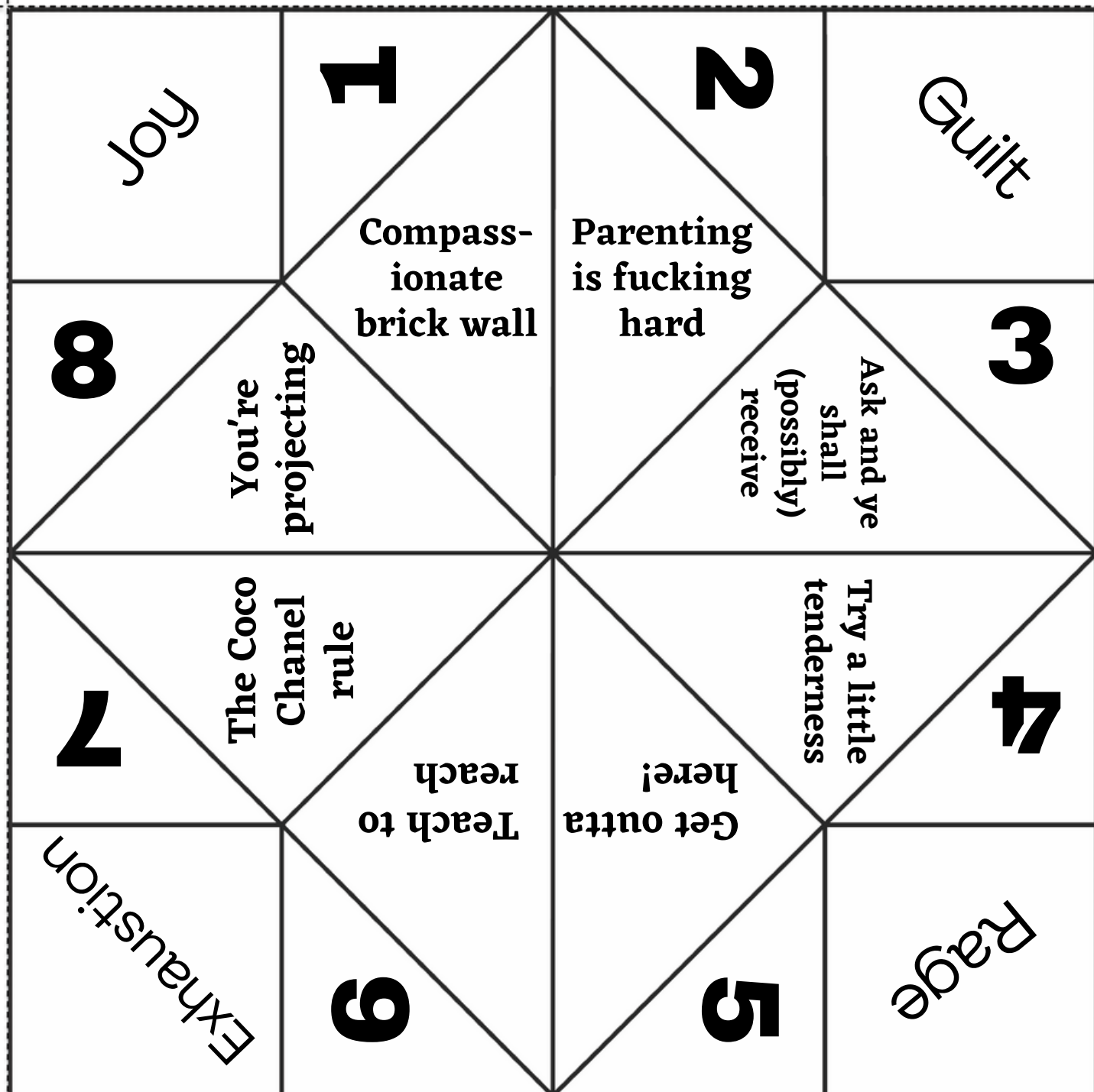


# The No-Cost No-Fail\* Parenting-Advice Fortune Teller

Brought to you by Sarah Wheeler of Momspreading

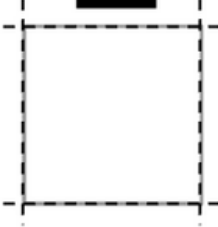






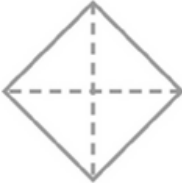
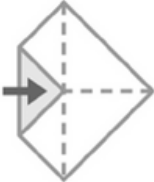








