

## TEACHING CHILDREN TO FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Teaching a child to comply with directions from appropriate adults is one of the most important lessons you can teach your child!

- It is a skill they are going to need throughout their life
- To succeed in school
- To succeed as adults in the workplace

### WHAT NOT TO DO

Studies observing the families of children who are oppositional and defiant towards adults, over and over revealed the following mistakes:

- When children chose to follow directions, parent did not acknowledge the child's efforts, the children were not praised, and gratitude was not expressed
- Parents would give a direction and repeat themselves over and over from three to seven times, getting more frustrated and angrier each time. When you find yourself doing this it is a warning sign that you need to change your approach.
- When repeating the directions failed to result in the child complying with adult directions, parents would make threats from one to three times with each threat becoming more severe and the parents becoming more angry
- At this point the parent would either
  - (1) give up or
    - The child will learn that if they ignore an adult's directions long enough the demand will go away. I do not have to do what adults say and adults don't do what they say they are going to do
  - (2) resorts to aggressive behavior
    - The child learns that when frustrate it is ok to use aggression to coheres people into doing what you want

### WHAT TO DO

- Make sure that you are calm and in control of yourself.
- Call the child by name and wait until you have his or her attention (turn off distractions if necessary)
- Give the directions
  - Keep it simple and to the point
  - Avoid giving multiple directions at one time
  - Break down complex task into simple steps and give the directions one step at a time
- If the child chooses to comply acknowledge and praise their efforts. Tell the child Thank You
- If the child chooses to not comply, repeat the command **ONE** more time and explain what the consequences will be if the child chooses not to comply
- Explain to the child that they have a choice they can choose to comply, or they can choose to have the consequence take place
- If the child, then chooses to comply praise them for making a good choice. Acknowledge and praise their efforts
- If the child chooses not to comply follow through and implement the consequences

## **GUIDELINE FOR SETTING CONSEQUENCE**

- When it is possible to safely do so let natural consequences take place
- When implementing consequences do so with a calm demeanor
- Make consequences relate to the disobedience
- Implement the consequences as soon after the disobedience as possible
- Do not threaten consequences you can not follow through on
- When possible make relief from the consequences dependent on obeying
- Apply consequences consistently
- Mild consequences applied consistently are more effective than severe consequences applied inconsistently