

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Putting the *Good* back in Good Morning



BY KIM DeMARCHI

How many parents do you hear say, “You know what comes really easily to me as a parent? Getting my kids out the door in the morning!” NOT! It’s actually probably one of the things my clients complain about the most! Despite our good intentions as parents, by 8:00am in the morning, how many demands, orders, and commands have we barked at our children? It sounds something like this: “Hurry up. Get up. Get dressed. Make your bed. Hustle downstairs. Feed the dog. Did you put your laundry in the hamper? I told you to unpack your lunch box yesterday. Unpack your lunchbox. Eat breakfast. Don’t make a mess. Get a napkin. Put the milk away. Finish eating. Pack your lunch. Clear your dishes. Brush your teeth. Hurry up. Did you feed the dog. Put your homework away. Get your shoes on. Grab your backpack. Did you get your lunch? Hurry up. Run to the bus. Have a great day! Don’t forget to turn in your homework.” Wow - now that’s supreme micromanaging!

Do you ever feel like it’s Groundhog Day... as in the movie? You wake up the next morning only to have the previous morning repeated! We certainly don’t enjoy being the one nagging our children constantly, but can you imagine being on the receiving end? The best way to imagine this would be to imagine for a moment that you were starting a new job. Your boss walked in to your office on your first morning and he started in with a dozen compliance statements such as not being late, signing in, wearing appropriate clothes, what time your break is, how you aren’t allowed to chew gum, the length of your lunch hour, when the report is due on his desk, where to put your lunch, etc... Would you like to work for him? Do you feel empowered and motivated? Are you feeling like being a team player and cooperating with him? Probably not. Do you think you might start tuning him out eventually? Probably. We sometimes subject our children to the same sort of compliance statements and then we wonder why they’ve become “parent deaf”. To add salt to the wound, our children leave our homes in the morning, only to be subjected to more of the same by their teachers at school trying to manage thirty students in the classroom.



There are several parenting tools we can use with our children to improve the above scenario:

1. **Use routines!** Have a poster or a chart depicting or listing the items that need to be done, for example in the morning. To ensure they are more cooperative, have them help to come up with the list. The more input they have into solving a problem, the higher the success rate and the more cooperation you will gain.

2. **To be more effective, don’t yell to them from the other room.** Go to them, get close, get on their eye level, gently touch them, and use a “low and slow” tone of voice. That will send the message that you mean business, but in a respectful way.

3. **Concentrate on REDUCING the number of compliance statements, not eliminating them.**

Don’t set yourself up for failure. Reducing them is an improvement.

4. **Rephrase the statement to a question.** i.e.:

Instead of “Get your shoes on.”, try “What do you need to put on before we go outside?” Instead of “Brush your teeth.”, try “What needs to happen since you just ate dessert and you’re off to bed?” Getting kids to think for themselves is half the battle.

5. **Lastly, try using the one word technique.** In the above examples, the first word would be “shoes” and the next one would be “teeth”. Simple. Just be sure to say it in a respectful way. Your delivery must be received as respectful to gain their cooperation.

None of us like to be bossed around constantly. Our children are no different. Remember when your child came into this world and your child’s spirit was like a glowing flame that danced and grew with each piece of fuel you fed it. We can dampen or put out our child’s flame (spirit) by nagging, yelling, controlling, demanding, or correcting all the time. Every day we have hundreds of opportunities to pour sand on their flame or kindle their spirit to ensure it continues burning brightly.

On a side note, go to YouTube and search for the William Tell Overture’s “Mom” version. It is hilarious!

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Kim’s goal for you is to help reduce conflict, foster mutual respect, and create deeper communication and connections with your loved ones. She can be reached through www.EmpoweredParenting.com or www.PassportToParenting.com.