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Ten Ways to Get Your Kids to Listen to You

By Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC

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There are times when every parent feels as if they might as well be talking to a block of wood. As with many other things, the harder you try to get your kids to listen, the more resistance you get. Here are ten things to consider when you want to get a message across:

1.) Make sure your relationship is solid.

If your kids don't like you, they're a lot less likely to listen to you.

2.) Remember that actions speak louder than words.

If your kids know that what you say won't be backed up with action, they'll more easily tune you out. Having natural consequences for not listening (toys disappear if kids don't listen and they're not picked up) has a way of having kids pay better attention.

3.) Talk about listening to them.

Make it a point to discuss the importance of listening occasionally when your kids are receptive. Talk about how nice it feels when someone else listens to you completely and what a great quality this is.

4.) Have a sense of timing when you talk to your kids.

Don't expect them to listen well when they're in the middle of something, when they're extremely tired, or when they're hungry. Find a time when they're reasonably relaxed and you have their full attention.

5.) Model great listening yourself.

Give them your absolute attention when they speak to you and try to reflect back what you heard so they can see how focused you were on what they were saying.

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6. Each child listens in a unique way, get to know their preferred style.

Your child may be a kinesthetic learner who listens and understands by writing something down or by walking through something. Find the way to reach your child in the way that works best.

7. Avoid Lectures

Many parents have a lecturing style that they're unaware of. Their kids are very aware of this style however, and tune them out. Speak in a casual and pleasant tone that you would use when talking with a friend

8. Limit their TV watching.

Kids who watch a lot of TV tend to be more easily distracted and have a more difficult time listening. This may also help to improve your relationship when you spend more time with your kids!

9. Talk to your kids in a non-judgmental way.

The more they feel judged by you, the more shame they'll feel and the less they'll hear. See your kids as great and they'll listen as though they are!

10. Be genuinely interested in your children's lives.

Ask them curious questions about what's they're experiencing. When your kids know that you have a real interest in their life, they're more likely to look forward to what you have to say.

Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC, is the author of "25 Secrets of Emotionally Intelligent Fathers" (http://www.markbrandenburg.com/e_book.htm#secrets). For more great tips and action steps for fathers, sign up for his FREE bi-weekly newsletter, "Dads, Don't Fix Your Kids," at <http://www.markbrandenburg.com>

Top Ten Ways to be a Better Father

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The expectations for fathers are increasing both at work and at home. Here are ten ways for fathers to be more effective in the most important job they'll ever have:

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1. See your kids as capable

The achilles heel of many fathers is to see their kids as "not good enough." Your kids will feel this, and they'll live up to these expectations. The more you approve of them, the greater they'll be!

2. Make time for your kids

There will always be more work, but you won't always have the chance to be with your kids. Are there ways to include them in chores around the house? Your kids will know if they matter to you by the effort you make to include them in your day.

3. Use positive forms of discipline

Punishment is not very effective. It tends to create more of the very behavior that fathers are seeking to eliminate. Use natural and logical consequences instead—if you don't pick up your toys, they get put in a bag and taken away for awhile. Give them choices. Positive discipline methods help kids learn responsibility, punishment helps them learn to dislike you.

4. Have a great relationship with you wife

You are the main role model for your kids, and this is the main source of information for them about how to have a close relationship. They're watching very closely to learn how to do it.

5. Be aware of your kids lives

How much do you really know about your kids? Are you aware of their hopes and dreams? Do you know what inspires them? Do you know their friends names? What they like and dislike about you? If there are things you don't know about your kids, you can always ask!

6. Be nurturing with your kids

Hug and kiss your kids, and let them hear plenty of "I love you's." And also don't forget to wrestle with

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them. Both boys and girls benefit from wrestling with their dads. Kids need to see your "soft" side, so show it to them frequently.

7. "Really" listen to your kids

Put down the newspaper and look your kids in the eye when they talk to you. Be aware of your own tendency to "filter" what your kids say. Reflect back what you heard from them. If you want them to listen to you, you've got to show them the way.

8. Examine your relationship with your own father

A poor relationship with your own father will affect your ability to be an effective father. Are there things you want to say to your father? Ultimately, forgiving your father will go a long way towards allowing you to father to the best of your ability.

9. Take care of yourself

It's difficult to be kind and nurturing to your family if you're not kind to yourself. Find ways to take the time to relax, exercise, and keep your stress levels lower. And use friends and family to support you—don't become an "island" in your family. Your family will appreciate it.

10. Have a plan for your anger

Men can have a difficult time with the overwhelming emotional intensity that families can experience. The result is often anger, which breeds anger in your kids and creates a vicious cycle. Make a plan with a specific relaxation technique that helps to defuse your anger. Remember that one bad episode can impact your kids for a long time.

Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC, coaches men to be better fathers and husbands. He is the author of "25 Secrets of Emotionally Intelligent Fathers" <http://www.markbrandenburg.com/father.htm>. Sign up for his FREE bi-weekly newsletter, "Dads, Don't Fix Your Kids," at <http://www.markbrandenburg.com>

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