument.

When a conflict is escalating...

- **Calm talk.** Lower your tone of voice and talk calmly with the child. Give a brief explanation if necessary. Lay your hand on the child's shoulder or touch him/her gently and say something short and simple, such as: "Come on, let's both go away and calm down a little, okay?"
- **Go with your child.** Walk away from the situation with your child and sit down together for a while in a place where you are able to calm down. Some children would rather be left alone for a while. In that case, respect his/her wishes and keep a discreet eye on your child until he/she has calmed down.
- **Calm and neutral.** Wait until the child has calmed down, and do not give him/her any special attention other than showing that you are there and will remain there until the child has calmed down again. Remember, you should stay calm and neutral so that there is no risk that an argument will be associated with a cozy time together.
- **Return to the activity.** Once the child is calm again, you both go back to what you were about to do before the conflict ensued (eat dinner, get dressed, walk to school, etc.) without discussing the child's behavior. You can also do something completely different together. Start giving the child attention again now that things are calm!



**Remember:** Before you use the emergency brake, you should think about whether you have worked enough with the base of the pyramid. That is the best way to prevent conflicts from arising.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU USE THE EMERGENCY BRAKE

- For many children, it is important to know what is going to happen in advance. In this case, you can prepare the child for the emergency brake when you are both calm by telling and showing him/her how it will work.
- If the child is very upset, it is a good idea to confirm the child's feelings, as described during session 7.
- Take away the attention from what the child is doing by stopping all nagging, yelling, and reprimands. Do not discuss or explain too much. Long discussions may easily be perceived as reprimands. If you still need to discuss the situation, it is better to bring it up another time.
- Sometimes children may start protesting and arguing even more at first. Try to remain calm and continue using the emergency brake. Carry the child away if necessary. If your child is older, it may be better for you to leave the place instead.
- The emergency brake must never be humiliating or threatening. Forcing children to apologize seldom has any positive effect. Let the emergency brake speak for itself.



## PERSONAL EMERGENCY BRAKE

Parents can easily become overcome by strong feelings when they are involved in conflicts with their child. Your own ability to remain calm is a prerequisite for using the emergency brake well and effectively. Remember that you are a role model for your child when it comes to managing anger (*the Imitation Principle*).

If you feel very upset, you may need to manage your own anger before you try to calm your child:

- Stop. Try to stop when you feel you are getting angry and put your feelings into words, for example by telling yourself silently, "Okay, now I'm starting to get really mad."
- Leave the place. Tell your child that you need to leave and why, by telling him/her something like "I need to go away for a little while so that I do not get too aggravated. I'll be back soon." If you cannot leave the place, you can try to stop and switch your focus to something else for a while. It is a good idea to use activities or thoughts that usually calm you down.



## HOMework - SESSION 8

One-on-one time

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PIP/The Snake

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Pick your battles/emergency brake

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## BEFORE SESSION 9

One-on-one time

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PIP/The Snake

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Pick your battles

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Emergency brake. Briefly describe the situations in which you used the emergency brake during the week.

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