



## Think Before You Talk

“You throw that ball and you’re grounded for a month.”

“You talk back one more time and I’ll give your bicycle away.”

“You don’t eat your peas, you won’t be able to have dessert.”

The traps we can fall into as we work with children.

In our efforts to have our children change their behavior, and using enormous amounts of our time and energy to try to control our children’s actions, we finally come to a realization: we can’t control or change our children.

*We can only control and change ourselves.*

We have to be clear in our own minds of what we will do in relation to our interactions. None of the ultimatums above show that they have been clearly figured out. Sometimes in the heat of battle, we find statements flying out of our mouths, and those words sound too much like how we were parented.

Rather than land in the middle of a big mess, it would serve us best if we stopped to think before we allowed anything to come out of our mouths. When we see a situation occurring day after day, we need to have a plan with words followed by actions, followed by seeing our plan to completion.

A problem with your toddlers unbuckling their car seats? Think it through. If they unbuckle their car seats what will you say?

What will you do? How will you follow through?

Perhaps having little talk before getting in the car might go like this:

It’s very important for me to know that you are safe in your car seats. If I hear a buckle click I will pull over on the side of the road. I will wait with the car engine off until you buckle up. As soon as you buckle up we will be on our way.

Prepare to be tested immediately. You might for convenience sake, try a dry run when time is not an issue. As soon as you hear a click, wordlessly pull over to the nearest convenient spot. Turn off the engine. Put your hands in your lap, pull out a book, do anything—just be sure that you don’t tell your toddlers why you’ve pulled over. They know. If they ask why you’ve stopped, smile and kindly tell them, “You know.”

There is no need to repeat, remind, or explain your actions. Giving your children the opportunity to learn to listen to you, really listen to you, is occurring while you wait. Important neurons are being built in the brain that link up the fact that what mom or dad says, mom or dad means, and mom or dad will act. I think you’ll find that lesson is worth twenty minutes waiting in a parking lot.

Yes, we can only control and change ourselves. Be sure to think before you talk and make sure your words can be followed through with important actions that help your children learn to be their bigger better selves.