



BE HAPPY

EFFECTIVE COMMANDS

BE HAPPY PARENTING SKILL

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WHY ARE MY COMMANDS INEFFECTIVE?

Giving a child commands is a daily part of caregiving. However, oftentimes commands may be structured in a way that enables noncompliance in a child and frustration in the caregiver! Most commonly, commands are ineffective because they are: (1) too vague, (2) tell the child what not to do, rather than what to do (3) are given in the context of dysregulation (4) the commanded behavior is not developmentally appropriate, or (5) they are used too often. However, a few simple changes in command structure can help alleviate difficulty for both you and your child.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COMMANDS

- ✓ Ensure full attention.
- ✓ Shorten content.
- ✓ Make it a command, not a question.
- ✓ Tell them what to do.
- ✓ Be specific.
- ✓ Ensure you are heard.
- ✓ Praise for success!



Ensure full attention.

- Get on their eye level.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Use their name when speaking to them.
- Speak in close proximity, not shouting across the room.
- Create a “listening” body posture.



Shorten content.

- Use simple words and phrases to communicate what you need.
- Provide only one direction at a time.
- Set expectations based on your child’s abilities.
- Leave commands for when something needs to be done.



Make it a command, not a question.

- Phrasing commands as questions gives children the opportunity to say no.
- If the command is not a choice, don’t give the option!



Tell them what to do.

- Telling a child what not to do leaves them without the knowledge of the desired behavior.
- Instead, provide information about what your child should do.



Be specific.

- Be specific about the time, place, thing and people associated with a command to help improve compliance.
- Consider specifying outcomes for compliance and noncompliance with a command.



Ensure you are heard.

- Have your child verbally repeat back the command.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Check in for compliance during and after they complete the task.



Praise for success!

- Thank your child for complying with the command.
- Label exactly what they did that you would like repeated in the future.
- Provide both verbal and physical praise.