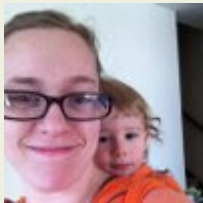


Patience as a Verb



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“Balancing on My Toes” is an original column appearing every other Friday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Angel M. Ethell. Angel lives in the Chicagoland area with her family: sons Teen (13) and Lil G (2) along with their little sister Cassie Pie (dog), her partner Daddy G and father-in-law Grandpa G. She loves learning new things along with learning that she might not always be right... 100% of the time. Archived columns can be found [here](#). BMT-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Patience is not something that comes natural to me. I was not blessed with the ability to listen to a child screaming pretty much for any reason, nor the ability to suffer just about anything when I am either tired or hungry. Anyone else hear me on that? I know I’m not the only one. There are so many things that aggravate me endlessly if I let them and for some reason my children are capable of doing any number of these things. Sometime simultaneously. Anyone else been there? Yup, I know it. You don’t have to tell me. So what do I do? I cannot just lose my cool all the time so I had to learn some patience if I was going to survive parenthood. So I’m going to talk about patience as a verb. What exactly is patience, where does it come from and how do I accumulate this stuff, and most importantly how do I keep from losing my cool once my patience has hit its limit?

What is Patience?

Lets all be honest here, we could probably all be a bit more patient, but to really possess it we need to know what it is. In its essence. Perhaps it is different for everybody but patience to me is knowledge, critical thinking, and understanding. I have said to a friend recently that I have endless patience for toddler shenanigans but very little for the teenage variety. While this is very true for me the reason for this is because I find it harder to have empathy towards teens because I have lost a bit more of the connection to my teenage self than I have retained. I know this, but still find myself getting tired of the same conversations and the same reactions to the conversations from my teen. The thing is that when I understand what is going on in his head a bit better I can allow for more flexible reactions to different circumstances of which there are too many to give example of all, but I can think of one off the top of my head. My son’s science teacher emails me to say he is missing some assignments (he chose to stay in public school) and that he needs to stay after to complete them or he will get negative marks. I am irked. For one I am irked that the teacher is

bringing this to my attention and not his, and annoyed at him for putting me in this situation. To me it seems it would be easier to just do the work, so I am quick to ask him why he is intentionally not doing his work; telling him that we could be doing something else but now he has to stay extra to complete his missing assignments. But it turns out he had the directions confused and although he did the assignment it was done improperly so it was counted as not turned in. Okay I get it, whatever, just make sure you do it the right way the next time. It is annoying to a parent to hear from a teacher for negative reasons, especially in my opinion, a teen who is plenty capable and intelligent enough to do the work, but understanding goes a long way to not losing it all over the place instead of remaining calm and talking about it.

Lost Patience from Lost Connection

I lose patience when I have told the teen to do a household chore only to find him still playing video games instead. But even if I don't understand them, there are reasons for these behaviors and if I connect to my teen I may see those reasons. And if I'm really lucky and they don't add up to good reasons I have the opportunity to develop a conversation about why the other tasks are more important. But I do lose my patience sometimes and react negatively myself and lose the chance to connect and communicate and that is something I work against every day.

Where Does Patience Come From?

Where does this stuff come from? Personally it comes from understanding. As I mentioned before I have very little innate patience so it is something I have to create in myself. To do this I research stuff. Seriously. Tantrums? No problem; I understand tantrums most of the time. These come from unmet needs. This can be the toddler kind in my house to the adult kind and isn't pretty in any form. My toddler loses patience with me plenty and I am inevitably comforting him using my patience as a buffer for his impatience with me. In many of these circumstances it is pretty comical, but I've been guilty of throwing my own adult size fits as has my 14 year old. These all stem from unmet needs. So anytime this happens (as long as I still have my cool) I am able to step back and analyze a situation, understand it and try a resolution that will satisfy all parties. The more I understand the more I am able to keep composure and control the situation. Although I have to say in the middle of the store the other day I came very close to the bottom of my cup as I knelt next to my sobbing toddler and told him as calmly as I could that I really understood that it was late in the day and he was probably hungry but that if he would just sit in the cart we could really make the trip a lot quicker and get us all home sooner. I was pretty close to tears myself. The yogurt didn't seem to notice. A mantra helps too in these situations. "Its okay darling. Everything is a-okay" Over and over again.

The Bottom of My Cup

I have been here more times than I care to relate here, but every time I learn a little bit more about myself and about self-control. It sounds counter-intuitive to learn how to be more patient by losing my cool, but I do. In some cases I learn my limits, which are good to know, and in other situations after I have calmed I realize something that I could have done to help in that situation. Mostly those things are something like: I could have left the situation or approached it differently.

When I start to feel frustrated I think about when was the last time I ate and if I slept well the night before. I have specific triggers just like everybody else. Learn those triggers and you will find patience. Communication is a good tool to develop patience too, but only if the other party involved can coherently explain him or herself.

Patience for All

I didn't have a good role model for patience as a child if you have not guessed by now. This has been a detriment to my development and I know this. It is the main reason I have dedicated myself to a more positive mindset and more education. It is amazing how much a good role model really does do. My partner of 12 years is seemingly endlessly patient. He is the Yin to my Yang. He balances me so well by providing me that role model I desperately need. I only have my own experiences to draw on alone, but with him as my guide I have grown exponentially as a person. He had the most loving, caring and patient mother to learn from and I hope my children learn that from him as I am learning every day.

How do you cultivate patience in your life? Do you find it helps to create peace in your home?

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