



The Power of PAUSE

Parent Coach **Alice Hanscam** tells **Hannah Hiles** why taking a moment to pause can transform your relationships and your life

ALICE HANSCAM HAS BEEN SUPPORTING FAMILIES in numerous ways for more than 35 years, including teaching preschool, mentoring daycare providers, volunteering in schools and raising her own two daughters. As a PCI Certified Parent Coach®, she provides in-person, phone and online guidance from her home in Alaska. Her two books, *Parenting Inspired* and *PAUSE*, encourage parents to step back from situations and connect mindfully with their children.

How did you come to write *PAUSE*?

I introduced 'The Power of Pause' in my first book *Parenting Inspired* as one of three important 'guiding touchstones', or tools, that can influence one's parenting and all one's relationships in meaningful and positive ways. The 'magic' of pause is how it allows us to walk alongside another,

leading with calm connection – which communicates respect, understanding, reassurance, empathy, acceptance – all things a child needs in order to grow well. For myself, I worked hard at growing my ability to pause and had lots of practice via my teenage daughters. I failed more than I succeeded—when your buttons are pushed, it is TOUGH to create that pause

and calm yourself down! Knowing that what I focused on would grow, I chose to see the failures as opportunities to think through do-overs with a pause in place, to re-focus on the times I'd been successful, on how I could actively take steps to keep 'pause' at the forefront of my brain (little yellow sticky notes found their way to many a place in my house...). Over time, the change in my relationships with my girls and also within myself was noticeable and felt simply wonderful. I felt closer and more connected to them; I felt more centered and steady within myself.

Hence, *PAUSE*. Writing about it—both the immediate

use in heated situations, and the long-term influence—felt essential. It has felt like my life's work (for now!).

Can you explain what you mean by *PAUSE* and give some examples of how to do it?

PAUSE allows us to focus on and take control of ourselves first, so that we can more likely positively influence our children. *PAUSE* creates the space we need to gain clarity and confidence so we can parent with calm connection. Pausing means, at its most basic, when your buttons are pushed and you can feel the heat rise in you, that you take a moment to find a place of calm within >



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> you, think about what you really want in the situation, then step back in responding to your child based on what you want the most, rather than reacting to the emotions or circumstance of the moment.

Sometimes this PAUSE is encouraging self talk as you step into the fray. “I can do this. I can stay calm.” Sometimes it is a physical space—such as walking into another room for a minute, or getting a drink of water before responding to your kids’ antics. Taking three deep breaths is an excellent way to create the PAUSE needed—it takes almost no time and it has a calming physical effect as well. The old ‘count to ten’ (or a hundred!) works for some parents. There are an infinite number of ways to create that moment to allow yourself to calm down.

Pausing doesn’t necessarily mean the button-pushing antics stop or even quiet down a bit. It DOES mean we are

better able to manage ourselves within that moment of chaos. And this allows us to more likely influence our children in positive and productive ways.

What’s the best place to start when learning to ‘exercise your pause muscle’?

The best place is to consider where you’ve felt especially good about how a challenge or conflict unfolded; when you’ve felt good about how you behaved in a conflict with your child; a time you felt calm despite your child losing it. Bringing your awareness to your successes helps tremendously. Often you were unaware you had even paused...

Sometimes it’s hard to come up with these examples because we are so focused on all the times we lose it, or our child pushes relentlessly, or ‘never’ listens or cooperates. It’s easy to pay attention to the loud and uncomfortable and what feels wrong. Encouraging

parents to take their time thinking about a situation that actually went well is important. And maybe it isn’t even with their child—maybe they can more easily consider times at work, with a friend or their partner. Once a parent does have an example, it takes off from there—they can consider just WHY that particular time went better, what they were doing, thinking, and feeling.

Why is this technique so effective for the parent and the child?

In heated moments it actually calms parent’s bodies and minds down enough so the parent can be more in control of what they then do and say. Now a parent can be more intentional and thoughtful about their response. The child on the receiving end who is upset can now feel safe within their parent’s calm connection, which often de-escalates the intensity of their upset. And this leads to a more relationship-building interaction, a chance for real learning—the child to better manage big feelings, the parent learning a bit more about their child. Role-modeling the ability to PAUSE

shows the child how adults manage upset—and now the child learns a bit more about how to do it for themselves. Talk about an important life skill!

How does learning to PAUSE in this way affect the rest of your life?

Relationships become stronger, healthier, with deeper, more meaningful connection. Our own ability to manage the ups and downs, the upsets, the challenges strengthens—we can feel steadier throughout a challenging time, which then allows us to be in a better position to help others, as well.

Parenting gets ‘easier’ because you are depositing into a respectful, healthy relationship...and this makes the HARD of parenting far more manageable. You can become a more positive, supportive, encouraging resource for others (aside from your children), and gain greater clarity in how you want to move through life, tackle challenges, decide what/how/when to do things, feel more creative and energized overall. You can also experience greater trust in what life and the Universe brings—and then be able to welcome it all in and see everything as an opportunity you WANT for learning and growing. And then grow.

MORE INSPIRATION

READ: Alice shares stories, experiences and parenting wisdom on her blog [Just Ask Alice justaskalice.org](http://JustAskAlice.justaskalice.org) and welcomes questions and comments from readers. **CONNECT:** She interacts with parents on her Facebook page [Denali Parent Coaching facebook.com/denali.parent.coaching/](https://www.facebook.com/denali.parent.coaching) **EXPLORE:** Hal Runkel’s book, *ScreamFree Parenting*, introduced Alice to the intentional act of pausing and she went on to become a ScreamFree Certified Leader.