

SAFEGUARDING

3 Simple Words to End Child Nagging and Negotiating

Have you ever met a more persistent creature than a child trying to get what he/she wants?

There is no one with greater resolve or dedication than a child on a mission to get their parent's approval.

Unfortunately, this level of persistence is not always well-received by parents who are often forced into these hostage negotiations at inopportune times – in the sweet aisle of the grocery store, in the toy aisle, in the middle of trying to cook dinner, while trying to take a shower.

While it is important to teach children gratitude to combat the pleading in the shops, it is equally important to stop the negotiations before they get out of hand. From the famed “Are we there yet?” to this morning’s “Can I have ice cream for breakfast?” to this afternoon’s “Can I have ice cream for dinner?” children are notorious for their one-track minds, and they will ask...and ask...and ask...just in case you have changed your mind in the last minute.

Why do children nag?

As with any behaviour, the root of the issue in order to address it appropriately. Child nagging is a learned behaviour that children of any age can pick up. Children will continue to use it because once, in a moment of weakness, we caved and let them stay up an extra half hour after they asked for the eighth time. In short, the nagging worked – it achieved the child's goal of getting an extended bedtime.

How can I stop my child from nagging?

Like any learned behaviour, child nagging can be unlearned. The solution comes from Lynn Lott, co-author of the Positive Discipline series of books, and it's said to work on children as young as two or three, all the way through their teens.

It only takes three simple words: **“Asked and Answered.”**

The concept is simple. When seven-year old Daniel begs to dig a giant hole in the front yard and gets “no” for an answer, chances are he will be back in five minutes asking again – this time with a “pleeeeeeease” just so you know he really, *really* wants to dig the hole.

Instead of repeating yourself or jumping into a lecture, avoid child nagging by getting eye to eye and follow the process below:

Step One:

Ask, **“Have you ever heard of ‘Asked and Answered’?”** (He'll probably say no.)

Step Two:

Ask, **“Did you ask me a question about digging a hole?”** (He'll say yes.)

Step Three:

Ask, **“Did I answer it?”** (He'll probably say, “Yes, but, I really”)

Step Four:

Ask, **“Do I look like the kind of mum/dad/teacher who will change her/his mind if you ask**

me the same thing over and over?” (Chances are Daniel will walk away, maybe with a frustrated grunt, and engage in something else.)

Step Five:

If Daniel asks again, simply say, **“Asked and Answered.”** (No other words are necessary!) Once this technique has been established, these are the only words you need to say to address nagging questions.

Consistency is key! Once you decide to use “Asked and Answered” with your nagging child, be sure to stick to it.

If the questioning continues even after you have responded with “Asked and Answered,” simply walk away. Once your child sees you will not even engage in the discussion, they will learn very quickly that nagging is not an effective behaviour to achieve their goals.

If fourteen year old Emma is particularly determined to keep asking to get her eyebrow pierced, stay strong. Answering her question again – or worse yet, changing your answer – will reinforce to her that nagging works.

Although it will take some patience, your child will eventually connect the dots and you will see results!

Parent as a Team

Make **“Asked and Answered”** a joint effort with your partner, and consider including any family or friends who may have to deal with child nagging and negotiating from your child. When Daniel and Emma realise they will not get a “yes,” even after they have asked YOU five times, your parenting partner three times, and grandma twice, they will get the hint and retire this tactic.

Be sure all caregivers follow through and stay consistent – and before you know it, twenty questions will be a fun game once again, and no longer a negotiation tactic!

Good luck!

Working together to keep our children safe and happy.

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