

Are you parenting from your wounds?

Picture this. It is a Monday evening in Kampala. Your son drops his school bag by the door. His report card is not what you expected. Before he can explain, your voice rises. Later, when the house is quiet, guilt sits beside you. You love this child deeply. So why did that moment feel less like guidance and more like a replay of your own childhood?

That is why a question Wendy Ologe, a parenting coach, asked during a webinar stopped me in my tracks: "Are you parenting from wisdom or from your wounds?" It sounds simple, but for many of us raising children in African homes, it is deeply confronting.

We like to believe that because we love our children, our actions automatically come from a healthy place. Yet Ologe reminded us that many of our responses are shaped by childhood experiences we have never fully processed. We may not even realise it, but our past quietly speaks through our reactions.

One sign she pointed out is overcompensation. It is that inner voice that says, "I have suffered so much for my children to go through what I went through." So we rush to remove every obstacle, solve every problem, and shield them from discomfort.

Another sign is becoming a controlling parent, saying, "After all, we turned out right under the same parenting model." But did we truly turn out right, or we simply learned survival skills that we now call strength?

Pause for a moment and reflect. Are you triggered by your child's behaviour? Maybe their crying irritates you more than it should. Maybe their talkative nature feels like defiance. Maybe when they do wrong, your first instinct is



punishment that is so severe it "teaches a lesson." That is parenting from wounds. Wisdom, on the other hand, asks: "What is my child learning about themselves in this moment? Am I building fear or character?"

Sometimes our unhealed dreams also shape our expectations. Did you miss out on a medical course and now insist your child must become a doctor? Did you grow up without certain essentials and now find yourself frequently saying, "I survived without them, so you can too"? These statements may sound strong, but they often come from unresolved pain rather than clarity.

Katrina Wood (PhD), in her publication "Mothers & Teen Sons It's Complicated", explains this beautifully. She writes that

"unresolved personal trauma and childhood wounding can trigger defensive reactivity and painful emotions." When a child behaves in ways that remind a parent of a distant or distracted caregiver from their past, it can awaken deep historical pain. Wood notes that when this reactivity is imposed on a teen, it becomes difficult to separate past from present, leading to defensive disconnections. Truly, that is a lonely place for both parent and child.

But dear parent, this is not a message of guilt. It is an invitation to awareness.

You do not have to remain trapped in old patterns. Healing begins with noticing your triggers and choosing differently. It is parenting with a long-term objective, where you focus on your child's character, not just their obedience. It means de-

cisions come from clarity, not emotional wounds.

Remember, parenting is first about you. It calls for emotional regulation; pausing when anger rises, breathing before reacting, and asking yourself what this moment is teaching both you and your child.

You will never undo your past, but you can transform your parenting. It is by separating your child's actions from your feelings and practising self-regulation when upset. That creates a safer emotional space for them.

And perhaps that is the greatest gift we can give our children in Africa today. Not perfection, but parents who are brave enough to heal, reflect, and choose wisdom over wounds.

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A concerned parent