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This intervention is a set of recommendations that should reduce or eliminate the problems in question in most average children. If problems do not improve and/or if problems are severe, you should seek the personal assistance of a child psychologist, psychiatrist, or pediatrician for further evaluation and treatment.

This handout is best used with face to face discussion/training which allows the care giver to ask questions and allows the psychologist to recommend variations in the procedure based on the age and developmental level of the child. Do not use this procedure if you are not comfortable using it or if you aren't sure you fully understand the procedure.

COMPLIANCE

The Problem

Even the best behaved children fail to follow commands given by their parents or care givers some of the time, doing as they are told about 70-80% of the time. More challenging children can have poor compliance rates, following directions no more than 10-20% of the time.

To find out what your child's compliance rate is, take a piece of paper and make three columns: Direction, Yes, No. Fasten the paper to your clothing or tape it around your wrist so it will be handy all day. Each time you give a direction, make a mark in the Direction column. If your child does as she is told *the first time you tell her*, make a mark in the Yes column. If she doesn't do it the first time she is told, make a mark in the No column. At the end of the day, add the marks in all three columns. Divide the number of Yes's by the total number of Directions to get your child's compliance rate. For example, 10 Yes's divided by 20 Directions equals a compliance rate of 50%.

Suggestions for Improving Compliance Rate

1. **Give fewer commands.** Parents sometimes give too many commands and repeat themselves. Kids become desensitized to the sound of a parent's voice and tune him out. Think twice before you tell your child to do something. It is better not to give a command than to give a command that you cannot enforce.
2. Many children resist following directions because they have difficulty with transitions (stopping one activity and starting another). **Give a five-minute warning**, e.g., "In five more minutes it will be time for your bath."

Always set a timer. When the bell rings it reminds both you and your child that five minutes has passed. Then, follow Step 3.

3. Research shows that the closer you are physically to a child when you issue a command, the greater the chance the child will comply. **Do not shout from the next room.** Walk to where your child is. (This enables you to see what your child is doing and helps you decide whether you want to give the direction right now. Maybe he is doing something you don't want to interrupt and you'd rather wait.)

Stand next to your child. Before you speak, say his name or put your hand on his shoulder to make sure you have his attention.

4. Avoid language that allows your child to refuse to comply. For example, do not say things like, “Don’t you think it’s about time for your bath?” Avoid language that indicates you are trying to coax your child into cooperating, such as, “Come on. Let’s have a nice bubble bath with your new bathtub toys.”

Use a clear command that tells your child exactly what to do, e.g., “You need to get into the bathtub now.”

5. When your child does comply, **remember to praise her for cooperating** by saying something like, “Thanks for cooperating. It makes me happy when you do as you are told the first time I tell you.” This positive reinforcement will go a long way toward making sure your child chooses to cooperate the next time.
6. For a period of time, to help your child get into the habit of responding, when given a command, if your child says “Okay” and begins to comply in less than 10 seconds, give him a token. Make a Token Menu and put it on the wall or refrigerator door. The menu should list a variety of rewards that can be purchased with the tokens, e.g., 5 tokens = 15 minutes of game time with Dad.

Tough Cases Need a Consequence

Never repeat yourself. After you have said, “You need to.....,” begin counting out loud, “One, two, three.”

Give a token for promptly complying. If your child has not complied by the count of three, remove a token from the jar.

Tougher Cases Need Tougher Consequences

If noncompliance is a serious problem in your home and removing a token doesn’t seem to make an impact, use time out for noncompliance. After you have counted to three, if your child has not complied with your command, place them in time out, e.g., “One...two...three. You will now have to go to time out.”

When you are escorting your child to time out and she says, “Okay, okay, I’ll do it.” Tell her, “It’s too late.” She must have a time out. You want your child to comply when you give a command, not after you have given a command and started to take them to time out.

When time out is over, your child must comply with your original request or have another time out.

See the Time Out handout for the correct procedure for use of time out.