



PricelessSM
Parenting

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Priceless Parenting Newsletter February 2009

Dear Parents,

It's easy to get into the habit of ordering our children around. So easy in fact that we may not even realize that we're doing it! However, we may be abruptly reminded of our children's independence when they decide not to follow our orders. This month we'll explore the effects of using commands and look for some alternatives.

"Stop crying!" + Other Commands That Don't Work

Moments of frustration can lead parents to issuing commands that really don't work. Any time we are ordering children to change their behavior we're not likely to succeed. Instead of producing the desired behavioral change, commands often lead to some type of resistance.

For example, when feeling stressed to leave on time, we may yell to our children "Hurry up! It's time to get going!" It can feel good to give commands because it seems like we have more control over a situation when we're shouting commands. However, children often resist being told what to do (interestingly, most adults also do not like being told what to do!).

Since children ultimately control their own behavior, commands like these are usually ineffective:

- "Stop crying!"
- "No more whining."
- "Don't give me that look."
- "Go to sleep right now!"

It is easy to fall into the parenting trap of using commands to try and control children's behavior. However, it is far more effective to tell children what we are going to do instead of what they have to do. Parents might declare "The car is leaving in five minutes." instead of saying "Hurry up!"

Recently I saw a dad trying to change his 18-month-old daughter's diaper while she was crying and struggling to get away. When doing an unappealing task like changing a diaper, it's difficult to have a child who is resisting and making an unpleasant task even more unpleasant.

This dad responded by telling his daughter "Stop crying!" Not only did she not stop crying, her crying intensified. It was easy to relate to his frustration as well as his child's reaction.

In this case, the dad probably would have been more successful by empathizing with his daughter by saying something like "I can see you're really upset. I'm going to change your diaper and then we will leave." By acknowledging her feelings and telling her what he was going to do, he could avoid telling her what she had to do.

Discussion Group

If you live near Kenmore, WA we would love to have you [join our seven week discussion group](#) starting Feb. 11th 6:30.

Facilitator notes are now available to help you [start your own Priceless Parenting discussion group](#).



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Other Resources

Sometimes in the heat of the moment, we don't do our best parenting. It's helpful to reflect on how we wish we would have handled the situation. We are likely to have a second chance in the near future to handle a similar situation in a better way!

This Month's Challenge: Avoiding Commands

Spend a day monitoring the commands or orders you give your children. Many parents are surprised at just how many commands they are actually giving their children, especially when getting ready to leave in the morning and getting ready for bed at night.

Next think of how you might instead tell them what you are going to do instead of what they have to do. For example, instead of saying "Finish your dinner." you could say "We'll be clearing the dishes in 10 minutes. Eat as much as you want to tide yourself over until breakfast." Try replacing your commands with statements like this about what you will do.

Last Month's Challenge: Making a Promise

Last month you were challenged to make a promise to your child and then go through with the promise. What did you promise and how did it work out? [Please let me know!](#)

My son asked me if I would play badminton with him if he got the net set up. I promised I would play even though it was cold outside and getting late in the afternoon. We had fun whacking the birdie around until it was too dark to see it!

I look forward to hearing your stories about how you avoided using commands this month.

Warm Regards,

Kathy Slattengren

P.S. I hope you enjoyed this newsletter. Please do me a favor and forward this to a friend who might enjoy reading it.

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[Parents in Love: 121 Dating Ideas](#) is packed with stories, tips, and the secret formula all lovers need.