

A young man with a beard and a light-colored cap is sitting on a ledge, looking down. He is wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants. The scene is framed by a large, circular opening in a light-colored wall. The background shows a cityscape with buildings and a clear sky.

5 WAYS TO GET YOUR WITHDRAWN TEENAGER TO OPEN UP

Rhonda Parry





HEY, AMAZING MUM!

I'm sitting here in New Zealand, and so pleased to connect with you! I'm a working mum of five kids, who struggled to understand or connect with my teenagers for years – as I focused on them and tried to change them!

I'm Rhonda Parry and ever since I started working on myself and stopped trying to change my kids, I've been able to completely transform the atmosphere of our home. The doors are open, kids want to talk to me and we even spend time together – by choice! When hugs are initiated by my kids – I know we're ok!

What I discovered during my transformation journey prompted me to ditch my corporate career altogether, so that I can help other mums just like me.

Now I help stressed and frustrated working mums connect with their withdrawn child, so their child opens up, and has the confidence to thrive.

I'm absolutely totally passionate about making a difference in the lives of us mums, and the kids whom we love so much it hurts – because the teenage 'silence' is hanging heavy over the household it's hurting us every day, every way.

Over the years I've worked with hundreds of mums who are struggling with kids who refuse to participate in the family, refuse to share what's going on, refuse to talk, listen or even be at home. These were mums who were stressed out, burnt out, and shut out!





Now, I just love hearing stories from my lovely ladies who have had life-changing conversations with their kids, been able to go on a weekend roadie with their teenager, or simply been able to sit down and have a meal together with their kids without someone refusing to join.

Sometimes a transformation in the atmosphere can be measured just by a door being left open one weekend, as an intangible invite for their mum to 'come on in'...

I don't want you to be left wondering what you could have, should have, would have done to build a healthy relationship with your kids "if only..." Or wishing your child had more pleasant memories of their childhood "if only..." Or dreaming about 'someday' when you and your child would connect.

So right here I'm sharing a few simple tools that **WORK**. They're so simple and yet so powerful. It's never too late to start transforming the relationships and atmosphere in your home too!

Please don't wait for 'someday'! Don't wait any longer – enjoy these tools, and like everything in life, make them practice not perfect!

Blessings, love, and light to you

Rhonda x



Introduction

I'm going to start with two questions for you to ponder:

Now, I have no doubt your kids are loved, fed, clothed, housed, and cuddled.

1. But do your kids feel they're connected with you?

There is a huge difference between love and connection.

Connection is THE main condition that needs to be present for a child to do and be all the amazing things they can potentially be! Connection is our children's lifeblood.

And I have no doubt that your kids spend time with you.

2. But, do your kids really have your attention?

Giving your attention is different from giving your time. When you give your attention, and role model connection, it lets them know they are important and 'they're ok' just as they are!





Time and attention invested in connecting with your children are far less than the time spent dealing with behaviors of a disconnected child.
And significantly more rewarding and long lasting.

When a child feels safe, inside a stable strong relationship, this is the space or condition, the child needs to flourish. And being surrounded by this sense of security and calm, helps them open up. Children won't talk with you if the relationship isn't stable and calm.

You're their mum, so why *shouldn't* this stable and calm relationship be with you, why *shouldn't* you be the special person in their life?!?

This resource is going to help ensure your kids feel the sense of safety and confidence that comes from a stable, loving connection with you. Which gives them 'permission' to open up, connect and share with you.

You're doing your best right? You love your kids and want the best for them.

Here's the thing: On top of love and good intentions to connect with your child, you need **mindfulness**.

By mindfulness I mean:

Awareness of how you're showing up and the link between your emotional state and theirs! Because children become a reflection of you. Your children need you to be role modeling calm, so they can be calm and connect too.

Mindful communication skills which you can access when your child is communicating with you. Because your children don't want your advice, your lectures, your criticisms. They just want to feel heard and understood.

