



## Keep On Walking Your Talk

An effective parenting principle is to not talk “at” our children, but to talk less, listen more and walk our talk.

The challenge becomes one of being able to keep on walking our talk. It’s the hard work of follow-through, that becomes our bug-a-boo, when we’d really, really like to do something else.

The paradox is that once our children learn that we follow-through, that is they trust us, the less follow-through we have to do. Perhaps knowing that your efforts won’t be in vain will help you consistently follow-through.

Listening is perhaps humankind’s most effective communication tool. When we follow through with our children we are also teaching them the valuable skill of listening to us and others. Follow through involves stepping back from a situation and trying to see a pattern of behavior. This is something that requires our full attention, and can’t be a fleeting thought while we are checking our text messages. Thankfully, not every issue requires our undivided attention. But once we decide to act, we need to commit to follow through, or our efforts will be ineffective.

When working through an issue, we need to acknowledge our children’s feelings and offer our wish that we could give them what they want. We also need to tell our children what to do, instead of what not to do. We need to get our children working on solutions with us. Once we have a solution, we need to implement it, which means...follow-through. And when our solution doesn’t work we go back to square one and begin again by giving the situation our full attention.

For a week, when dropped off with his grandmother, Jayden screamed and ran out the door trying to go with his father, Alex, who was headed back to work.

To resolve this Alex decided this was a matter that needed his full attention. His customary quick drop off wasn’t working for whatever

reason, and Alex felt frazzled. Alex acknowledged Jayden’s feelings.

“Jayden, I know that you want to go with me. I wish I could let you go with me to work, but I can’t.”

Alex told Jayden what do. “When we get to grandma’s you need to get your building blocks out and build whatever is in your imagination. Can you do that for me?”

“Is there anything I can do to help it be easier for you to be at grandma’s?” Alex asked, trying to get Jayden involved in the problem solving process.

“You can give me a high-five before you leave,” Jayden offered.

“Well, buddy, I can do that, and that will make it easier for me to go to work. It’s hard for me to go to work if I think you are unhappy.” Alex offered his own feelings, and then how he planned to follow-through.

“So, Jayden, when we get to grandma’s tomorrow you’re going to get your building blocks, I’m going to give you a high-five and then leave for work. You’re happy and Dad is happy. I know you can help me get to work and you can do your own work with the blocks.”

Alex knows that odds are that Jayden may try to run after him after their good-bye high-five. But Alex also has a follow-through plan of leaving and not allowing Jayden’s behavior to dictate what happens next. Alex will leave without saying another word after the high-five. No reminder. No explanation. No apology. And he does.

When we keep on walking our talk, our children learn that they can be cooperative and responsible. They learn that they are worthy of respect. They learn that it is okay to be upset, but the world doesn’t end if they can’t get their way.

Sounds like a winner to me.