



## Why Self-Awareness Matters

Truth be told (and a painful truth it is at times), we only have control over ourselves. The good news is that with awareness you can better manage how you end up acting with your child and the kind of impact you have. Like it or not, helping your child change is a two-way street. The most powerful way to help change occur is to be part of the change yourself.

There are two important parts to self-awareness:

1. **What are you experiencing?** Checking in on your feelings, your thoughts, your reactions, and how your body is doing.
2. **What are your values?** Checking in on what matters to you; letting yourself remember what your values are, what you care about as a family member and person, and finding ways to keep those values clear in your heart, mind, and actions.

When your child is using substances, their behaviors will upset you- plain and simple. You may face seemingly endless emergencies, crises, and threats that pull you into constant action mode or ready-for-action mode. You may be living with a constant background drumbeat of tension and worry that you can't seem to shake. You may not even know how you feel anymore, responding instinctively or automatically to problems as they arise. Under stress, all too often we as parents lose track of our limits, our emotions, our reactions, and what is really important to us.

But what would you find if you were to take a breath and check in with yourself? If you are like many parents in this struggle, you'd probably find a lot of worry, fatigue, upset, and uncertainty. You might be asking yourself, "Why on earth would I want to notice that!?"

How can self-awareness impact your efforts to help?

1. Getting (re)acquainted with your values- what matters to you, the qualities you want to bring to the relationship with your child, who you want to be as a person- can act as a crucial anchor in the emotional storms you are navigating.
2. Being aware of (a) yourself (your emotions, thoughts, reactions), and (b) your values, allows you to be proactive, self-compassionate, and strategic instead of simply reacting to whatever you are facing day-to-day.
3. When you take time to check in with yourself, you can prepare yourself to handle difficulties in an intentional and constructive way- instead of shutting down or lashing out, which can send both you and your child off in the wrong directions.
4. Because increased self-awareness can lead to less impulsive, more intentional action, you can start to have more responses like these: "I am way too stressed to be helpful right now" or "It's important to me to keep my cool because I want to help create safety in our home."