

Get Your Child to Listen (It's Easier Than It Sounds)

BY JIM FAY

You can train your child to hear you the first time you say something. Or, you can train them to ignore you. Raising a child who listens to adults is a source of joy. Raising one who doesn't is a constant source of frustration and torment.

Our actions train kids either to listen or not to listen. Consider this situation I witnessed in an airport recently. Joshua, a 5-year-old, was running out into the concourse.

"Joshua. You stop that running!" called his mother. She did not follow through, so Joshua continued dashing in and out of a crowd of irritated travelers.

"Joshua. You get over here!" Once more, she barked an order, but did nothing to enforce it.

"Joshua! Get off of that!" Another order was shouted by mom and ignored by Joshua.

Suddenly, Joshua was right at my feet staring up at me.

Mother ordered again, "Joshua. You get away from that man. You come over here. Quit bothering people."

I looked down at Joshua and asked, "Joshua, what's your mom going to do if you don't do what she says?"

He knew the answer immediately, "Nothing."

Of course he was right. His mother had trained him to know that she would bark orders, but never enforce them. Why should he listen if he could do as he pleased—without adult interference—by not listening?

In fact, Joshua never had to walk back to his mother in the airport. She came over to him, held his hand, and apologized to me with, "I'm so sorry. You know how 5-year-olds are. They won't listen to a thing you say."



It took a lot to keep myself from saying, "I've known a lot of 5-year-olds who listen to their parents. But their parents mean what they say."

Training kids to listen is not brain surgery. It's not complicated. Joshua's mom could retrain him to listen first by retraining herself to do several things.

Committing to No Repeats

Kids unconsciously learn how many times each parent will repeat a request before taking action. She can give Joshua the gift of knowing she will say something only once.

Be Prepared to Act

This mom needs to be dedicated to making her child's life somewhat uncomfortable each time he fails to listen the first time she says something. This means as soon as he disobeys, she goes to him, takes him back to his seat and makes him stay with her saying, "How sad not to listen. Now you can stay with me."

No Excuses

She should never accept, "But I didn't hear you," as an excuse. When confronted with this excuse, she should respond with, "How sad not to be listening. Maybe your ears will get better." It is important

she says this without sarcasm and follows through with the consequences of not listening.

Prepare for a Fit

Be prepared for Joshua to have a fit about not getting his way. Even though this will be uncomfortable, other adults around her will secretly applaud her courage and willingness to put forth the efforts to raise a well-behaved child.

Enjoy Your Happier Child

I have worked with kids and families for 47 years. During that time I have never met a child who failed to hear a parent's promise. They always hear promises the first time. I've also learned that their ears work the same way for requests when parents learn and follow the four steps I've outlined.

Training and expecting kids to listen is one of a parent's greatest gifts. It's the Love and Logic way. [wfm](#)



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ONLINE RESOURCES

Learn more about parenting techniques
www.loveandlogic.com

How to get your child to listen

www.supernanny.com/advice/-/parenting-skills/-/routine-and-teamwork/how-to-get-your-child-to-listen.aspx

But how do I get my child to listen?!

www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/communication/how-get-kid-listen