Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids Online Course

Week 6: **Preventive Maintenance**

Transcript

Hello, and welcome to Week 6 of the **Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids** Online Course. This is Dr. Laura Markham, and today, we're talking about Preventive Maintenance.

What's preventive maintenance? It's the work you do with your child before there's a problem, to prevent those problems. Most of the time in parenting, we just try to get on with our lives hoping that there won't be a problem, and often, that works. But it never works all the time.

Even the most easy-going child will have problems from time to time, and that means problems for us. Children who are more sensitive or who have more stresses in their lives are going to have more problems, and that means more problems for us. The good news is that by meeting our child's needs preemptively, we can often head off those problems before they blow up in our faces and land our whole family in the breakdown lane.

Now, it may seem like a lot of work to put in when things might go okay without it, and after all, you're so busy. But it's better to do the preventive maintenance because otherwise, the problems come up when we don't have the resources to deal with them.

This isn't just the way it seems to us – like, *"Oh, my goodness. We're stressed. We're trying to get out the door, and this is when my daughter starts falling apart."* It actually happens that way for a reason, because when we get stressed, it stresses our children. If they have some unmet needs, that's when those needs come pouring out, and they fall apart or they become very difficult and oppositional.

What is preventive maintenance with a child? Your car probably came with a booklet to tell you what kinds of preventive maintenance it needed to stay in peak running condition and not end up in the breakdown lane. But your child didn't. What are the practices that will keep your child's engine humming along and ready to meet the demands of everyday life?

It's not that mysterious, actually. It's just meeting your child's needs before they overwhelm him. You already do some of this. You feed your child. You make sure he gets enough sleep. Those are physical needs. The needs we don't think about as much are the emotional needs. The most important emotional needs are to feel safe and loved, which are obviously interconnected.

Love includes feeling understood, accepted, emotionally validated, supported, connected, belonging. When the child's needs for love and safety are met, that provides the foundation for the child to develop self-esteem and mastery.

Self-esteem means feeling seen, heard, respected, and valued just for being herself. Our respect for our child allows her to develop self-respect.

Mastery is about feeling capable, having the power to affect one's world and accomplish one's goals. It allows our children to notice their own unique gifts, develop them, and share them with the world. That contribution, that feeling that our presence helps make the world a better place, is an important need for all of us.

Those are your child's basic needs because they're the basic needs of all humans. But your child can't articulate them to you. In fact, most adults can't articulate that they need to feel they belong, that they need to feel respected, that they need to feel like their presence in the world makes a difference.

Most of us don't articulate those needs. But we still need them to be met, and a lot of our behavior is driven by those needs. Sometimes that behavior is very positive and sometimes it's not so positive.

I'm sure you can think of adults in your world whose need to feel like they matter means that they don't notice the needs of other people so much. If your child doesn't feel like he matters, you can count on that unmet need driving his behavior in ways that are not very pleasant as he tries to feel like he matters.

Luckily, there are healthy ways to meet your child's emotional needs, and most of those things come naturally to us as parents: adoring your child, reassuring him when he's scared, encouraging him when he's trying something new, holding him while he cries, roughhousing with him so that he laughs and laughs.

But in the press of everyday life when we're so busy and distracted, what comes naturally sometimes gets lost because it isn't on our to-do list, it isn't on our schedule, and our child doesn't know how to express her needs. So it helps to build those things into your schedule.

But what are you going to put on your calendar? *"Build my child's self-esteem. Help him develop a sense of mastery. Connect with her."* It's hard to know what you're supposed to do when you see that on your calendar. Luckily, there are some practical ways to meet your child's emotional needs.

Today, we're going to talk about five big ways you can meet your child's needs preemptively before there's a problem. I'm going to give you very specific practices that you can pick and choose from so that you can work them into your schedule, and every single day you can do some specific practical things to help your child stay on an even keel.

The five primary things that help for preventive maintenance are: empathy, laughter, special time, routines, and welcoming emotions. We'll go into each of them in depth.

1. Empathy

Let's start with empathy. Empathy helps children feel connected, understood, accepted, emotionally validated, and supported throughout their day. Since this is the most effective way to meet emotional needs, let's give you some specific practices to build empathy into your day and into your relationship with each child.

First, what is empathy? We've been talking about empathy right along in this course as we've talked about connection, emotions, and discipline. Empathy is simply feeling from the other person's perspective.

The three specific practices for empathy are simply how you respond *verbally* in the moment, how you respond *physically* in the moment, and how you respond *later in the day* to reinforce a connection.

First of all, how you respond verbally. Whatever your child expresses, empathize. That meets your child's need for love and connection and acknowledgement so that he feels seen and heard.

Sometimes you'll be empathizing with what we think of as positive emotions. For instance, sharing your child's excitement. *"You did it!" Wow!"* Usually, parents find that pretty easy. They find it much harder to empathize with what we think of as more negative emotions, like sadness, disappointment, or anger. *"I know. It's hard to leave your friend's house. You were having such a great time playing. You wish you never had to say goodbye to her. I know, sweetie. It's hard."*

What gets in the way of our being able to empathize with our child's "negative emotions?" It's our own emotional stuff. If our child gets angry at us, we go on the defensive the same way we do when anyone else gets angry at us. *"Look. I gave you three warnings. We have to get home for dinner. Don't give me that. You knew we were only going to stop by for an hour and a half."* Or if our child is sad because her toy broke, we might feel terrible. We can't bear for our child to be so sad.

You can see that if we're going to empathize with our child's emotions, we need to notice our own emotions and be able to manage them. Luckily, we've already talked about self-regulation, so I know you're getting really good at this. We're all a work in progress all the time. You start from wherever you are, and you take one step forward. That's all you ever have to do.

If your child gets angry at you because you're making her leave her friend's house, it's natural that you'll get a little defensive. Take a deep breath, and remind yourself, *"I can acknowledge*

how she feels. I can just acknowledge how she feels," and you say to her, *"I know. It's hard to leave."*

Once you do that, she's going to find it a whole lot easier to leave because someone has acknowledged how she feels at least, so she doesn't have to yell to get her point across. When you empathize, it helps your child feel heard, and most of your child's emotional expression gets heightened when they don't feel heard. The minute you let your child know that you hear what she's expressing to you, she's able to ratchet that upset down a little bit because you let her know you hear. The message has gotten across.