Acceptance, Compassion, and Non-Judgement for your child. Not wishing for them to be any different from who they are. Because your children just want to know 'they're ok' as they are. This means feeling accepted, not being judged, or criticized.



If you're role modeling a calm emotional state, showing compassion and acceptance, AND if you're going about communication with your child using the tips I'm about to share, you'll be driving the connection you're so desperately seeking!

Here are 5 ways to use mindfulness to get your withdrawn child to open up - which don't require you to change your child!

Because we can't control or change our children. Not ever. But mindfulness and these tips go to show that we do have the power to change our own views, thoughts, and feelings about our parenting challenges.

You *can* do this!

1. Prioritize Your State
2. Listen Generously and be Present
3. It Makes Sense to Validate!
4. PAUSE – Say Nothing
5. Talk About ALL Feelings!





1. Prioritize Your State

What I mean by your state is how you are *showing up* in your relationship with your kids.

Are you stressed, angry, frustrated, resentful, overwhelmed with everything that needs doing?

Or are you able to turn to your compassionate side, to connect, feel stable and calm? When things are going according to your plan, your love for them shapes how you react. It's pretty easy, right?

But when you're stressed and overwhelmed, angry or disconnected, it really doesn't matter how much love or good intention you have. If there is resistance, kickback or tantrums, it is nigh impossible to show up with love and follow through with our 'good intentions'. Sometimes your behavior and your words towards your kids are not very calm or compassionate, at all! They make you cringe!

It's worth prioritizing your state because ... your children become a reflection of you and yours!

To be able to connect, you must first be calm!

The very first community your child belongs to is your family. They learn everything from your family tribe. Your language determines the language your child speaks. Your attitude towards self-care impacts your child's ability and attitude towards looking after themselves. And your state impacts the state your child is in.

That's because we're literally hard-wired to detect and absorb the emotion of those around us. Your emotional state triggers similar emotions in others – including your kids!

This means role modeling is a much more powerful learning mechanism than anything your kids hear or read.



So it really DOES matter how you show up to your kids. Every. Single. Day.

Here's the thing: 'calm' is not innate. You have to decide if it's important to you and practice it, like any skill. And you keep practicing it, until one day, you realize, calm has become part of you, it is part of the fabric of you.

When you practice calmly, it improves *everything* in your life. Relationships. Productivity. Resilience. Sleep. Happiness. Longevity.

But *even* if none of these wonderful benefits happen, it's still well worth being calm, to help your kids. Most importantly your calm benefits your kids, simply because it's easier, safer, to be around you. This is exactly what they need from you – a stable, loving connection with you.

Your calm creates calm in your kids. The opposite is of course true too.

Now it may be a terrifying thought – that your stresses are naturally going to cause stress in your child. And that when either of you is stressed, it's impossible to connect and have a loving conversation - even just a casual conversation about your child's day is impossible!

BUT, the idea of 'calm' can become more of a reality than an 'unachievable aspiration' when you practice being a Mindful Mum.

When you practice the research and science-backed practices of mindfulness, you learn to pause before you respond, you give yourself the space to be able to ensure your response is not going to shut up or close off your child even more!

Plus you become more accepting, compassionate, and less judgemental.

You are the parent after all: and it is precisely when your child has lost control that they need you the most. They need you to be calm and in control – even if they're being provocative, challenging, or refusing to talk!



In summary:

- Children need you to be calm more than they need you to be 'there' with them.
- Children mimic your state. So you need to operate from a calm state rather than a stressed state!
- Children can connect with you when you're both in a calm, compassionate state.

TOOL

Live and breathe – and role model - the STATE you want your child to be in.

Because who you're being is more important than what you're saying.

Wait for yourself to be calm and allow time for your child to get themselves together too.





2. Listen Generously and Be Present

Let's be honest, when our child is talking to us, often it's to have a rant about an issue, something they're unhappy with.

Something has gone wrong, they've procrastinated on some study, they've got wound up in a web of lies, or they've forgotten to do something they promised to do. Add to this, hormones, their brains under development, and social pressure and it's not surprising sometimes that they're unhappy right!?

