



QUESTION

"My teenager gets so overwhelmed sometimes, and I feel like nothing I say makes a difference. How am I supposed to support her in those high intensity moments without making things worse?"

ANSWER

Teens, preteens, or all children for that matter, don't need us to stop their feelings.

They need to feel safe having them.

When a child is overwhelmed, our job isn't to fix or distract or cheer them up.

Our job is to be the container—the steady presence that holds their big emotions without getting swept away.

If your child is angry, it's not helpful to meet them with anger.

If they're spiraling, it doesn't help to spiral with them.

Children don't need us to adopt their dysregulation—they need us to anchor them.

To say with our presence: You can be upset, and I can stay steady.

When we stay grounded, kids borrow our calm.

That's how they learn to regulate—not because we told them to breathe, but because we breathe through it ourselves. Because we stayed regulated ourselves.

In those moments, in those charged moments, in those intense moments, go into your own container. Remember we talked about our glass box? Dig your heel into the ground, find your core, and say to yourself: "I can handle you."

That's what teaches children how to become regulated adults—not through our words, but through our steady presence. By modeling emotional regulation and being okay even in the face of their big feelings and outbursts.

It can sound like this:

"I'm here."

"It's okay to feel this way."

"I can handle you."

"You're not too much for me."

"I can handle your big feelings."

Being a container means showing up with calm energy and trust.

It says: Your feelings are safe with me.

And over time, that's what helps children feel safe with themselves.