That's obviously hard to do because our own emotions get in the way. If you have the goal of expressing empathy no matter what your child says or expresses, and your goal is to do that 24/7, you'll probably find that you're successful at it about 20% or 30% or 40% or 50% or 60% or 70% of the time, but not all the time. No one bats 1000. That's okay. Just work on moving your ratio up.

The second form of expressing empathy is physical. You don't have to actually say anything; simply notice how your child is feeling, and connect. That can mean looking her in the eye and giving her a warm smile. It can mean squeezing her shoulder as you walk by. It can mean that you give her a big hug.

Like when you first see her in the morning, if she's been in a separate bed from you, or when you say goodbye to her, or when you're reunited, or simply because you were busy cooking dinner, and she's now coming to eat dinner, you give her a big hug because there was a small separation. In other words, you give hugs for no reason.

That may seem like connection instead of empathy, and yes, it is. All empathy is a form of connection. But I'm also saying that we give these hugs as a response to a signal from our child. If you're tuned in to notice what your child is expressing throughout the day, you'll find there are many opportunities for physical hugs, for reconnection, for reassurance, for letting your child know that you're there and meeting her where she is. That's a form of empathy.

The third specific empathic practice is to acknowledge your child's feelings about something later, after the event has passed. For instance, maybe you'll say to your son at bedtime, "I noticed when you were reading on the couch and your little brother started bothering you… I saw you work so hard to be patient with him. I want you to know how impressed I was by that. That took some real effort on your part. Thank you, Sweetheart."

What happens when you do this? Your child feels seen. Your child feels valued. Your child knows that the effort he puts out makes a big difference. This is something he tried hard at, and

you noticed. His efforts at mastery – in this case, emotional self-regulation – matter, and he feels good about having put that effort in.

Now, maybe you've already said something about it. Maybe you said it right when it happened. We try to do that. Obviously, when we see our child doing something that we're really impressed by, we try to comment on it at the time. But maybe at the time, you swooped in and distracted the little brother, and you really didn't deal with the older brother at all.

Coming back later allows you to close that loop, and not only give your child empathy for what he did at that time, but also because you're making the point to bring it up later, you're adding extra weight to it. Whether you were able to comment on it at the time that it happened or you just bring it up later, either way, you're adding extra weight by bringing it up again later.

You're meeting your child's needs for mastery – in other words, what he does matters – and also for self-esteem. He's being seen. He's being valued. His contribution is being acknowledged. And you appreciate him. Simply feeling appreciated is so important as part of the empathy we're offering children.

Empathy is something we try to do all day, every day. It's just retraining yourself to notice what your child is expressing and just mirroring it, which comes naturally, and noticing those times when we can't mirror it because our own feelings get in the way, and trying at those times to be able to mirror anyway.

When we can't, sometimes we can bring it up again later and say, *"I was frustrated when we were trying to leave Rebecca's house, and you didn't want to leave. But I recognize that it's hard. It's hard for you to leave. We need to figure out ways that we can make it easier on both of us."* This is another example of finding a way to offer the empathy later, if you couldn't do it at the time.

So, 24/7 empathy – in what you say, empathy and connection in your physical responses to your child, and just noticing what's going on and just offering physical connection, reassurance, and love throughout your day. And then finally, reinforcing later by bringing things up again gives your child extra empathy because he hears this as having extra weight because you really noticed it and brought it up later.

I find that in the press of everyday life, it can be very hard to remember what happened after lunch, much less before lunch, so jot down on a piece of paper that you keep around or on your phone any time you see your child trying super hard to do something. Those are great things to be able to bring up later while your child's in the bathtub, or at your bedtime chat, anytime where

you're one-on-one with your child and you want to offer some special acknowledgement. That's empathy.

2. Laughter

The second preventive maintenance practice is laughter. Laughter is one of nature's ways of helping humans process stress. Children really need to laugh. Adults really need to laugh, too, but children learn through play, and laughter is usually one of the many byproducts of play.

Children will laugh naturally usually as they go through their day. But since laughter is so useful to human beings, I think of it as a vitamin that we want to make sure we get some of every day.

How can you help your child to laugh on a daily basis? I think the best way is roughhousing. But, of course, all children have things that get them laughing. You're the best expert on your child. Notice what gets your child laughing and do more of that.

Some parents feel very comfortable performing and using funny voices or maybe slapstick comedy or being the person who always loses and whines about it, especially for kids who are aware that they don't get to win as often as they'd like against their big brother or their classmate or their best friend. That can be very effective to get them laughing.

But for all children, being physical usually gets them laughing. It's such an easy way to get kids laughing that I always recommend that parents start with roughhousing, and that they include a little roughhousing in every day. What's roughhousing? I think the term was invented by Larry Cohen – Dr. Lawrence Cohen – who wrote *Playful Parenting* and along with Anthony DeBenedet also wrote *The Art of Roughhousing.*

I think lots of people have just done roughhousing naturally as long as there have been children. It's any kind of physical play that gets your child laughing. That could mean throwing them up in the air, or letting them ride on your back and being a bucking bronco. You can lie on the floor and roll over and over with them, so you're on top and they're on top at different times. Any kind of physical activity that gets your child laughing, to me, is roughhousing.

For instance, if your child asks to wrestle but then he gets very, very serious while he's wrestling, and determined and anxious about who's going to win the wrestling match, that's not roughhousing, or at least, it's not roughhousing that's going to bring any kind of laughter, and to me, it's not necessarily constructive.

There must be some reason he's getting anxious like this. Is he actually worried about the outcome? Does he sometimes lose in his wrestling matches with his father? Is his dad giving him a little too much resistance so that he doesn't know how things are going to turn out? Some

resistance is great. That's what provides the excitement. Otherwise, the roughhousing would be boring, and you wouldn't be laughing.

The laughter comes from the tiniest bit of fear. It's like, *"Oh my goodness. Might I lose here? Will Mommy really drop me in this bucking bronco ride? Will Daddy really pin me down and not let me get up?"* But, of course, if there's too much fear, if the child really thinks those things are possible, then he's going to be anxious. He's not going to feel safe, and he's not going to be laughing.

This is not the time to build character by having your child lose. We'll talk about winning and losing more in our week on mastery, but for today, let's just say your child will have plenty of experiences of losing and will build character as long as you support him through it.

Roughhousing should be an opportunity for him to be the victor. If your child is getting anxious during roughhousing, that's too much fear and anxiety. It's not the purpose of roughhousing. The purpose of roughhousing is laughter. Always go with what gets the most laughter for your child. Yes, it is sort of dancing on the edge of your child's fears, but those fears are never very full blown or your child can't be laughing.

