Children who won’t take no for an answer

Ever had a child who keeps asking for a favour or a treat until they get the response they want?

These kids generally use one of two strategies. They may either nag or hound you until they get an affirmative or they will seek out an adult who will give them the answer they want.

The first method, which is based on persistence, is generally very effective to use with tired parents and sole parents who are more susceptible to this type of behaviour.

“All right have the treat. Anything for some peace and quiet” is a response that most people who have spent time around children are familiar with.

The second method is a little more devious but very effective and usually occurs in dual parent families. You know the situation. A child’s request for a treat, favour or outing is turned down for good reason “No Jessica you can’t have an ice cream now. Wait until after dinner” but the child goes to the other parent who may well give them the affirmative they are seeking.

Minor happening but very irritating. These situations are indicative of two people who are operating on different parenting planes. If it happens every now and again then it is no big deal. However, if one parent is always granting a child his or her wishes without consultation or thought of how the other parent thinks then it is probably time to step back and reflect on how you can both work together. If it happens frequently your children will learn how to play one parent against the other or manipulate situations until they get what they want.

It sounds sinister but it is not. It is just how we human beings tend to think and behave. This type of parental manipulation can occur for many reasons. Either it is due to different standards of behaviour or thoughts about bringing up children or a lack of understanding about what has happened in a child’s day.

Regardless of the reason it means that parents need to communicate and also get the message across to children that it is taboo to keep seeking out a parent until they get the response they want.

Parents should be firm with a child who goes to another parent in search of a yes after they have received a knock back from another.

The other technique that you can use is to defer to the other parent whenever children catch you unawares with a request.

“O kay. I’ll just check with dad and I’ll get back to you” is the type of response parents may need to use.

This strategy can be a little wearing and even artifical but it demonstrates that you are a double act.

Most dual parents play good cop/bad cop where one is more the disciplinarian or hard-line manager and the other is the play director. That tends to be the way of families. It helps if you can swap roles occasionally (or even backbones) and give the other parent a break.

Vitamins for Parents

Don’t tell them more than once:

Sometimes we ask children to help or give them advice but we get little response. The natural reaction is to repeat ourselves as if saying it one more time reinforces our message.

If you repeat yourself just to underline your message there is a good chance that parent deafness will become permanent or they will do the opposite of what you want, just to annoy you. Rather than repeating yourself get in the habit of acting. For example, rather than remind children a number of times to come to the dinner table just serve the meal after informing them the meal is on the table.

Cooperation is invited not bought

A child’s cooperation is a tenuous and precious thing. Some children give it willingly. They will cooperate with their mother and father because they enjoy their approval or it is just part of their nature to want to please. Other child are tough nuts to crack to gain cooperation.

It helps with tough nuts to invite some cooperation rather than demand it. For instance, when a relative comes for a visit ask children what they may do to make their visit pleasant rather than tell them what to do. These tough nuts will generally respond positively to an invitation rather than a demand.

Wise & Witty Words

“It you judge people you have no time to love them.”
Mother Teresa

“People who say they sleep like a baby usually don’t have one.”
Leo J. Burke

quick Parenting Quiz

1. How much television each week does the average Australian child currently watch:
   a) 10-15 hours?
   b) 16 – 20 hours?
   c) 21 – 25 hours?

Answers:
1) b) The average Australian child watches 19 hours
2) b) 0ver 30 per cent of children have a television in their bedrooms

2. How many children aged 0-5 have a television in their bedroom?
   a) 0-20 per cent
   b) 21 -40 per cent
   c) 41 -60 per cent
   d) 60+ per cent

Answers:
1) b) The average Australian child watches 19 hours
2) b) 0ver 30 per cent of children have a television in their bedrooms