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Love and Logic®

If Kids Can Hear Promises, They Can Hear Requests

Getting Your Child to Listen to You Is Easier Than It Sounds

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 either train kids to listen or not to listen. Consider this situation I witnessed in an airport recently. Joshua, a five-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 crowed 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 five-year-olds are. They won't listen to a thing you say."

It took a lot to keep me from saying, "I've known a lot of five-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 by first retraining herself to do the following:

1. Make a commitment she will never repeat herself. 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 only say something once.
2. Be prepared to act. She 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."
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Get ready to enjoy a more responsible and happier child

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continued...

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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 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.

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Jim Fay is one of America's most sought-after presenters and authors in the area of parenting and school discipline. His background includes 31 years as a teacher and administrator, over three decades as a professional consultant, and many years as the parent of three children. Jim's sense of humor and infectious spirit have made his interviews, audios, videos, and books popular with educators and parents as well as the national news media. Jim has discovered that fun stories are the most powerful way of helping people learn. He often comments, "People seem to learn best when they giggle." You will find this delightful quality in many of our Love and Logic products.

People who are really successful implementing this skill purchased Love and Logic Magic for Early Childhood

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