

DEALING WITH A CHILDS DEMANDING BEHAVIOR

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Let's Face It – Kids Will Test Your Limits!

They will push your buttons. How do we deal with a child's demanding behavior?

Following are 10 tips I hope will help you manage this difficult phase.

1. Be Concrete – Don't confuse your child by saying, "In a little while". Or "In a bit". Instead, be specific. For example, "We'll read the book after you finish brushing your teeth." Or "You can play outside when you put the toys away inside the container."
2. Take Turns – Practice taking turns with the child. For example, during play time, say, "We are going to take turns choosing what we play. You go first, and then I will go next." You can model this in other areas as well: taking turns picking a movie, what to eat Friday nights and what drink mix, etc. This builds cooperation and teamwork.
3. Give Choices – Try to say "No" less. Instead, give choices. This will allow them to express their voice and gives them a sense of control. To avoid confusion, be careful not to give too many choices. Allowing the child to choose can be used as a distraction. For example, you can say, "You can color or play your DS while you wait for dinner." Or have things set up for the child to avoid frustrations. For example, use coloring mats during meal times. It promotes learning and invites dialogue while you finish up a meal.
4. Keep Structure – Knowing what's next alleviates anxiety. I know there are times when keeping structure is difficult. One way to help a child know what's next is by using a timer. For example, when watching television, say, "When the bell rings, it's time to turn off the T.V."
5. Explain the Consequences – Be clear about the consequences before the child has opportunity to "misbehave". For example, before going to the store, say, "We are only buying what's on our list". I find that having the child hold and "help check off" the list helps them focus. When they say, "I want..." I ask, "Is it on our list?" I play it off, then say, "No, it's not" and just keep walking.

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6. Read a Book or Watch a Movie – Books or movies can provide great examples regarding various topics. After reading a book or watching a movie, talk about it. Ask questions that will open the dialogue. Please don't give examples of what your child is doing wrong. Instead, use the characters and ask the child a question about what happened with the character. To reinforce the concept you are trying to instill, refer back to the character as many times as possible.
7. Play Games – Games have the potential to teach a demanding child the concept of “taking turns”. The child will learn that there are times of rest, passing and other times engaging in “their turn”. Children learn to empathy with others as they learn the game of “loosing” or “winning”.
8. Model Delayed Gratification – This is important. Show your child that you are able to wait for those things you really want. For example, when shopping don't buy an entire outfit. Instead, discuss the concept of being a “good steward”. Even if you can afford it, this will help the child understand that “we can't always buy what we want.”
9. Teach the Difference between Needs and Wants – When a child's impulsive tendency surfaces, they are not able to recognize it. Parenting requires helping your child identify their impulsive behaviors and help them choose wisely. We don't need a new bicycle. We want it. We need food, but we don't need an ice cream cone. We want it. Check your own vocabulary and try to catch yourself when you misuse the word need.
10. Be Consistent and Stay Calm – As the adult, you have to be consistent and stay calm. It won't help for you to show your frustration or anger. In fact, it will only make things worse. So, model staying calm. Remember that eliminating demanding behaviors will take effort and energy. It's all about trial and error but most of all, it takes time to reinforce these concepts.

Rest in His Word: Proverbs 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” (NIV)

Heart Checkup:

- Go back to the list and mark the ones you already implement with your children. Great!
- Now, for the ones that you didn't check, pick one that you can begin implementing today. Just one. Focus on it, get good at it and share it with others. Once you master it, move to another item.

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