

Why won't they listen?

Tips for talking with your child

Be clear about what you expect

- Tell them what you want them to do. 'Be good' is too vague.
- Examples: 'When you finish your homework, you can go outside.' or 'Before story time you need to brush your teeth, wash your face and put on your pajamas.'

Use visuals and timers

- Seeing or reading something can help your child remember 8 times more information than saying it.
- Write down expectations on a chart or as part of household rules.
- Use pictures, words or both.
- Use a clock or timer to help your child be aware of the time and motivate them to get the task done.

Notice when they do well

- Give attention to the behaviour you want to see more.
- Examples: 'You made your bed this morning, awesome!' or 'You let your sister go first, that was nice of you.'
- Focus on the effort, not the end result. It might take them sometime to get it right.

Don't give a choice when there isn't one

- 'Would you mind getting that for me?' 'Don't you think it's time to get ready?' Both questions offer a choice. If your child says 'no' they appear defiant, however they were given a choice.
- Give clear expectations, such as: 'Five more minutes, then it's time to go.'

Alter your expectations

- Children develop at different rates. Some need more support and time to master skills.
- Your child will need more time and support if they struggle with mental health issues, or are behind their peers in thinking skills or physical development.
- Alter your thinking to be more positive. Think about how far they have come.

Children are not little adults

- Children and teens think differently than adults. Their brains aren't fully developed until well into their 20's.
- They will have different goals and expectations. Children and adults differ in what they think is important.

Show that you care

- Children want to feel heard. Show your child that you are listening. Respond with empathy to show that you care.
- Example: If your child says 'No one played with me at recess today. I'm never going back!' you could say 'Oh no, no one played with you? That must have been frustrating and lonely.'

Be consistent and follow through

- Children need to hear the same message many times. If you change your message, your child may get confused.
- If you do not follow through with your plan, the message you give is that it's not important.

Be a good role model

- Children learn what they live. Your child learns from what you say and do.
- Teach your child how to do things. Don't expect them to learn things on their own.
- Follow these steps to teach: Show them how, do it together, watch them do it, then let them do it on their own.

Don't parent from the other room

- Communication is most important. This cannot happen from another room.
- Speak to your child face-to-face.
- Depending on what they are doing, they may need physical touch, such as a tap on the shoulder to get them to focus on you.

Listen actively

- Listen to understand not to respond.
- Give your full attention.
- Do not interrupt or offer advice.
- Acknowledge with a nod.

For more information or help

See our 'Growing together Flyer' at www.mchcommunityed.ca for free community groups and programs

To register call 905-521-2100 x 74147

Community Education Service
Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre
McMaster Children's Hospital