

Script

When Your Child Gets More Upset When You Try to Calm Them Down

Scenario: Nathan and his dad are playing a game. Nathan loses for the second time in a row and starts screaming at his dad.

Nathan: I hate this game! I'm never playing again!

Dad: Nathan! You're going to lose sometimes...

Nathan: I don't want to play! It's dumb!

Dad: Nathan, calm down...

Nathan: NO!

Dad *(doesn't say anything and reminds himself to model the mature behavior he wants to see in Nathan).*

Nathan: Why aren't you talking? You're being mean!

Dad *(doesn't say anything and reminds himself to remain in control of his own emotions).*

Nathan: I'm NOT playing with you anymore, Dad.

Dad: It's hard to lose when you want to win.

Nathan: No it's not! I don't care!

Dad *(doesn't say anything).*

Nathan continues yelling. His dad waits for a few minutes, remaining quiet. Eventually Nathan starts to slow down.

Dad: I don't really love losing either.

Nathan *(gets quiet for a moment).*

Dad: It's frustrating.

Nathan: I'm NOT frustrated.

Dad: Fair enough.

Nathan: It's just dumb.

Dad *(doesn't say anything).*

Nathan *(starts to speak more quietly):* I wish I'd at least gotten to the next part of the game.

Dad. I hear you. *(Pauses).* It's OK to be disappointed. I wish you wouldn't yell at ME though.

Nathan *(doesn't say anything).*

Dad: Next time you feel that mad, can you try what you did last time that worked? Pushing really hard against the wall?

Nathan: I forgot.

Dad: I get that. How do you think you can remember next time?

Nathan: I'm not sure.

Dad: What if we practice it a few times before we play this game again?

Nathan: I guess.

Dad: Does that mean you're willing to play this game with me again?

Nathan *(smiling slightly):* I guess.

NOTE: If Nathan's dad tried to engage with him and Nathan continued to get upset, Nathan's dad would remain silent and focused on showing what it looks like to stay calm even when things aren't going your way.



- **KEY TAKEAWAY:** Nathan's dad knows that when Nathan is in Yuck, he won't behave positively or think rationally. Instead of trying to get Nathan to change, **he focuses letting Nathan travel the curve while he regulates his own emotions** so he doesn't make the situation worse. In this way, he's also **providing a model for Nathan to learn from.**
- **TIP:** This situation will go much better in the moment if Nathan's dad has been proactively **demonstrating that he is on Nathan's side** (by making deposits regularly) and **helping Nathan practice Yuck release strategies when he's not upset.**