One of the ways that parents often get their child laughing is tickling. I'm going to make an exception for tickling. I'm going to say even though it gets kids laughing, it's probably not good for them. I know that's probably not something you've heard before.

But when I ask an audience whether they were tickled as children and whether they liked it, the majority of parents say to me, "Yes. I was tickled as a child," and at least two thirds of them say they didn't like it.

That tells us something. I think what happens is that the child just feels out of control. Sure, they're giggling, but they're laughing so hard, they're out of control, *and* the parent is not listening when they ask not to be tickled anymore. Part of it is if we're not hearing the child say what their limit is and we don't stop the tickling, then, of course, the child is not going to like that, is not going to enjoy it.

Even when the child is in charge of tickling, I suspect – and there is a little research that is starting to show that this might be the case – that a different part of the brain is involved in the laughter that responds to tickling – it's a physiological response – as opposed to the laughter from, let's say, a joke. A different part of the brain is involved in laughter that has a mental, emotional release (a joke or roughhousing) than a physiological release (from tickling).

I suspect that's the part of the brain that's stimulated with roughhousing, although I have not seen research to support this theory, I have to say. But I think since we know that something

emotional is happening during the roughhousing, where the child is releasing stress and is laughing, then it makes perfect sense that that emotional, mental release part of the brain is involved when the child is laughing with roughhousing. That's a different part of the brain than the part of the brain that is involved with the physiological release of laughing that is almost a reflex when the child is tickled.

If your child begs to be tickled, fine. Go ahead and threaten to tickle him – "I'm going to get you!" – but don't actually make contact with his body. You'll find he still giggles like crazy because instead of that being the reflex of being touched, it's the psychological threat of your hand coming at him that he's laughing about, and that's where the release is. So there is a way, when children beg for tickling, to give them that fun, that laughter without actually pushing it over the boundary of the child feeling out of control.

What I have found when I have heard from parents is that even with children who beg to be tickled, when we find other ways to get them physically laughing from roughhousing, those children stop begging so much for tickling because they now have other ways to connect and to laugh with their parents. It really wasn't the tickling they loved, it was the laughing, and there are other things that they prefer once we introduce those into our repertoire, like chasing them around the house, giving them a bucking bronco ride, or having a wrestling match, those kinds of things where they feel a little more in control.

I would urge you, if you're using tickling as your main way to get your child laughing physically, just experiment with other ways. I think you'll find that as you develop a bigger bag of tools for roughhousing, you'll find that you won't be using tickling so often, and you won't miss it.

If you're wondering how to get your child laughing, how to start roughhousing, there are a lot of ideas on the AhaParenting.com website. Go to the website, put the word "games" into the search box, and you'll get some articles on different kinds of games to play with your child. I also mentioned that Larry Cohen is a great source of games to play with your child to get them laughing.

Before we move on from roughhousing, I want to address a couple of questions that I often get about it. Sometimes I hear from a very even-keeled calm parent who has a very even-keeled calm child, "You know, I don't really see the point of roughhousing. Things are fine. I don't need roughhousing."

I get it. I actually had a child like that, and I was that kind of parent. But I found that even with that kind of a child who was not someone who tended to get wound up, that he still loved to get goofy and giddy and feel exhilarated, and it was good for our relationship when we did that

together. We didn't need to do it every day, but when we did it, it was a special bonding experience, and it was really fun and good for both of us.

Then when my daughter was born, I had a child who did tend to get more wound up, and she especially needed to laugh. If she had a chance to get silly and rambunctious, there was a lot less chance that she would have a meltdown before dinnertime.

Some children need laughter more than others because they tend to get more stressed out. But even naturally serious children love that giddy, exhilarated feeling of connecting physically with their parent and laughing. I recommend roughhousing to everybody.

Another question I often get is from mothers who say, "I'm not that kind of person. I don't like to play. I've got too much to do. I'm always trying to move the kids through the schedule. Their dad plays with them. He roughhouses with them all the time, so I don't need to do that, right?"

The answer is no, you don't need to do it. Your child's need for that laughter is being met by Dad, if he is indeed roughhousing with the kids every day. But I think you're missing out on something.

I know it seems like it would take a lot of effort to give them a bucking bronco ride, but when you roughhouse with kids, you're bonding with them, and you're laughing, too, which actually has a very beneficial effect on your body chemistry, as well as on your child's. You're decreasing the stress hormones circulating in your blood stream, and you're increasing the bonding hormones. How can that be a bad thing? You're actually bonding with your child when you're laughing with your child. Laughter is good for you, too.

No, you don't have to roughhouse with your kids every day if that's too hard for you to do, but I encourage you to find ways to ease into it a little bit. Just pick up a pillow and have a pillow fight. Do something – anything – that will get you laughing, doing something physical with your child, so you're both laughing together.

I think that as you develop a repertoire of ways to do that, you're going to find that you use them more and more frequently because you'll both feel so good and so connected after you do it.

3. Special time

Let's move on to the third preventive maintenance practice. Special time is one-on-one time with our child. It is not structured time. It is not taking your child to Disneyworld. It is not making cookies with your child. Those are structured things that you do with your child.

Special time is, by definition, unstructured time. There have been many versions of special time presented in the psychological literature. There are many approaches to child therapy that include

some version of special time. Sometimes they call it special time; sometimes they call it something else.

People have been writing about special time for two decades, but the person who has taken special time to an art form is Patty Wipfler of HandInHandParenting.org. It's a great organization. Patty is a brilliant thinker about children and emotion, and she says that special time is an active form of listening in which the child's play becomes her vehicle for telling the parent about the child's life and perceptions.

We're talking, in preventive maintenance, about how you help your child with emotions and meet her emotional needs. One of those needs is to feel seen and heard and acknowledged and validated, and special time is a way to do that. I see it as a more focused version of empathy that not only helps a child feel emotionally seen but also helps the child feel valued and capable, which is an essential building block in self-esteem and mastery and self-actualization.

Special time seems so simple. You're just spending one-on-one time with your child in an unstructured way. And yet every parent I know who has begun to do special time with his or her child has told me they see significant changes in their child's behavior. Parents often say that their child seems to respond to special time as if they've been missing an essential nutrient, and in a way, they have.