Yet life happens – and just like us – your teenager is not perfect! They make mistakes! When they do, they don't want our advice or our criticism, they just want to feel heard and understood. Supported.

So how do we listen generously?

It starts with being present - and attentive listening. Being curious. Not distracted.

Yes, it takes practice!

Practice generous listening whenever you sense a heightened emotional reaction in your teenager. Could be any minute now right!?

Research has shown that tweens and teens are more likely to open up and feel better about themselves when they've been listened to attentively.

If we don't listen generously, we 'listen distracted'. Regardless of the outcome of the conversation, what your child will normally remember is the sense of not being heard and understood. 😞

TOOL

Be curious, pay attention, ask questions, reflect back on what you think you're hearing them say.



3. It Makes Sense to Validate!

As human beings, regardless of our age, we're hard-wired for connection. And this means feeling heard and understood. If our own issues aren't validated, it feels awful, doesn't it? If you've just had a big download with your sister, you don't want to hear:

"Calm down"

Likely response from you: "I can't calm down, didn't you hear what just happened?"

"Everything's ok, don't worry about it".

Likely response from you: "Everything isn't ok, if [this then that happens....]"

"Do [this or do that]"

Likely response from you: "But I can't do [this or that] because ..."

You just want to know that your sister – or partner – or manager - 'gets you', and it makes sense that you feel the way you do, that your emotion makes sense!

The same goes for your kids. Despite what you might think, often when your kids talk to you, **they don't want your advice.**

They just want to be HEARD. And they want their views and feelings to be VALIDATED by you.

So how do we do validate?

Honestly, it's so effective, it should be taught in childbirth classes. But it is HARD. Especially when you're exhausted and the kids are pushing your buttons!

Remember the first TOOL – ensure your calm state first!

And with practice, it will shift from feeling 'impossible' to becoming natural.



The technique of validating involves two steps:

First of all, you observe what are they feeling, how are they feeling. Or even just reflecting back on what has happened, that's the event. No opinions or judgments or problem-solving. Just reflect back to them what you are sensing or hearing from them.

When your child hears you reflect back to them there are three benefits:

1. It may help them make sense of things themselves
2. It will definitely help them feel heard and understood! Respected. Which is exactly what they want!
3. Plus, it means they're less likely to feel the need to keep telling you the same stuff (over and over and over again!) and making themselves feel worse!

Brilliant!

Now they know they've been heard, and that you see what has happened for them.

It's time to validate and let them know it makes perfect sense for them to feel that way. Whatever their emotion is, it's ok.

This is how we express our empathy for what's going on for them. Putting yourself in their shoes and doing your best to imagine what is going on for them.

By the way, how they are feeling doesn't need to make sense to us to remember! This step is about validating how *they feel*, not questioning the logic of their feelings using our adult brain!

The part we need to practice is not to offer a lesson, not to insert a 'but' and not to criticize their choice. So keep it clean and simple and bite your tongue!

TOOL: Reflect back on what you see or hear and let them know why this makes sense.



4. PAUSE – Say Nothing

After you've validated, it's time to ... say nothing. Simply Pause.

Without a doubt, PAUSE is the simplest but hardest part of the process.

Pause reminds us to say nothing. You got it – nothing. Simply pause and wait.

P. A. U. S. E.

Lots of pausing!

The Pause may feel awkward. You may sense that your kids expect something else from you.

Here are some ideas to use, after your Pause has been sufficiently long enough!

- What do you think?
- What have you tried in the past?
- Your ideas are awesome, what do you think about this?
- I've never
- Your ideas are better than mine, what do you think?
- It's been decades since I was your age.

When you pause you invite your children to recognize the empathy you're extending to them and sense the connection. It makes your connection with them stronger because you're letting them know you trust them.

And just as importantly, it stops you from giving advice, offering solutions, opinions, and judgments – and even stops you from sharing your own similar stories.

