

Effective Parenting Lingo

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We spend the first twelve months of our children's lives teaching them to walk and talk, and the next twenty-four years telling them to sit down and be quite!

Most of us actually do not enjoy being ordered around. So, when we are told to slow down when driving, we tend to desire to drive faster. And, when children are told to hurry up, they tend to sloooooow down. This oddity of human nature was researched by Dr. Raymond Wlodkowski. He found that when we are ordered to do something, we subconsciously sense a loss of personal control. This is increased if a threat is stated with the order such as, "If you don't eat your vegetables, you are not going to get dessert." We've all seen the results of this kind of threat. The situation usually goes down hill rapidly. What was once a happy mealtime becomes the scene of a power struggle as both the adult and children try to regain control.

Dr. Wlodkowski's Threat Cycle research led Dr. Jim Fay to develop the technique called Enforceable Statements. Dr. Fay found that when kids tell themselves the possible threat, there is far less resistance. Though there are times it is important to train our children to follow our directions and use direct commands, enforceable statements is an important tool that is helpful to avoid constant unneeded battle struggles.

When a child hears the parent say, "I'll be serving dessert to everyone who eats peas." The child can say to himself, "Uh oh, I might not get dessert," but doesn't readily identify the threat as coming from the adult. The result? Odds for cooperation increase. Odds for arguing go down.

Enforceable statements tell kids what WE will do or allow...rather than trying to tell THEM what to do.

The results:

- We avoid looking like a fool when we can't get our kids to do what we say.
- We share some control with our children. As a result, they are much less likely to resist in order to regain control.
- We avoid getting sucked into trying to control something we really can't.

<u>Ineffective Technique</u>	<u>Enforceable Statements:</u>
You can't go play until you have finished your homework.	Feel free to go play as soon as you have finished your homework.
Please be quiet. I can't listen to your	I'll be glad to listen to you as soon as

brother when you are both talking at the same time.	your brother has finished talking to me.
Hurry up! You need to get ready now.	• My car is leaving at 8 a.m.
Keep your hands to yourself.	Feel free to stay with us when you can keep your hands to yourself.
Clean your room so we can go shopping.	I'll be happy to take you shopping as soon as your room is clean.
Get this room cleaned up right now and I mean it!	You are welcome to join us for _____ as soon as your room is clean.
Stop arguing with me.	I'll be glad to discuss this with you as soon as the arguing stops.
Please sit down. We're going to eat now.	We will eat as soon as you are seated
Pay attention.	I'll start again as soon as I know you are with me.
Don't talk to me in that tone of voice!	I'll listen as soon as your voice is as calm as mine.

References:

Fay, J. (2003) Parenting with love and logic: Make Your Kids Responsible For their Actions.

Ginsberg, M. B. & Wlodkowski, R. J. "Professional Learning to Promote Motivation and Academic Performance among Diverse Adults." In D. Bamford-Reese, B. Doyle, B. Klein-Collins, and J. Wertheim (eds.), CAEL FORUM and NEWS: Learning Never Ends. November, 2009, pp.23-32.