

Dr. John Ferguson presents...23 WAYS TO TALK SO YOUR CHILDREN WILL LISTEN

A major part of discipline is learning how to talk with children. The way you talk to your **child** teaches him how to talk to others. Here are some talking tips that work with children:

1. Connect before you direct Before giving your child directions, squat to your child's eye level and engage your child in eye-to-eye contact to get his attention. Teach him how to focus: "Mary, I need your eyes." Offer the same body language when listening to the child. Be sure not to make your eye contact so intense that your child perceives it as controlling rather than connecting. Address the child by name when a request is made.

2. Stay brief We use the one-sentence rule: Put the main directive in the opening sentence. The longer you ramble, the more likely your child is to become parent-deaf. Too much talking is a very common mistake when dialoging about an issue. It gives the child the feeling that you're not quite sure what it is you want to say. If she can keep you talking she can get you sidetracked.

3. Stay simple Use short sentences with one-syllable words. Listen to how kids communicate with each other and take note. When your child shows that glazed, disinterested look, you are no longer being understood.

4. Ask your child to repeat the request back to you If he can't, it's too long or too complicated.

5. Make an offer the child can't refuse You can reason with a two or three-year-old, especially to avoid power struggles. "Get dressed so you can go outside and play." Offer a reason for your request that is to the child's advantage, and one that is difficult to refuse. This gives her a reason to move out of her power position and do what you want her to do.

6. Be positive Instead of "no running," try: "Inside we walk, outside you may run."

7. Begin your directives with "I want." Instead of "Get down," say "I want you to get down." Instead of "Let Becky have a turn," say "I want you to let Becky have a turn now." This works well with **children** who want to please but don't like being ordered. By saying "I want," you give a reason for compliance rather than just an order.

8. "When...then." "When you get your teeth brushed, then we'll begin the story." "When your work is finished, then you can watch TV." "When," which implies that you expect obedience, works better than "if," which suggests that the child has a choice when you don't mean to give him one.

9. Legs first, mouth second Instead of hollering, "Turn off the TV, it's time for dinner!" walk into the room where your child is watching TV, join in with your child's interests for a few minutes, and then, during a commercial break, have your child turn off the TV. Going to your child conveys you're serious about your request; otherwise children interpret this as a mere preference.

10. Speak developmentally correctly The younger the child, the shorter and simpler your directives should be. Consider your child's level of understanding. For example, a common error parents make is asking a three-year-old, "Why did you do that?" Most adults can't always answer that question about their behavior. Try instead, "Let's talk about what you did."

11. Speak socially correctly Even a two-year-old can learn "please." Expect your child to be polite. Children shouldn't feel manners are optional. Speak to your children the way you want them to speak to you.

12. Speak psychologically correctly Threats and judgmental openers are likely to put the child on the defensive. "You" messages make a child clam up. "I" messages are non-accusing. Instead of "You'd better do this..." or "You must..." try "I would like..." or "I am so pleased when you..." Instead of "You need to clear the table," say "I need you to clear the table." Don't ask a leading question when a negative answer is not an option. "Will you please pick up your coat?" Just say, "Pick up your coat, please."

13. Write it Reminders can evolve into nagging so easily, especially for preteens who feel being told things puts them in the slave category. Without saying a word you can communicate anything you need said. Talk with a pad and pencil. Leave humorous notes for your child. Then sit back and watch it happen.

14. Talk the child down The louder your child yells, the softer you respond. Let your child ventilate while you interject timely comments: "I understand" or "Can I help?" Sometimes just having a caring listener available will wind down the tantrum. If you come in at his level, you have two tantrums to deal with. Be the adult for him.

15. Settle the listener Before giving your directive, restore emotional equilibrium, otherwise you are wasting your time. Nothing sinks in when a child is an emotional wreck.

16. Replay your message Toddlers need to be told a thousand times. Children under two have difficulty internalizing your directives. Most three-year-olds begin to internalize directives so that what you ask begins to sink in. Do less and less repeating as your child gets older. Preteens regard repetition as nagging.

17. Let your child complete the thought Instead of "Don't leave your mess piled up," try: "Matthew, think of where you want to store your soccer stuff." Letting the child fill in the blanks is more likely to create a lasting lesson.