Special time is a power-packed nutrient. It delivers something to your child that it's hard for them to get in any other way simply because the parent is fully present with the child and giving the child the gift of their full attention. For that reason, there's a wonderful quote from B.J. Howard who says, "Special time is priceless because it symbolizes the parent's unconditional love for the child."

What exactly does special time do that's so great? It's the antidote to disconnection. We live in a stressful culture that disconnects us, and special time reconnects us with our child after the separations and struggles of daily life.

As you remember from our chapter on connection, you can't always stay connected; what you can do is notice you're disconnected and reconnect. Special time gives you an automatic way every single day to reconnect. It also gives the child a safe place to play out the everyday issues that all kids need to work through – such as feeling powerless – by reversing the roles and letting the child lead.

You do also give the child that experience when you roughhouse, when you let the child lead or you let the child win, but often, kids don't get enough chance to play out those issues (using pretend or creative play, with a witness). When you let your child take the lead in special time,

you're according them respect, and you're also giving them a safe place to set the agenda so that they can work on whatever they need to work on. It gives the child a regular opportunity to express scary feelings and ideas to a compassionate, trusted adult.

Again, children do express those scary feelings to their special adults as they roughhouse, but special time allows them to do it verbally, and it allows them to work on them through play, which is their natural language. Some kids will prefer special time to roughhousing, some kids will prefer roughhousing, but most kids need some of both, so they can work on their issues in different ways.

It also deepens our empathy for our child. That may not seem to be a necessary thing, but actually, all of us get caught up in our own agendas and needing to move our child through the schedule, so we forget to see things from our child's perspective.

Empathizing with our child helps in the course of daily life, but when we have special time, when we sit down and we just move ourselves into a place where we're wholly there to connect with our child and to notice our child and to see things from his point of view, that trains us to look at our child in a new way.

It's like meditation, which trains us to be more in touch with ourselves, with our emotions, and to be more mindful and aware as we go through our lives, simply by sitting down every day and meditating and practicing our awareness.

Special time is the same thing. We're practicing our awareness of our child and our connection to our child. That actually deepens our compassion for our child, so it allows us to be more patient on a daily basis with our child and to have more empathy for our child when our needs clash, which inevitably, they will sometimes do.

Special time convinces the child on a primal level that she is central to the parent, that she really matters, that she's important. I know you would do anything for your child, but she doesn't really get that. This gives her the essential experience of your full, attentive, loving presence in a way that's hard to duplicate in the press of daily life. That's why special time is so important.

How do you do special time? First, you announce that you're going to have special time with each child every day. I like to call special time by your child's name. If your child is Kevin, this is Kevin time, this is Maria time, this is my time with Maria, or my time with Kevin.

Parents often wonder, "Well, should both parents be in special time?" I think it's a one-to-one thing because relationships are actually one-to-one, and your child has a different relationship with each parent. You'll have to see what works in your household.

Sometimes parents do the special time at the same time, so dad is with Kevin and mom is with Maria, and the next day, they switch. If you're the one who's home most of the time with your kids and you're the one who can have special time with them daily, and your partner can't do that, or if you're a single parent and you don't have a partner, then it's a little harder because you have to figure out what to do with Kevin while you have special time with Maria and vice versa.

Here are some ideas about what you can do. If one of your children is at school or being looked after by someone else for any period of time during the day, do special time with the other child during that time. If one of your children still naps, do special time with the other during that time.

If your child has a playdate on a regular basis, while they're with their playdate, do special time with the other child – as long as they're fairly self-sufficient on the playdate. Obviously, you can't leave three-year olds alone on a playdate to go have special time with the five-year old or the baby because three-year olds do have a way of finding trouble, and especially if they're together and they get new ideas that one of them didn't have before.

It is hard to find that time to be one-on-one with either child because it's very hard to get the other child occupied. But one good strategy I have found is audiobooks, because that absorbs the child's attention enough that they don't even notice you laughing with their sibling. Hopefully, you can put headphones on them instead of just earbuds. Those noise-canceling headphones are great. They won't even hear you with their sibling.

If this is the kind of child who needs to be physically active, sit them down with washable markers at a small table and have the headphones on. Let them listen and draw pictures of what they're hearing in their audiobook at the same time.

Now, if they're just starting the audiobook, you don't know whether they'll be interested in it, so you have to be with them as they begin the audiobook and get them excited about it. Then as they get into it, you'll be able to leave them to draw and to listen to the story while you go and spend 10 or 15 or 20 minutes with their sibling.

That brings us to the question of how much time you do special time for. I think ten minutes is the minimum because once kids get started on having your full attention, it's hard for them to let that go. Ten minutes usually is the minimum amount of time for a child to actually feel that connection and get something out of it. If it's only five minutes, they feel like, "Wow. I barely got you, and now you're leaving again," and often, it's just too hard on them.

Ten minutes on an ongoing basis is probably the minimum amount. It's a good place to start because ten minutes can be hard for you to sustain your focus on your child, for you to turn off

your cell phone, not do anything else, and just focus on your child. Many parents when they begin this, find that it's actually hard for them, so I think ten minutes is a great place to start.

You can present it as, "We're going to have ten minutes just for us. I know it's not a lot of time, but it's for us, just for the two of us."

You set a timer. The reason for the timer is then you're not the bad guy after the ten minutes is up, saying to your child, "Oops. Now we have to stop," which seems very arbitrary to the child. But if the timer is ticking away and they see, "Oh, now we only have five minutes," then they see it coming, and they usually can be more graceful when the time is up.

If you have a child who you know is going to fall apart when the time is up, that's fine. Build that in. Make sure that you have someone with your other child, even if you have to get a babysitter. When you first start doing this, it's worth it to have someone with your other child just so you can make sure that when your child falls apart after the ten minutes, that you can be there in a really warm and loving way.

Don't look at it as your child is being a greedy brat; you just had this really nice time together, and it's so ridiculous that your child is now falling apart after you've had this wonderful time together. There's a reason that this happens.

Your child has been lugging around all these emotions. Now he feels safe. He's had this wonderful interaction with you. They're starting to bubble up so that she can show them to you, and they can be healed, and here you are ending the special time. That brings up all her feelings about how hard it is to share you with her sibling or with all the other things that you do in your daily life, like going to work or the other things you need to separate from her briefly or for a longer time to do.

She shows you her upset about that, how hard it is to let go of you, and not get as much of you as she'd want. Don't be defensive about it. You don't have to say, "Well, she gets plenty of me." It doesn't matter. She's feeling, at least sometimes, like she's not getting enough. That's what's coming out when she loses it at the end of the ten minutes of special time.