When we offer up advice or opinions we're coming from an "I know best" position. And yet because we are *not them*, we may not even have all the information, how *can* we know best?



When we offer a **story** that we think might be similar, we're turning the conversation back to ourselves. It's not about us and they may not care if we think we've had a similar experience "in the old days". They've started the conversation and we need to ensure they have our attention about *their* issue!

When we offer them a **lesson or lecture**, they tune out. The worst thing for them, at rock bottom, is to be 'taught a lesson'. Their 'thinking' brain won't be online so the lesson is never going to be heard or remembered anyway!

Sometimes in practice, when I've shown empathy using this method, my daughter feels safe to share something else. Maybe there's something else underneath the surface that's an emotion not yet expressed, or something else has happened at school and she's been holding onto it until now.

My middle child is very much like this – if we start talking about one matter, and I validate and pause, then whoosh, if she's in the mood, it all comes tumbling out! This is far more effective and 'safe' than to just keep asking 'what's wrong, what's going on with you, why are you in a grump!?!'. They may well have no idea themselves!

When I use this technique with my eldest daughter, the daughter with whom I used to have the most heated stressful conversations, she often comes up with her own solutions. Brilliant.

Here's a recent example:

In January 2021 my daughter had just been to a music festival: 30,000 people for 4 days. On her way home she fell asleep at the wheel and wrote off my car – incredibly she walked out of the car after being airborne and taking the roof racks off a parked car on the opposite side of the road (and for that I'm eternally grateful)! But she did incur significant debt. She was supposed to be saving money for university. I was still in the 'thank-goodness-she-is-alive-phase', yet she'd moved on to looking to buy a ticket for the next RNV, which was 11 months and thousands of dollars of car debt and university tuition away!

I couldn't believe it!



DAUGHTER: "Mum, I didn't get an RNV ticket and it's stressing me OUTTTTT"

ME: "Ohhhh I hear your frustration! Makes sense as you have so much fun at RNV!!!!!"

DAUGHTER: "What should I dooooo?"

ME: "What are your options and priorities? Always a balancing act!!!"

(note there are no advice, judgment, or opinions – about how she really should be saving money for university anyway!!! Boy, it was tempting. I may have even typed that into the text, then deleted it before I sent it!)

DAUGHTER: "I can wait until resale at the end of the year but it's sooo risky cos I might not get one then either. Or one of my friends might not go so he said he'll sell me his"

That, thank goodness, was the end of it.

Previously I may have offered to lend her the money, then get into horrible arguments about her needing to pay me back before she buys herself new clothes. It would have been awful. I was so proud of myself this time not to offer up solutions, not to launch into a lesson about saving money, and not to rescue her by lending her the money.

Proud mum, feeling connected 😊

TOOL

After you've validated, PAUSE. Say nothing.

Unless invited.

Refrain from giving advice, offering solutions, opinions, and judgments, or sharing your own 'similar' story



5. Talk About ALL Feelings

There's no doubt the VALIDATION and PAUSE are immensely powerful.

It sends a message that it's OK to *feel* something. And that *they, as a person*, are ok.

“It makes (perfect) sense that you feel...[angry, frustrated, lonely, disappointed, let down....].

I know a teenager's emotions are full-on. Intense. One minute they're jumping for joy, the next they crash into a ball of tears or they enter a state of rage.

They have BIG emotions!

This tip is about helping your child accept and regulate their emotions. To do this, we must first feel safe having these emotions, and then secondly, feel safe talking about them. Emotional regulation is key to our relationships, problem-solving, even our ability to be part of a team at work.

And when they're experiencing BIG emotions, it's your chance to help them. Because when you validate your child is invited to process their emotions which starts a life-long journey of full awareness and access to their emotions.

This may be very different from some of our childhoods perhaps? It's certainly different to mine when we are rarely encouraged to express 'unpleasant' emotions! I can't recall my parents ever talking about how they 'felt' in front of us kids.

