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HOW TO GET YOUR CHILD TO LISTEN

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Have you ever wondered what it will take to motivate your child to listen? There is actually a number of strategies you can store in your “parenting toolbox”. The answer lies in how you manipulate the environment. Let me explain. The majority of children in American households have free access to all of their preferred belongings (toys, video games, etc.). This does not work in the parent’s favor as the child becomes satiated or the items lose their value or appeal. Therefore, when you ask something of them, they have zero motivation to listen. However, say you put all their preferred belongings away. If they only were able to access these items for a limited time and under certain contingences, do you think they will WANT to listen to you more? Of course! By using the *premack* principle, or a first-then approach, children will have to comply with your request in order to obtain what they want access to. Understanding the roles of satiation and deprivation are key here. The more a child is deprived of their preferred items, the higher their value. The more they have access to them, the less valuable those items become.

Another empirically based method that has been proven to work is using positive reinforcement. A token economy, or token board, is one of the most popular tools to use when reinforcing desired behavior. It is important to provide verbal descriptive praise along with a token as soon as the desired behavior has been exhibited. Once compliance is established and the child is listening at higher frequencies, begin fading the token board. It is very common for parents to focus on what their child does wrong. Instead, highlight the behaviors you want to see more of.



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