

THE META-MOMENT

OVERVIEW

The Meta-Moment

What is the Meta-Moment?

Most of us have had the experience of “losing our cool” and regretting it later. For example, your daughter is whining, the milk spills, and you’re late for work. You yell at her and she dissolves into tears. Later, you wish you had handled the situation differently.

Even in the most trying moments, our behavior does not have to be automatic and reactive. The Meta-Moment is a process that allows us to prolong the time from when we are triggered to when we respond. And, taking Meta-Moments keeps us aligned with our values over time. With practice, our responses can be more deliberate and skillful. Even when our emotions are really “hot,” we can take a Meta-Moment, pause, call to mind our ‘best self’ and choose a helpful strategy.

Practicing Meta-Moments over time requires intentionality and effort...and, it’s worth the extra effort to feel proud of the actions we choose even in the most challenging moments.

The Meta-Moment

consists of four steps:

1. **Sense:** You sense that something has happened or changed in your environment, body, mind, or behavior. For example, you may notice that your palms are sweaty and your mind is racing, or that your heart is beating more quickly in response to an event.
2. **Pause:** You make a conscious choice to pause, and take a few long, slow, deep breaths. This helps to calm your body and mind in the moment so that you can try to problem-solve more effectively.
3. **See Your Best Self:** When pausing, you call to mind an image of your ‘best self’ – the ideal self you want to be; the person you are when your actions align with your values.
4. **Strategize & Act:** As your ‘best self,’ you might choose a thought strategy or an action strategy. A thought strategy might be to remember that there is more than one perspective, or to consider your larger goals (such as preserving the relationship). An action strategy might be to take a walk, drink some water, or set up a time for a conversation later. If you responded to the moment as your ‘best self,’ you’ve just taken a Meta-Moment!

