

Ep #11: How to Get Your Kids to Listen the First Time – Without Yelling!



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

[Real World Peaceful Parenting](#) with Lisa Smith

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Welcome to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*, a podcast for parents that are tired of yelling, threatening, and punishing their kids. Join mom and master certified parent coach Lisa Smith as she gives you actionable step-by-step strategies that'll help you transform your household from chaos to cooperation. Let's dive in.

Welcome, welcome, welcome. Today's episode is dedicated to all the yellers. Yes, you. I so understand the habit that is yelling at our kids, to our kids. Today's episode has the power to change how you look at yelling for a long time to come. Listening can be a big challenge while we're parenting. So far, we talked about how to listen to your kids so it makes a difference. We talked about why don't my kids listen? Today I'm going to help you get your kids to listen the first time. Yes, the first time.

Okay. Let me guess. You don't like yelling, right. Maybe you think, "I don't want to yell, but yelling is the only way my kids listen to my Lisa." I hear you. I hear you. I promise there is no judgement here. In fact, I used to believe this too. I thought yelling was the only way Malcolm would get in the bathtub, put his shoes on, go sit down, do his homework. You name it. Today I'm going to explain why yelling does work, but it probably isn't why you. I'm going to tell you what else works equally as well. Are you listening? Get it? Are you listening?

All right. As Maya Angelou says, "When we know better, we do better." So today I'm here to teach you how to get your kids to listen the first time without yelling. Yes, it is possible. Stay with me. Be open minded. Just listen. I promise it is possible.

Now, I do know as parents we are very busy people. Whether you work inside the home or outside, no matter what your profession, life is busy living life and parenting. There are about a million things to do in a day,

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right, and very little time to get them done. From the moment our feet hit the ground in the morning until we go to sleep. We're not only constantly going, but we're always thinking about what we should be doing next and all the things that need to get done in a day, right. Also known affectionately as multitasking.

Okay, confession time. Right now as you're listening to me, are you also working at your computer? Are you driving? Are you making dinner? Are you folding laundry? Are you watching your kids? Chances are right now you might be multitasking. I get it. For us as adults, our executive function which is housed in the front top of our brain in the prefrontal cortex. For most of us, it's fully developed.

Executive function is the part of the brain that allows for multitasking. So while you're making breakfast, you're also looking at the clock and scanning the universe for what needs to be done next and where you need to be at what time. That's multitasking.

Here's the news. Are you ready? Your children are not multitaskers. Let me repeat that. Your children are not multitaskers at any age. You see, multitasking doesn't really start until the prefrontal cortex is fully developed, which happens at around the age of 25. It's because the prefrontal cortex has to be fully developed to allow for the activity of multitasking.

Multitasking requires seeing a couple steps ahead, critical thinking, being able to see the big picture, scanning your surroundings. It requires planning, forward thinking. All the activities that are happening in the executive function in the prefrontal cortex. Multitasking requires being able to see the bigger picture, and your children can't do it. So when they're doing something, it's all they're doing. They are people who live in the moment doing whatever they're currently doing right now.

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Once we as parents understand that they can't multitask and that it's not because they're being difficult, or they don't care. Once we understand it's because of brain development, it helps to calm our frustration down. Not being able to multitask is very normal. Whether they're two or eighteen, they just don't have a lot of executive function. Once again, let me state this. Executive function is required to be a multitasker. Our kids live in the moment. They don't think ahead, and they don't multitask. This is really important that you remember this.

All right. So let's set the stage. Let's say that Steve has two kids, two boys eight and 12. Steve does the morning routine. He gets them breakfast and he gets the kids to school before heading to work. So one morning he's in the kitchen making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for lunch. It's 7:00 in the morning, and he realizes that they need to get ready and leave for school in order to be on time. One of his kids is in the living room laying on the couch reading a book. The other is sitting in the chair on his phone.

From the kitchen while making lunch and cleaning up breakfast, Steve yells out, "Hey get your shoes on. We've got to go." He continues about his tasks. A few minutes later he realizes nothing is happening. So, again, he barks out, "Get your shoes on. We've got to go." Again, there's nothing happening. Not because his kids are bad or defiant or uncooperative. It's because his two boys are single taskers. They are in the moment. They are reading their book and on their phone.

So now Steve's worked up a whole head of steam because they're not listening. He marches into the living room and shouts, "Get your shoes on now!" The kids look up from what they're doing and say, "Okay. Gosh Dad, you don't have to yell." Steve is thinking or maybe saying, "Yes I do. You only listen to me when I yell." Can you feel for Steve? Can I get an amen?

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Have you been there? Are you like, “Wow Lisa. Do you have a camera inside our home?” I do not. I promise. But I do know how it goes.

