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Parenting Tips

The Way You Give Instructions

If you're experiencing resistance from your child when you give an instruction, you may find that using different words will bring a more positive response. Proverbs 15:1 says "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Look for ways to communicate that will encourage a positive response. We recommend that you make a statement about your goal or objective before you give the instruction. "Emily, I'm trying to get things cleaned up before Dad gets home. Would you please pick up your books, shoes, and backpack in the living room?" The statement before the instruction gives children a little more information and can help them feel they're part of a team.

The older the child, the more the explanation is helpful, and not just for the purpose of showing value to the child. Older children are developing their own convictions and need to understand more reasons and guidelines behind rules and instructions.

Andrew is seventeen now. He told us, "I appreciate the way my mom and dad have treated me these last few years. They don't just order me around like a little kid but they explain why they're asking me to do something. They allow me to disagree with them at times and I know I can discuss things with them whenever I want. Sometimes they ask me to submit even though we don't agree. The fact that they listen to me and talk about their convictions makes submitting easier to accept. I may do things differently when I'm a parent, but one thing I've decided is that I'm going to talk about instructions instead of demanding. When I'm at some of my friends' homes, I can't believe the way their parents treat them. It makes me grateful that my parents love me and show it even when they're asking me to do something."

To learn more about relating to teens, consider the book, [*Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes, In You and Your Kids*](#) by Dr Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller RN, BSN.