



Group lesson with young teens

Listening and Following the Adult

Children naturally want to connect to the adults in their lives. Obedience to these adults is a sign of natural and normal development in a child. Obedience, though, does not refer to an automatic and unthinking response to an order. Obedience, comes from the Latin, *oboediere*, meaning to listen to. When the relationship is built on trust, our children with on-track development should listen to us, and choose to follow our respectful requests.

For the child who is “misbehaving,” or not behaving in accordance to adult wishes, we need to recognize that we have a situation where a child has lost a vital link of trust with an adult in his or her world.

An obedient child listens for directions from a trusted adult and then chooses to follow that direction with confidence based on previous positive experiences.

If our child ignores direction, he or she has veered off the path of normal development and we must figure out what has caused this detour.

Carol, mother to three-year-old Matt, would tell Matt that it is time to leave a friend’s house and then would continue talking for

another 10 to 20 minutes. Carol thought nothing of it since she was from a family where it took that long to say good-bye. What Matt learned, though, was that when his mother said it was time to go, it really didn’t mean anything in his immediate world. Carol had created a situation where Matt didn’t believe what she was telling him.

Carol would say it was time for lunch, the cell phone would ring, and lunch would be delayed for ten to twenty minutes—an eternity to a three-year-old, and again, another learning experience that taught Matt to not pay attention to his mother’s words.

At bedtime, Matt’s father, Jim, would tell Matt to get ready for bed and continue to watch his television show. Day after day inconsistencies between words and actions taught Matt that listening to his parents and following their lead were not coherent events.

Are we surprised when Matt begins to ignore his parents’ direction and requests? Should we be surprised if Matt throws a temper tantrum when he’s been told it is lunchtime then has to wait for an undetermined amount of time? Should we be shocked if

Matt, after being told for the fifth time that it’s time to leave grandma and grandpa’s but no one makes an effort to move to the door, cries when he is picked up and scolded because he didn’t “listen”?

As parents and teachers if we ask our children to do something, we must realize the power we hold—the power to create a trusting relationship, or one of rebellion. Our children are born to connect positively to our adult words and actions. To create authentic relationships with our children, we must have integrity in our words and actions.

Our words and actions must guide our children to listen and choose to follow us based on the confidence of our leadership. That is true obedience, and not blindly following an order.