

SOBER: Adapted for parents

S — Stop

Your child is melting down, defying you, or doing the thing that always gets to you. Before you react, simply pause. One breath, one beat. This is the gap between what they did and what you do next.

O — Observe

Notice what is showing up — without acting on it yet. Is it the guilt about this morning? The fear they'll never change? The old story that you're failing? Notice it as a passenger, not as the truth. "Ah, here's self-doubt again."

B — Breathe

A few slow breaths; out longer than in. Bring your nervous system back into range. You are not trying to feel calm. You are trying to feel capable. Enough to access the parent you want to be, even if they are only just within reach right now.

E — Expand

Widen your view. Look at your child; not the behaviour, but the child. Consider what they might be carrying right now. Then ask yourself: what kind of parent do I want to be in this moment? This is you remembering your destination. Hands back on the wheel.

R — Respond

Act from your values, not from the noise. This does not need to be perfect — it needs to be chosen. Patience when you are tired. Connection when you are frustrated. Repair when you have got it wrong. Small, values-driven steps. That is the whole job.

SOBER works because it mirrors what psychological flexibility actually requires:

- a moment of space,
- a willingness to see clearly,
- a physiological anchor,
- a widening of perspective,
- and finally a step in the direction of what matters.

Each stage is doing something distinct.