This led to my habit of suppressing or ignoring emotions in favor of 'doing'. Which has come back to bite me as an adult. I spent years pushing emotions aside, hoping that one day they might just fade away and disappear altogether!

However, suppressing emotions is like trying to keep a beach ball submerged under the water until, one day, whoosh, it comes bursting out of the water at great speed – that's because we can't suppress it forever!



The sad thing is this – we can't be selective about which emotions we ignore and suppress.

When we attempt to avoid dealing with things that make us angry afraid or sad, we desensitize ourselves, literally numb ourselves to feeling any emotion. We can't select just to be 'numb' to the difficult emotions – we also numb ourselves to the pleasant and comfortable emotions such as joy, happiness, and fulfillment.

That's why 'protecting' yourself by suppressing emotions comes at such a cost – you literally lose the ability to feel the pleasant emotions too.

You see, all emotions are OK.

Not all behaviors are ok.

So whatever we *feel* is ok. Whatever we *do* may not be ok.

Emotions are just our minds and body giving us feedback about something – it could be pleasant or unpleasant, but never is an emotion 'wrong'.

TOOL

Encourage discussions about feelings.

No emotion should be banned from being talked about. Share how you're feeling about something, share why it might make sense that you feel this way.

Yes, I am suggesting you 'validate' yourself in public with your kids!





FREE 15 MIN PARENTING BREAKTHROUGH CALL!

WELL DONE, MY FRIEND!

The truth is, *IT IS HARD* being a mum!

Especially when our kids shut us out, or they start to withdraw from us or the family unit.

But it's even harder if we spend our time and energy trying to change the kids when we're in an awful space ourselves right?

Getting back to why I'm sharing all this with you? Because I want YOU to become THE ONE your child has that safe, stable relationship with which empowers them to open up, connect and thrive! Without it taking 15 years! Or filling your shelves with self-help books.... Like I did! 😊

I know, all the parenting advice we're bombarded with becomes super overwhelming. Not to mention all the advice from well-meaning relatives.

Argh!! I get it because I struggled with all of this too. I've felt the same way!

And if you currently feel like your rock bottom moment with your child is approaching at lightning speed (or you think it's happening right now!), breathe.

I can guarantee, you're not alone.



Working now as a coach and a mindfulness practitioner, I can say first-hand, your investment in becoming the calm, confident, connected version of you, will be repaid over the remainder of your life... every time you engage with your child, your investment will be worthwhile.

There is no greater gift you can give to your kids, than a calmer, more mindful version of you!

Becoming a mindful mum is SO MUCH easier when you:

- Have one on one coaching support
- Have group support
- And a one-stop-shop of resources and tools - backed by science and research - to 'practice, not perfect'

It takes a village to raise a child, right?

Yes, please [FREE BREAKTHROUGH CALL](#)

Well in my experience of working with hundreds of other mums, it takes a village to support a mum too!

Since you've already taken action and are here reading this right now...

I'm pretty confident you're an amazing mum who needs a helping hand to become an amazing mindful mum, so your teenagers open up and connect with you.

If you'd like to have a complimentary 'Parenting Breakthrough Call' to get your withdrawn, anxious, or just plain angry teenager to open up, step up and calm down (without having to change them!) then click below to go straight to my calendar.



Yes please, **FREE BREAKTHROUGH CALL**

So here's how a FREE Parenting Breakthrough Call works...

I'm making myself available for a limited time for about 20 amazing mums who want to start their journey towards being amazing mindful mums (and having amazing mindful teenagers!).

In this complimentary Parenting Breakthrough call we'll:

- Discuss what's going on for you now and your biggest area of concern
- Become *aware* of what's stopping you from having the connection with your child
- With this new *awareness*, figure out '**the one tool**' you can try immediately
- Discover if MINDFUL MUM 1-on-1 coaching will be a good fit for you.

Sounds great right?

Right!

I can't wait to meet you, so jump into my calendar and I'll see you soon!

Blessings, love, and light to you

Rhonda x

