

Diane Laney: Being an emotional container. This is [Diane Laney 00:00:03], a foster parent in Massachusetts, and I'd like to talk to you about an example of when I have to be an emotional container for my son, Alex.

Alex, when he initially came to me, was very agitated if I was even one minute late. He is a teenage boy, and he has a cell phone. He would text me when I was on my way. "Where are you?" Now, I wasn't even late yet. And I told him, "I'm on my way."

He'd text me back. "How much longer?"

I said, "I'll be there in a couple of minutes, Alex."

"You're mad dumb. Why are you always late?"

"Alex, I'm not late. I will be there. Perhaps I will be a minute or two late, but I am coming."

"You're dumb. You're dumb. Forget it. I don't even need a ride. I don't know why you're not texting me back. You're stupid."

"Alex, I have to wait till I'm at the red light. I will be there."

"Forget it. I don't even need you anyway. I'm just going to walk. Forget it. Just forget it. Don't even bother to come."

And of course, I continued to drive there, and within just a few minutes, I was there. I was no more than a couple of minutes late, but in Alex's world, I had abandoned him. He was way outside of his window of containment. He was angry, furious. He got in the car, and he started to call me names. And I calmly said, "Alex, I'm sorry you're so agitated that I was late. I know you were worried."

"I wasn't worried. You just don't care. And I don't care. It doesn't matter anymore."

I said, "I will try to always be on time. Sometimes I may be late, but I will always come for you, Alex."

By the time we arrived home, he said, "I don't know why I freaked out like that."

I said, "It's okay, Alex. I know you were worried."

Now, a lot of parents would've been very angry and felt that he was disrespectful in the way he was talking to me, but I knew he could not contain himself in that moment. And because I remained calm, he was able to recognize his behavior and realize that he had said some hurtful things. Did I get the full

apology that I would've loved? No, but he did acknowledge and recognize that his behavior was over the edge. Over time, Alex has learned to be calm and ask me nicely when I'll be coming. He realizes that I'm always coming for him. We've established that pattern, and he can now contain himself. But in that moment, I needed to be his emotional container.

Speaker 2: This marks the end of this podcast. For more information about the Resource Parent Curriculum, please visit us online at learn.nctsn.org/rpc. Thank you for listening.