18. Use rhyme rules. "If you hit, you must sit." Get your child to repeat them.

19. Give likable alternatives You can't go by yourself to the park; but you can play in the neighbor's yard.

20. Give advance notice "We are leaving soon. Say bye-bye to the toys, bye-bye to the girls..."

21. Open up a closed child Carefully chosen phrases open up closed little minds and mouths. Stick to topics that you know your child gets excited about. Ask questions that require more than a yes or no. Stick to specifics. Instead of "Did you have a good day at school today?" try "What is the most fun thing you did today?"

22. Use "When you...I feel...because..." When you run away from mommy in the store I feel worried because you might get lost.

23. Close the discussion If a matter is really closed to discussion, say so. "I'm not changing my mind about this. Sorry." You'll save wear and tear on both you & your child. Reserve your "I mean business" tone of voice for when you do.

Our Stress and Our Children

Did you know that 90 percent of the time our kids' stress is tied to our own? Trying to cope with our own inner turmoil and at the same time be patient with our children can be a huge challenge. And even if our child's stress isn't related to our own, it still distresses us because we hate to see our kids hurting. Learning how to deal with life's ups and downs is an essential life skill. Balance is everything. When you understand the physiology of stress, it's easier to be the sensitive emotion coach that your child needs and stay out of the power struggles.

The Stress Hormones

Researchers have found that when we're stressed, our bodies become aroused, ready for action. Your nerve system, which controls and coordinates all body functions, detects that stress (real or perceived) and sends messages to your sympathetic nerve system to start your body's intelligent stress response – called **"fight-or-flight"** - by releasing certain chemicals from your adrenal glands called "hormones". These hormones (adrenaline, nor-adrenaline and cortisol) have the following effects on the body to allow your body to survive in the short term:

Increased heart rate and blood pressure and increased fatty acids (lipids) and blood glucose (sugar) and clotting factors and blood cholesterol (increased LDL, decreased HDL) - ask yourself if this doesn't sound like heart disease and stroke waiting to happen. There are decreased serotonin (the "feel good" hormone) levels and increased nor-adrenaline levels which produce depression, fatigue, anxiety as well as decreased short-term memory, reduced ability to concentrate and learn new material (learning and attention deficits = ADHD?), decreased sex drive, increased sensitivity to pain and accelerated aging (lack of growth hormone)! What about the insulin receptor resistance and increased blood sugar and lipids leading to obesity and type II diabetes? What about the chronically suppressed immune function (leading to frequent colds, allergies, asthma, cancer)...muscle protein break down and bone density decreases (osteoporosis)...and disrupted sleep associated with increased cortisol? Virtually every major health issue in society is addressed here!

When you're chronically stressed, as most Americans are, your nervous system becomes imbalanced, you can't think, you forget things and become susceptible to many illnesses. You're more excitable and more sensitive, which can disrupt sleep and make crowds unbearable, noises louder, and surprises harder to handle. The cycle feeds itself – you get more stressed out and your brain reacts by releasing more hormones. That's why the more stressed the child (person), the less he'll sleep; and the less sleep he gets, the more cortisol his body produces. The result is a child who wakes up ready to battle.

Studies show that parents that are proactive and take better care of themselves and their children are better able to minimize this cycle. The most natural way to reduce the stress response is through healthy body movement: (outdoor) play, sports, stretching, yoga, massage and most importantly chiropractic adjustments. Research shows that most of the receptors to turn down/off the stress response in the body are located in the spine. If subluxation (spinal misalignment) is present, there is increased stress to the body (Hello stress response!) and decreased nerve system function. By correcting spinal imbalances, the nerve system is allowed to reduce stress within the body and control body functions more efficiently. Each and every day, I work with the nervous system to decrease the stress placed on it while allowing for proper growth and development of the spine, nerves and body – especially in children.

You owe it to yourself and your **children** to make sure their bodies and nerve systems grow and develop as **stress-free** as possible and that includes regular chiropractic check-ups to keep the **spine and nerves** functioning well so it can control the rest of the body! A complimentary consultation is your next best step. I look forward to talking with you soon!