Just acknowledge that she's having a hard time ending. "It's hard to stop playing when we've been playing together. I loved having our special time today, and you loved it, too. It's hard to stop. I know. We'll have more special time tomorrow. But I know it's hard to stop. It makes me feel like crying, too, sometimes. It's hard to let go of each other. I love being with you."

Just empathize. Let her express those feelings, acknowledge them, and as she expresses them, she's getting them off her chest. Your acknowledgement means everything to her. After she expresses them and you acknowledge them, you're going to find that she's going to calm down,

she's going to hug you, and she's going to be able to go on with her day and actually be in a better mood than she was before.

You'll find that every day, it will be a little easier to stop special time because she won't have such a backlog of stuff to show you. She feels understood on an ongoing basis. She'll be getting all of the benefits of special time, and you'll see them. She'll be much more happy and cooperative, and also, she'll be more able to let go and move on at the end of special time.

Some kids will still continue to have a hard time transitioning from special time. Those are the kids who have a hard time with all transitions. So if you know this about your child, then build in longer time for special time, even if you do it less often.

I think special time every day is great, so children have that acknowledgement and that emotional release and filling their love cup every single day. I also think it's great for kids to have 20 minutes of special time instead of 10 if you can work up to that.

But depending on your own life and your own time schedule, I think you don't want to have a fight with your child about ending special time every single time you end special time. If it (the upset at the end of special time) continues after the first week, then I suggest you simply do longer special time, even if it means you don't do special time every single day.

If you do it every other day, and it makes the transition easier for your child because they're getting more of you because it's a longer time and you have more time to prepare them for the transition, then absolutely that's the way to go for your specific child.

Ten minutes is a good place to start if you're not sure you'll be able to handle special time, but it really is the minimum. 20 minutes is far better because it allows you to sink into a rhythm with your child. The research on play shows that for children to get into deep play, they need longer than 10 minutes; 20 minutes is far better.

If you can do 20 minutes a day with each child, that's ideal. If you can't, do the ten minutes, and then on the weekend or whenever you can, do a longer stretch of time with each child so that they know that they get a longer time with you on Saturday, and they can look forward to it, and the other child is going to get a longer time with you on Sunday, and he can look forward to that.

If you have a child who ends special time easily, you may wonder if a buzzer is strictly necessary. No, of course not. But there is another benefit to the buzzer that's worth thinking about.

Your rules in special time are going to be different than your rules in the rest of life. Maybe you'll let your child explore some forbidden fruit. Maybe he's allowed to jump off the dresser

onto the bed only during special time when you're there to supervise him, so you can make sure he stays safe, and it's a rule that he can't do that the rest of the time.

Maybe you give him shaving cream because he loves to play with his dad's shaving cream, but you don't want him emptying out the shaving cream every day and having to buy another shaving cream, so you buy him a special shaving cream that is just for him. It's labeled, and he gets to play with that while you're doing special time.

Maybe he's a preschooler, and he's somehow picked up some swear words, and he wants to use them. You tell him that he can use them only during special time. Then you turn it into a joke and you play with it.

There's information on how to do that on the Aha! Parenting website. If you put in "swear", "swearing", or "swear words" – I'm trying to remember what the actual headline of the article is – there's an article about how to do that.

Special time has different rules. The rules are not the same as in regular life. For that reason, I like to put boundaries around it so that kids get that really clearly. One way to have a boundary is to announce the beginning and end of special time, and another is to have a buzzer, so when the buzzer goes off, now we're back in regular life. If he has a meltdown about ending his time with you, that's fine. You handle it just the way you would in regular life, but you're not extending the special time.

What do you actually do in special time? You say to your child, *"I'm all yours for the next ten minutes. What would you like to do?"* Your child will pick whatever his favorite thing is to do. Screens are not allowed, and structured activities, like making cookies or reading, are not such a good idea either. It's better if your child simply plays and you can pour 110% of your attention and love into your child, with no agenda and no distractions.

That means you're not in control, and you're not coming up with great ideas for how we can do something different. If your daughter is painting, and she says to you, *"What color should I use next?"* you can say, *"That's a hard decision. What do you think you'll use next?"*

If your son is playing with his blocks, don't rush in to tell him how to build the tower. Just say what you see him doing. *"Wow. You're making the tower even taller. You're standing on your tiptoes to get that block up there."*

Why do you refrain from suggesting what your child should do? Because in daily life, we're constantly pushing and prodding our kids to do what we want them to do and to be the way we want them to be. The goal of special time is to do something different; it's to allow the child the freedom to decide what they want to do. Our acceptance of whatever our child decides helps

build the child's confidence that actually he is capable, he is able to make his own decisions in life.

If you say to him, *"Why don't you build the tower that way?"* you don't mean to imply that he's building the tower wrong, but that's how he hears it. If you can simply say, *"Wow. I see. You decided to build the tower that way. Oh,*" you're noticing what he's doing; you're not passing judgement – *"This is the best way to build a tower ever"* – because then he wonders well, what if he made a different decision? You're simply acknowledging that this is what he's doing, and you're happy to watch him do it.

Your attention tells him that he's valuable, and whatever he decides he wants to explore is of value. Really, you don't have to say much, and you don't want to say much. You simply want to look at your child and surround your child with love. Just pour 110% of your attention into your child.

Sometimes when parents have a hard time fitting roughhousing into their day, I suggest that they do that as part of special time. But your child may not want to roughhouse for special time, so the only way you can do that is if you set it up from the beginning that one day, she decides what to do for special time, and the next day you decide. On your days, you can do roughhousing.

That's a good way to fit in it if you're not already doing it. But otherwise, I would just let your child decide what to do with special time because it's the only time in her life that she gets that.

When you do special time with your child every day, or even every other day, what you'll see is that your child will begin to ask for it and will talk about it and say it was the favorite part of her day. You'll realize, yes, it really is worth it to do this.

Some parents have a really hard time with special time. They find it excruciating in the beginning. That usually passes as they get used to it, and they become more able to really be present with their child.

But if you're someone who starts doing special time and find that it's very hard for you to sit there, just do it for a shorter amount of time and talk yourself through it. It's uncomfortable to be fully present for many of us, and it's uncomfortable to be fully present with our child for many of us.

