

Greetings!

Motivation is one of the biggest problems parents have with children today. How to get them to do what you want them to do when you want them to do it? Repeating instructions over and over again can be very tiring and stressful. This month we will focus on ways to assertively give commands and have directions followed the first time. None of these strategies are magic bullets. They need to be applied consistently and persistently until the child learns what you expect of them.

Teach them while they are young

Preschoolers have a natural need to be with their parents and instinctively want to do what their parents are doing. Take advantage of this and teach them early to follow directions and help out around the house. Problems arise when parents need their pre-schooler to do one thing and the child wants to do another. The key to successfully motivating your young child is to stay CALM and be assertive. Tell your child what you **DO** want done instead of criticizing them for what you don't want them to be doing. When you want a task completed be sure to be assertive, specific and fully expect your directions to be followed. "We will put our coats and boots on now." Being direct, assertive and using a firm voice will clearly communicate to your child who is in charge. This is actually comforting to the child because they crave structure, it helps them feel safe.

Maintaining the motivation to help

During these early school years it is time to slowly transition your child to being more internally motivated to solve problems as they see them come up. One way of doing this is to describe what you see and be open to solutions suggested by the child. "I see toys spread out on the floor." Children who have been involved in the clean up process at an earlier age should have the tools to solve the problem and be internally motivated to take care of it. If the child does not take the initiative then it is time to be more directive in their problem solving. Let them know how you feel and then give them a choice on how to solve the problem. "These toys all over the floor are frustrating me, you can pick up the blocks or the trucks first." If this approach fails calmly pick up the toys and put them up on time out for a day or so. Using logical consequences teaches the child cause and effect. As parents we tend to lecture our way through this process, but that only blocks the learning that could occur through logical consequences.

Keeping teens engaged

During the teen years it can be a particularly challenging battle to keep them engaged in the functioning of the family and helping out around the house. Personally I have five teenagers in my house and as different as they all are the key ingredient in maintaining cooperation is respect. Modeling respectful behavior, such as refraining from lecturing and allowing consequences to be

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the teachers. For example, if I want my son to clean the bathroom I give him a time frame which allows him the autonomy to get to it when it fits in his schedule. I will often say the chore needs to be done before the next time you turn on the TV. The next question is what to do if the chore is not completed. The logical consequence would be no TV. However, respect is really the key for communicating and enlisting cooperation from teens. Once they know you care about them and respect their growing abilities they are much easier to deal with on a daily basis.

Free one hour presentations are available to church and school groups for adult forums or parent education nights. The presentation is called, "Love and Limits; Raising happy and cooperative children." Call now to reserve a time for your parent group, 619-6539.

Sincerely,

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