

## Gaining Cooperation

“How many times have I told you...?” How would you complete the sentence? Perhaps one or several of these—Shut the door. Remember your lunch. Wash your hands. Set the table for dinner. Walk in the house. The list goes on and on.

When we feel that our children are not listening to us—they become parent-deaf—and they don’t comply with our requests, we need to stop repeating what hasn’t worked for us. We need to step back and come up with some new strategies.

**Are you reminding or building memory strategies?** Oliver was a six-year-old with nine and twelve-year-old sisters. When he got to kindergarten Oliver had trouble remembering to get his coat, his gloves, his lunch, his books, etc. out of the car. When he was three and four Oliver seemed to arrive in the classroom with all the necessary equipment for his day. We discovered his older sisters were getting dropped off at school first and they were no longer reminding Oliver of what to do as he got out of the car. Oliver depended on being reminded instead of learning to independently think of what he needed to bring to school. After a visit with his family about strategy, Oliver started to learn to remember his belongings.

**Are you asking, or telling?** From the kitchen sink Molly watched in dismay as her nine-year-old son climbed over the fence into the neighbor’s yard to retrieve a ball. The rule was to knock on the neighbor’s door and ask permission to use their gate. Benjamin knew the rule. Molly decided to use a new strategy of asking instead of going over the rule, again. “Why did you climb over the fence when you know the rule? Why do we have the rule? What will help you remember the rule?”

Asking questions helps convey to our children that we see them as capable and intelligent to figure situations out on their own, and remember and understand rules.

**Do you say what you mean?** If we tell our children that something is important, and then not act on it, we have set up a situation where we have taught our children to ignore us. If we have a rule—Don’t eat in front of the television—and we don’t enforce it, we’ve taught our children not to pay attention to what we say. Spell out the consequences of certain behaviors then enact those consequences when needed. It becomes important that the consequences we establish are reasonable—and don’t create a hardship for us. We might not want to miss our favorite show because Tommy took his snack to the tube.

**Change the environment. Change your attitude. Change the rules.** When we need to help our children change behaviors we can step back and see if we can make some changes to help. Our children are running down the hallway? Perhaps change the environment by putting a chair, a table, or a baby gate to make the space less attractive for running. After a week of rain, perhaps our attitude about gross motor activity in the hallway changes. Or perhaps we decide that running down the hallway is fine, and the rule changes. Step back and see if you can change the environment, your attitude or the rules to make life better in your home.

To gain compliance, learn to step back and come up with fresh strategies instead of sounding like a broken record.

**Kids Talk™** deals with childhood development issues. Maren Schmidt founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland. She has over twenty-five years experience working with children and holds teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale. She is author of Building Cathedrals Not Walls: Essays for Parents and Teachers and Understanding Montessori: A Guide For Parents. Contact her at [maren@kidstalknews.com](mailto:maren@kidstalknews.com) or visit [www.MarenSchmidt.com](http://www.MarenSchmidt.com). Copyright 2010.

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