I would suggest that something that will really help with that is to let go of the list. Just for ten minutes, let go of the list. If you were going to have sex with your partner, you wouldn't be thinking about your to-do list – I'm hoping. You would give yourself a break from it. The same thing is true for this ten minutes with your child. Let go of the list and give yourself permission to be completely not productive.

I would argue that as a parent, this connection with your child is priceless. There may be nothing more important that you get done today than this ten minutes of simply showing up and connecting with your child.

There's one more really important guiding rule about special time. Turn off your phone. Really. Turn off your phone. The only excuse for not turning off your phone is if you have another child and need to stay available in case there's an emergency. If you have another child and you need to leave the phone on, then put it on vibrate and move it from your view. Put it where you can hear it away from you across the room.

Research shows that if your phone is anywhere near you, even if its off, if you can see it, it distracts you and your addiction gets awakened. Just move the phone away where you cannot get to it. You can't see it. You can't quickly check something that came in. Your child will remember for the rest of his life that he was important enough to his mom and his dad that they turned their phones off when he was with them.

That's special time. Special time can change your life. I hope you'll give it a chance.

4. Routines

Let's talk about routines, which are the fourth element of preventive maintenance. Routines help children feel safe. They meet basic safety needs. They help kids to know what to expect, and they help kids feel like they belong. "These are the things our family does."

They help children develop their prefrontal cortex because when you talk about the routine, you're helping children see into the future and plan for what the future is going to be like. That's a prefrontal cortex function.

When you say to your child, "After breakfast, we're going to the grocery store. Will you help me pick out the fruit? After the grocery store, we'll have time to go to the playground, and then it will be time for lunch," your child orders those activities in her brain. She starts to think about her day as a series of events one followed by the next, and they're in order. That's a planning function of the brain, so she's actually building more strength in her prefrontal cortex as you have those discussions.

But the real reason to do routines is that they help children feel safe. Kids are confronted by change daily, and it's hard for them. They're constantly getting introduced to new vegetables and learning new skills, like how to tie their shoe. They're asked to give up all kinds of things – pacifiers, bottles, breasts, cribs – and even to get used to having a new baby in the house.

They often have a new teacher and new classmates every year. They often move to new houses during their childhood. It's rare now to live in the same house for your entire childhood. Most kids move several times.

These are a lot of changes for the child, and almost all of them are outside of the child's control. Children need to know what to expect, and it helps them a lot if the changes in their lives on a day-to-day basis are predictable.

You may not think it's a big change to leave the house and go to the grocery store, but to your child, it's one more incident where he feels like he's a victim of life circumstance and he's not able to do what he wants to do, which is to play with his trucks.

The more we can help children to understand that this is what we do at this time of day, the less he feels jerked around by life, and the more sense life makes to him. When kids have a routine and they know what to expect, it helps them feel more in control of their environment and of themselves.

The other benefit of routines is that routines help children learn how to manage themselves. Kids who come from chaotic homes where belongings aren't put away never learn that life can run more smoothly if things are organized a little and we know where to find things. In homes where there's no set time or place to do homework, kids never learn how to sit themselves down to accomplish an unpleasant task, which is about the best thing I can say about homework since there's not much positive to say about it.

Kids who don't develop basic self-care routines – from grooming to food – may find it hard to take care of themselves as young adults. It all seems beyond them, and they can't quite get things together.

Having a routine allows a child to internalize constructive self-care and self-management habits. Routines are great preventive maintenance because they keep your family on track, and they help your child cope emotionally.

5. Scheduled meltdowns

That brings us to the last element of regular preventive maintenance: scheduled meltdowns. Scheduled meltdowns are really about welcoming emotion. You never have to schedule a meltdown. You never have to provoke a meltdown. Your child will have big emotions no matter what.

If you're someone who can welcome those emotions and help your child feel safe with them, your child will feel free to show you his or her emotions. There's no reason you ever need to feel like you have to push your child over the edge into having those big emotions.

What I've noticed is that with kids who are very emotional, as they begin to get worked up, they get caught in anger because they don't want to be upset. They don't want to cry. They don't want to feel those awful feelings of fear, or disappointment, or sadness, or whatever the feelings are that they're trying to fend off.

What happens is kids who stuff emotions in their emotional backpack and then don't have a chance to get them out with laughter – for instance, with roughhousing – or simply with a parent who can really listen to them, the child gets more and more uncomfortable with all those emotions and more and more frightened of letting them out. Usually what children do is they lash out.

Now, children are not alone in this. You can probably recognize this. Sometimes when you're hurting, haven't you lashed out at your partner or a good friend or your mother? We all have, and it's because we have pain inside that we're having a hard time dealing with. What we really want is to connect with that person, but we're feeling so bad that we lash out at them when they try to help us.

This is what your child does, as well. You're just trying to have a normal day with your child, and you give her a sandwich, and she says, *"No! I didn't want it cut this way."* She can't articulate to you that she had a hard time in preschool, or that she missed you when you left for work this morning and she was with the babysitter, or just that she's been with you all morning but she's tired; she didn't get a good night's sleep last night. Whatever it is, she can't articulate it to you.

All she knows is that she feels yucky inside, and then you put her sandwich in front of her, and even if some other time, she would be only mildly disappointed, now because she has all these feelings, it's the straw that broke the camel's back. She yells at you that you cut her sandwich wrong, and she hates you, and she wants another mother.

Usually, it starts off more mildly. For instance, she'll be cranky when you pick her up from preschool. But you try to jolly her along and get her home. You get her laughing a little. Sometimes that's enough – the reconnection with you, the laughter – and she pulls it together.

But sometimes that's not enough. That just siphons off the top layer of anxiety and stress in the backpack, and underneath it, there's some deeper sadness. Maybe one of you (the parents) has

been out of town on a business trip, or maybe she misses her friend, or maybe her teacher was out sick, whatever it is, and she's having a hard time.

At that point, you're going to see that even though you try to jolly her along, she's escalating. You're just giving her permission to have her feelings. She escalates, and you're creating safety.

The way you create safety is with your compassion. You're welcoming her feelings, and she might just begin to cry.

On the other hand, if she's like most kids, she won't just begin to cry. First, she'll attack, such as what happened with the sandwich, or maybe she'll turn around and smack her little brother on the head for no reason or what you don't think is a good reason. There is no good reason, obviously, even if she thinks there is.

