

RED CUP, BLUE CUP: WHAT'S AT THE ROOT?

ASKING AND IDENTIFYING WHY YOUR CHILD
MIGHT BE ACTING A CERTAIN WAY.



TIP! LOOK AT THE
BIG PICTURE AND PUT
OUT WHAT IS CAUSING
THE FIRE INSTEAD OF
JUST CONTINUOUSLY
FIGHTING FIRES.



Picture this, your little one throwing themselves on the floor completely melting down, screaming, crying, spinning around, thrashing, and sobbing because they asked for a drink and you poured them a drink in the red cup they always drink from—except this time, the planets are definitely not aligned and all they wanted in the world and the only acceptable cup in the world is a blue cup.... that you don't even own.

Replace the cup with a blanket or a toy or anything really, and as a mama and a specialist, I can't tell you how common this scenario is with children even if at the time, you feel like the worst most confused misunderstood parent ever.

What is really going on? How do we break this down so we can see through the eyes of your little one and respond as a parent? How do we get to the root of what's happening?

In a snapshot, we could *prep*—allow them to choose which cup they want their drink in, when, what, and where they will have the drink before, during and after; *listen* to them as they tell you all the things that are wrong with the red cup; genuinely *empathise* and really *acknowledge* without reasoning or invalidating what they are saying and feeling even if you may not agree or understand; sitting with them in the hard of the tantrum as they scream, cry, sob through their complex hard heart feelings about it; and then after the storm has passed, calming back down and equipping and empowering them with words, tools, actions on what we could do differently the next time.

But that's the fire fighting; what we want to get to today is the source of the fire. Look at the big picture and put out what is causing the fire instead of just continuously fighting fires. The root really comes down to three things that little ones need to thrive: **boundaries, consistency, exploration.**

BOUNDARIES

Set up and have an established consistent set of rules and loving limits that are understood by all, including what is expected of them and what to expect in the follow-through. This is done calmly and confidently with no threat, bribes, guilt, or punishment.

When problem-solving in this area, you might want to see if you're being consistent in terms of rules, boundaries, and expectations for your little one, if they understand it and are clear on it, and if there are non-negotiable natural consequences to their actions not based on threat, punishment, bribery, or guilt.

CONSISTENCY

Establish consistent boundaries, expectations, time together, and routine. Allow little ones to feel confident and fill their love buckets so they can respond at their best.

When problem-solving in this area, you might want to see

if you're being consistent in terms of schedules—sleep, eat, rest, play. When the boundaries and things that you can control are consistent, it allows them the capacity to handle the variables calmly and confidently because it is only one thing at a time, not a variety of pieces imploding all at once.

EXPLORATION

Create time for children to do nothing but play, play, play, and explore, move, whether physically or developmentally. This is a critical part that is often overlooked. For more info, please refer to July's article on play.

When problem-solving in this area, you might want to see if you are allowing your little one enough time to free play. To be the captain of their ship, to be stimulated physically and cognitively. Just as important as sleep and rest, is your child getting enough time to play, explore, jump, run, climb?

After you have narrowed down areas that might need a little bit more work on, give yourself and your little one the grace and patience to put in the hard heart work and change.

It's okay if the spinning wheels get a little off-balanced or need a little fine-tuning every once in a while, the question to come back to again is just: What's at the heart of this? How can I see the world through my child's eyes and respond as a parent? ☺

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