

# Strategies to Help Kids Follow Directions in Difficult Times

“My kids won’t listen!”

Right now, we are experiencing life differently than ever before. As parents, we are trying to hold everything together as well as teach, entertain, and work from home; the list goes on and on.

With all these changes your kids may be struggling with following directions. During these tough times right now, our kids need consistency more than ever.

Here are some strategies that may sound simple but have proven to be really effective! You can use one or all of them.

- *Come up with some simple rules for everyone in the house to follow.*
  - For example, “We use gentle hands with each other (rather than hitting).” Create rules that relate to behavior you are struggling with.
- *Praise the good stuff whenever you see it.*
  - Examples include, “I love the way you are keeping your hands to yourself” or “Nice job working that out by talking about it.”
- *Reinforce rules with a brief discussion.*
  - To help your kids learn the rule, guide them to the correct behavior for minor misbehaviors. First, get close and get their attention by saying their name. “{Child’s name}, you yelled at your sister. That isn’t kind. What is our rule about how we treat each other?” Encourage him to say the rule, and if not, you say the rule: “We are kind to each other. Can you show me what that looks like?” Stay close. If your child follows the instruction, praise him/her. “Nice job asking nicely. That was kind.”
- *If instruction isn’t followed, use a logical consequence if possible.*
  - Continuing on our above scenario, you could say, “You will have to play by yourself for a few minutes and then we can try playing with your sister again.” After a few minutes, reunite them and watch for the behavior you want to see and praise it.

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- *If the behavior is repeated, try quiet time.*

- o “You are not using gentle hands, come sit over here and take some quiet time. I will come and get you when I know that you are calm and you can try again.” Wait until the child is calm. Do not pay attention to any whining, etc. When he/she is calm, take him/her back to try again.

These strategies work best when we have realistic expectations of ourselves and our children. It will take lots of practice, patience and grace to get through this time but we can also use this as an opportunity. An opportunity to grow and come out even better!

Stay calm and parent on!

**For parenting tips and resources, check out Nationwide Children's Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) at [NationwideChildrens.org/TripleP](http://NationwideChildrens.org/TripleP).**