Usually, these things are unfolding in real time, and we're just trying to keep up, and we don't realize how far gone our child is until they lash out. That's what usually happens. We're just trying to make things work, and then all of a sudden, the child is lashing out.

If you see a meltdown coming, you can create more safety by using more compassion. You can put the little brother down for his nap. Maybe during that time, you can do whatever is necessary to keep your daughter occupied until you're available to her. Then when you come back, you want to give her an opportunity to show you all those feelings.

Hopefully, if you're just compassionate, she'll start to cry, and sometimes that happens. But often, it doesn't because she's trying very hard to hold it together. If you know that she's going to blow sometime because you've seen it happen over and over again in the past, the best thing to do, I think, is to allow her to do it now while you can give her the benefit of your full attention while her little brother is asleep.

That's what I call a scheduled meltdown. You're scheduling it based on a time when you can give her your full attention. It's not just that you're scheduling her emotions around your schedule; it's that you're allowing her to get the full benefit of your attention when you can give it to her.

Because the truth is you can't always be available to her, and if you don't do it now, you know she's going to fall apart later – at dinner, at grandma's, or when you're nursing the little brother when he gets up from his nap – so you want to allow her to have her meltdown now.

If you have a child who simply falls apart when you are extra compassionate to them when they're having a hard time, great; you'll never need to "provoke" the meltdown. But most kids don't do that. They get angry first.

Let's say, to pursue our example, that you've put little brother down for his nap, you come back, and you've let her have some rare screen time, or she's been listening to an audiobook, whatever your usual routine is for her while little brother goes down for his nap. You come back out to her, and you connect with her.

The first thing you do is you're creating safety, so you're connecting with her, and then it's time to turn off the screen. That might be enough to set her off. If it is, you empathize with how hard it is to turn the screen off. You're offering compassion, at which point, she will usually cry.

If she doesn't, if she's excited to spend time with you, fantastic; there's no reason she has to cry. She wants to spend time with you, she can pull it together, fabulous, so then you have special time with her. At the end of your 20 minutes, when the buzzer goes off, you say to her, *"Wow. That was so much fun to have special time with you. We'll do it again tomorrow. Right now, that's the buzzer. We need to stop."*

Now maybe at this point, all of those feelings engulf her, and she's so upset because special time is ending. Again, you don't change your limit on special time, but you empathize with how hard it is for her to stop, and again, your compassion makes it safe for her to show you how upset she is, and all those upset feelings come pouring out.

But what if she's stuck in the anger? Instead of actually telling you how hard it is, just simply crying or saying how hard it is for her when she loses you. Often, kids do get stuck in the anger. That's a way of fending off those more powerful feelings, the ones that are so sad and demoralizing for them, that make them feel so alone and disconnected from you. They'd rather lash out than feel those feelings.

If your child starts to lash out at you when you've set this limit, ratchet up your compassion a little higher, and stay empathic with them. *"Oh, Sweetie. You're so mad at me. You really don't want to stop."*

The child's feelings are allowed no matter what they are, whether they're sadness, whether they're anger. But always remember that under the anger, there are trickier emotions, things that are just harder for human beings to bear.

The anger is always a defense. It's the body being in fight, flight, or freeze, in a state of emergency because those feelings are threatening to swamp the child. This is true for all human beings. We all do this.

If you can stay compassionate, then your child doesn't stay locked in struggle. They don't need to attack you. They don't need to speak even louder their truth about how awful they feel and how angry they are at you; instead, they're able to just feel those feelings and let those feelings

of sadness or disappointment overwhelm them, and they're able to cry. If you can stay compassionate, your child will cry.

If you're using the opportunity for a scheduled meltdown and your child doesn't cry, either it's because your child doesn't need to cry and they just got enough connection from you, or it's because they're going into anger, in which case, your compassion, your acknowledgement of how upset they are is what will help them to get to that place that's underneath the anger.

Usually, your child will lash out, and you'll need to set a limit. *"I'm not going to let you throw that, Sweetie. Toys are not for throwing."* But always, keep your focus on creating (emotional as well as physical) safety. Connect, empathize, and welcome the feelings. Keep your words to a minimum – simply *"You're safe. I'm right here. Everybody feels upset sometimes. It's good to get all your mads and sads out."*

If your child won't let you hold her while she cries, that's very common. Simply say, *"I'm right here with a big hug when you're ready."*

Sometimes children, because they've gone into fight, flight, or freeze, run away during a meltdown. That's the flight, obviously. If your child runs away from you, follow, but give your child some space. Stay as far away as your child wants you to stay.

If he yells*, "Don't touch me! Get out of my room,"* you can say, *"Oh, Sweetie. You're so upset. I will move back to here. I'm not going to leave you alone with these big feelings, but I won't touch you. I hear you."* Then he feels respected.

Why shouldn't you leave the room? It's certainly easier on you. Because what he's trying to do is modulate his sense of safety. Having you close by makes him feel safer because you're his mom or dad. But it also then makes all those feelings more likely to bubble up to get healed because when he feels safe, that's when the feelings come up.

When you're closer, he feels yuckier. That's terrible. He doesn't want to feel yuckier, so he tells you to go away. He hopes that'll make him feel better – and it will to some degree, but then he's just stuffing the feelings back down again.

Move back as much as he needs you to, but try not to have to leave the room. If you do have to leave the room, stay right outside, and let him know that you're right there when he needs you.

If your child tries to distract herself, if she says, *"I want to go find Daddy now. I want to watch TV now. I need ice cream now,"* you can say, *"Okay, Sweetie. I hear you. You think that would make you feel better. We'll go find Daddy soon. But not yet. Right now, we're still going to sit*

here for a few minutes. It will feel better soon. I promise. I'm right here to hold you. You're safe."

What if your child is so far into fight that he attacks you? That can be scary for all of us. Nobody wants to feel like someone is about to hurt them. When your child attacks you, you need to keep yourself safe. Step back, and say, *"Whoa, whoa, whoa. I don't want those hitty hands so close to my face. Sweetheart, you can tell me in words what you're upset about. I want to hear. Tell me why you're so upset."*

Your child will scream at you probably very rude things, but at least, he isn't hitting you. Over time, as he learns that you're really there to listen and feels safer that he can show you his emotions, you'll find that he'll stop attacking you, and he'll stop being so rude.

But initially, you'll need to set that limit (on physical aggression). You might even find that he'll throw himself at you with his flailing fists, and you'll have to hold his arms or his hand or even turn him so his back is to you so that he isn't hitting you.