\*Parenting advice is culturally-bound, usually given out of context, and likely to make unreasonable demands of parents. And yet, in all of my years working with all kinds of families and kids, these "best of" approaches tend to cover most bases. Of course, the advice included herein may fail. Please don't sue me.

# Directions

- If you weren't a ten-year-old girl between the years 1956 and 2022, and you don't know how to operate a *Fortune Teller* (aka Cootie Catcher), watch [this video](#) for a demo!
- Print, cut, and fold (see next page) your Fortune Teller. If it tickles your fancy, color it in before cutting it out.
- Place four fingers inside the *Fortune Teller*, so that only the "Four Winds of Parenting" (*Rage, Exhaustion, Guilt, and Joy*) are visible.
- Ask a parenting-related question that's been troubling you. For example, *why won't my kids eat the lunch I pack them?* or *Why are mornings the absolute worst?*
- Choose one of the Four Winds and open and close the *Fortune Teller* once for each letter (for example, R-A-G-E).
- Now, choose one of the four numbers you see, and open and close that many times.
- Choose another number from the four visible options.
- Open the *Fortune Teller* to read what is behind that number, and you will land on a possible strategy for *reducing* (notice I don't say *solving*) your problem. Consult the fortune guide for more info.
- If one piece of advice doesn't resonate with you, try again! Think of this as akin to a Tarot card reading, where you have the freedom to say "I don't know what that *Jack of Knives* is about, but the upside-down *Nine of Muses* really makes sense!" And remember, parenting is inherently challenging and imperfect – the goal is not to make everything go away, just to make it a *tad* better.

# Fortune-Teller Folding

<div>1</div>  <p>Cut</p>	<div>2</div>  <p>Fold</p>	<div>3</div>  <p>Unfold</p>	<div>4</div>  <p>Fold</p>
<div>5</div>  <p>Unfold</p>	<div>6</div>  <p>Fold Corners into center</p>	<div>7</div>  <p>Flip over</p>	<div>8</div>  <p>Flip over</p>
<div>9</div>  <p>Fold Corners into center</p>	<div>10</div>  <p>Flip over</p>	<div>11</div>  <p>Fold in Half</p>	<div>12</div>  <p>Fold in Half</p>
<div>13</div>  <p>Unfold</p>	<div>14</div>  <p>Fold in half and put fingers into flaps</p>		



# Fortune Guide



## ASK, AND YE SHALL (POSSIBLY) RECEIVE

This one sounds obvious, but I'm amazed at how often I forget about it. Asking your child, be they toddler or teen, without judgement and at a *neutral* time, what's up for them around a particular issue, can really shift your sense of the problem, and their sense of whether you care about their perspective. In the *Collaborative and Proactive Solutions* model, you sit down and say "I notice that (ex: you've been coming out of your room a lot at night), what's up with that?" Then you question them till you really understand their take, and reflect it back to them to make sure you've got it right ("Okay, so I hear you saying you have to pee a lot in the night, and you get scared sometimes, and sometimes you're hungry, and sometimes you want to listen to a story, anything else?"). Only then do you present your side of things, and invite them to try and think of some solutions that might address both of your concerns. ("The thing is, when you come out at night it wakes me up too.

I wonder if there's some ways we could get you what you need at night without waking me up?"). For more guidance, go [here](#). Family meetings are another great way to get your kid's POV.