Right now, while he's very angry, he's in fight, flight, or freeze, and you look like the enemy. But he doesn't actually want to hurt you, and he'll feel terrible later if he does hurt you, so do whatever you need to do to keep him from actually hurting you.

After a meltdown, your child will end up in your lap, sobbing, holding on to you. They're ready to reconnect. They are not necessarily ready to talk about what happened. They, in fact, usually don't want to talk about what happened; they want to change the subject.

The truth is they don't really know why they were so upset. Often, when we have a big fight with our partner, afterwards, we're holding each other and maybe one of us is crying, we often don't know why we were so upset either.

That's okay. You're not going to analyze your child because that will make him feel less safe about trusting you in the future with his emotions. Instead, just scoop him up, hug him, tell him, *"That was some hard work, Sweetheart. I'm right here. You can cry as much as you need to. Everybody needs to cry sometimes. I love you, no matter what."*

Later, when he feels better, and even at the end of the day if you want – it doesn't have to be right then – you can say, *"Remember when I said no when you wanted to have some time on the iPad and I said no to you? You were so angry at me, and you yelled and screamed and stomped and even tried to hit me? Remember that?*

"Yeah, you were so upset, and then you cried and cried. Then we hugged each other, and we both felt better. Sometimes you get really mad when you want to use the iPad and I say no. I know you love the iPad. You know what? It's hard not to be able to use the iPad when you want.

"But you know what? The iPad is not something you can use every day. It's really for special times. I know it makes you unhappy and I know you miss it when you don't have it, but I do need to say no sometimes. It's not okay to scream and yell and try to hit me when I say no. I know you didn't really want to hurt me. You were just so upset."

Here's where you give your child a hug, and then you say, *"Next time when you want the iPad and I say no, you're still going to feel bad, aren't you? I know. But how can you handle it next time so you can tell me what you need, and whether I say yes or whether I say no, you can handle it when you get frustrated without hitting. Hitting is not okay, ever. What could we do next time to make that easier for you?"*

Now you're having a constructive, problem-solving discussion, but you're not trying to have it on the heels of the upset when your child got those feelings out and showed you how upset he was. That's a separate interaction from your problem solving. It does not have to be right away.

Really, right away, after children have cried, they just want to get as far away from those feelings as possible, so it's good to introduce a repertoire of things they can do to shift back into daily life.

After your child has cried in your arms, you might have a little ritual where you get a drink of water, and your child's allowed to splash a little water in his face, and you have a big hug where you count to 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, a million, or whatever works for you. But some way that your child is able to shift gears and feel more self-contained and in charge of himself and self-regulated.

At this point, parents often ask me, *"Well, how do I know if my kid needs a scheduled meltdown?"* The answer is you don't start with a scheduled meltdown. When your child is having a hard time, you always first, regulate your own emotions because when we're stressed, when we're short or sharp with our kids, they always pick it up, and they always act out. So start always by regulating your own emotions.

The second thing you try is to reconnect. When your kid says, *"I didn't want my sandwich this way,"* you say, *"Oh, Sweetie. I'm sorry. You wanted it to be cut on the diagonal. Oh, I didn't realize that. I'm so sorry. It sounds like I did it completely wrong. Well, that's the sandwich we have for today."* Now, you're setting the limit – *"That's the sandwich we have for today."*

"But I hear you that it's not the one you wanted. Tomorrow I absolutely will remember to cut it on the diagonal. I just didn't know that's what you wanted. Do you think it will still taste okay?" You're setting a limit, but you're doing it with empathy.

The third thing you do after regulating yourself and connecting with your child is you coach your child. You say, *"Oh, you're getting so frustrated with that. It looks like it's really hard to do. Let's take a deep breath and let's try again. How can I help?"*

You're making yourself available to help. You're not jumping in to take it over from your child, but you're helping him calm down, and you're offering, *"How can I help?"* That's coaching your child.

You've regulated yourself, you've reconnected, you've tried coaching, and often, that's enough for your child to pull himself together and get past his upset about whatever it is at that moment. Then if he still seems a little out of sorts, you get him laughing. Laughter often makes a tremendous difference because it siphons off the top layer of anxiety or fear or upset in the backpack.

But let's say you've done all that. Let's say your child is still giving you a really hard time. Whatever you do is not making him happy. He's demanding. He's whining. He's obnoxious to his brother. He looks right at you and breaks the rules.

Those are signs of a full backpack – demanding, whining. Being defiant is actually a sign that she needs to reconnect with you. But if she looks right at you and breaks the rules, she's doing what I call suing the doctor. She's actually starting a fight with you, instead of dealing with her feelings because she doesn't want to feel them.

She knows that if she does this thing that's wrong – pour her cereal on the floor right in front of you, or jump on the couch with her shoes on – that you're going to get upset about it. She's purposely pushing your buttons, picking a fight with you, and she's doing that so she doesn't have to feel the feelings that are going on.

All of those things are signs of a full backpack. When your child acts like that, absolutely, try to reconnect. Absolutely, try to get them laughing. But then if you need to, move into a scheduled meltdown.

But instead of thinking of it as *"I'm going to make my child cry"* – because you can't make anybody cry, and then you're controlling him, which he'll just rebel against – instead, think of it as *"I'm giving my child extra compassion and support so that she feels free to show me all of her deepest feelings. I'm creating safety."* And then the organism knows what to do. She'll move into

a space where she feels safe – if you provide safety – and at that point, all those feelings will come bubbling up to get healed.

All you really have to do is be compassionate and empathic, and you'll create safety. At that point, your child feels safe to show you her feelings. That's scheduled meltdowns.

Those are the five elements of preventive maintenance: empathy; laughter, which includes roughhousing; special time; routines; and welcoming emotions or scheduled meltdowns when you need to do them.

If these are mostly new habits for you, it will sound overwhelming initially. But if you work on one of these habits at a time and begin to build it into your life, you will absolutely see a difference in your relationship with your child, and you'll find that you have fewer breakdowns.

Over time, you can incorporate all of these ideas, and you'll find that not only is your relationship with your child transformed, and you're enjoying your child more, and your child is cooperating with you more, but you'll also find that your family is a more peaceful place, and you spend a lot less time in the breakdown lane.

This ends Week 6 – Preventive Maintenance – of the **Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids** Online Course. Thanks so much for joining me today, and for your commitment to your child and to your own growth. This is Dr. Laura Markham of AhaParenting.com.