## TRY A LITTLE TENDERNESS

When we're stuck in a crappy place with a kid, much of our time with them can become, well, crappy. Especially if you have more than one kid, setting aside QT with one child can seem impossible, but a little goes a long way. A day-long one-on-one zoo adventure is cool, but even 10 minutes of focused attention is probably going to loosen something up in your dynamic. If they're little, try being your best Doris Burke and narrating their play like a sportscaster. "Oh, you're putting the train on the tracks now" so they feel seen and not controlled. If they're older, give them an amount of time and ask them what they want to do with it. Consider setting aside a regular time for this, like the ten minutes before dinner or every other Wednesday after school.

## GET OUTTA HERE!

When's the last time you took time and space from your family/child? Can you spend a weekend at a friend's house? A night in a motel? Can you walk around the block for five minutes while they nap or instead of cleaning up dinner? It can seem impossible, but there is usually room for taking space, and it's absolutely essential when you're feeling too close to the problem.

## TEACH TO REACH

Ross Greene, author of "Raising Human Beings" and possessor of a solid New England accent, has this helpful philosophy: "Kids do well if they can" - meaning that if they had the skills to *not* have problems, they would. They're probably not sucking at stuff to make you insane, but because of a "lagging skill" that needs to be taught, modeled, practiced, and reinforced, just like we teach reading or math. Asking for help, doing something more quietly, picking out clothes, calming down, and organizing homework are good examples.

## THE COCO CHANEL RULE

Fashion-designer Coco Chanel supposedly said "Before you leave the house, look in the mirror and take one thing off." Though I never follow this rule in fashion (more is more!), when I'm stuck in a parenting rut, I often return to this Marie Kondo-esque edict. What is one expectation you can remove from your kids or yourself? How can you simplify something? What family norm sparks joy for absolutely no one?

- What if the kids dressed in their clothes the night before rather than the morning?
- What if you stopped trying to corral everyone to the breakfast table, and just made breakfast a to-go activity?
- What if you went to one fewer weekend events or volunteered for one less PTA thing?

You can also think of this as an invitation to *remove* one of the steps required to do something:

- If everyone is leaving their backpacks around the house, why not put hooks right by the door?
- If kids demand a different dinner than the *Jerusalem Cookbook* spread you prepared, how about they have a bin in the fridge of self-service substitutes?

You see what I'm getting at here.

## YOU'RE PROJECTING

As parents, it's very easy to worry that our children will experience the world in all the horrible ways we did, but it's often an unhelpful distraction. Agonizing over whether your daughter is going to grow up to also struggle with depression doesn't help you get through her meltdowns. In fact, it probably makes you so overwhelmed that you're no longer reacting to what's actually going on and how to move through it. Your kids are not you. You are not your parents. Let that shit go. Read about how to "Byron Katie" your kids [here](#).

## COMPASSIONATE BRICK WALL

I can't remember where I read this, but it got me through some rough toddler times, and still feels relevant with older kids. "Be a compassionate brick wall" is a shortcut to remembering that it's good to set limits with your kids, and you can empathize with their response without sacrificing your own boundaries. "Of course you want that *Lego Star Wars Murder Vessel*, and I'm not going to buy it for you today. That would make me sad too.

And if you keep screaming, we're going to have to leave the store."

One version of this I often repeat is "you can be mad, but you can't be mean." Sure, it doesn't always stop them from being mean anyway, but it serves as a helpful reminder that responsive parenting does not mean letting your kiddo do whatever they want.

## PARENTING IS FUCKING HARD

At the end of the day, and despite all of the advice I just spewed, often there is no pure solution to parenting challenges. All of the books and blogs and parenting podcasts exist in a vacuum, and your family is a complex, messy, human ecosystem. So many things are out of our control. So, if you're up for it, try something new and see if it helps, even a little. But mostly, practice acceptance. Of yourself, of your kid(s), and of this ridiculous task you maybe didn't know you were taking-on when you became a parent. Also, though the difficulty of parenting never ends, it does ebb and flow. Give your current situation a few weeks, maybe it will let up. And if it doesn't, know that you're in good company.