I totally understand why you and Steve really truly believe yelling is the only way to get your kids to listen. Yelling is actually what's called a pattern interrupter. Have you heard of that before? As a pattern interrupter, it does work. Let me also share with you there are many other non-yelling pattern interrupters that work equally as well. So what I want to tell you today is the four steps in getting your kids to listen the first time.

Step one in getting your kids to listen the first time is to gain their attention. To gain their attention, we often use yelling as the pattern interrupter. Going forward to gain their attention, I want you to use a non-yelling pattern interrupter. Teachers use pattern interrupters all the time. Am I right teachers? Let's say you have 23 kids in your third grade classroom. They're all sitting around on the carpet in groups of three reading books. You realize as the teacher it's time to get them to put their books away and line up for lunch.

The teacher doesn't just say to all 23 kids, “All right, everybody line up. Time to go to lunch.” It would be absolute chaos in the classroom. Instead she uses a pattern interrupter. She might say, “One, two, three.” The kids are trained to look up and say, “Eyes on me.” Or she might say, “Macaroni”. The kids look up and say, “Cheese”. This is an effective non-yelling pattern interrupter.

The first time she says one, two, three, only one or two kids looks up and say, “Eyes on me.” So then she calmly does it again and again and again until she has all 23 kids saying in unison, “Eyes on me”. At this point she knows that she has gained the attention of all 23 kids with a pattern interrupter. Only after she realizes or verifies that she's gained the attention

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of all the kids with the pattern interrupter does she go to step two and make the request.

The teacher in the classroom never makes the request until she's gained the entire class's attention. We need to borrow this tool and bring it into our parenting. You don't have to do "one, two, three, eyes on me" because you have a smaller group of people. You can just say your kid's name. You need to say it over and over and over again until you've gained their attention. If you're just making the request, it gets lost on them because they're not paying attention to the request.

So remember to do a pattern interrupter. Come out of the kitchen, go over to them. Go into the living room, walk into their bedroom, say their name, say eyes on me, look up, touch their shoulder. Do whatever you need to do depending on their age and situation, but I'm telling you the magic is in gaining their attention before you make the request.

So here's why your brain thinks yelling works or yelling is the only way to get your kids to listen. So back to Steve, right. He's in the kitchen making these peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. He just yells out to his kids to get their shoes on. Remember, they're not listening because they're not multitaskers at eight and 12. They're sitting down reading Harry Potter and playing on their phone. They are not scanning the universe for Steve's request that they get their shoes on because they're doing whatever they're doing in the moment. They don't have the ability to be scanning the universe looking for requests coming their way.

So when Steve yells out, "Hey, get your shoes on." They just simply don't hear it. So then he says it again. Nothing's happening. Now his frustration is building because in his mind, he's telling his kids what to do, but they're not doing it. So then he marches into the living room and yells at them, "Get

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your shoes on now.” He’s using a pattern interrupter, so they look up. They look up from what they’re doing. They say, “Okay Dad. Jeez. You don’t have to yell.”

Now Steve’s completely exasperated because in his mind he thinks, “Yes I do. I have to yell to get their attention.” Steve could just use a different non-yelling pattern interrupter. He could come out of the kitchen into the living room and say his boy’s names. Say, “Look at me. Please stop what you’re doing. Put down the book and phone and look at me.” That will interrupt the pattern of what they’re currently doing and gain their attention. We can totally use calm pattern interrupters to gain our kid’s attention successfully.

Now, I want you to note that if your kids are doing something really fun or something they really enjoy like watching a show on YouTube, gaming, scrolling social media, playing in a pool at a friend’s house. It might take some extra work to gain their attention. Just stay patient and calm and don’t get triggered. It might go something like, “Samantha. Samantha. Honey, Mommy’s talking to you. Look at me. Samantha. Can you put your phone down, Samantha, and look at me for a minute?” Right? So step one is to gain their attention with a calm pattern interrupter.

Only after you’ve gained their attention do you go to step two, which is to make your request. So after you’ve gained their attention, you’re going to make the request. Put your shoes on. Put your clothes away. Go get in the bathtub. Put the dishes away. Start your homework. Brush your teeth, etcetera. The magic here is to make sure you have their attention before you make the request. don’t move on to step two until you’re sure you have their attention.

Step one is gain their attention. Step two is make the request. Step three is also really important. Step three is to confirm that they heard the request.

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You can confirm it with a statement as simple as, “What did I just say? Tell me what I just said. What am I asking you to do?” This is important because your kids may not have been actively listening. They may be zoned out. Their brain may still be on the original task that you interrupted.

Some kids depending on age and personality, they don't do transitions well. So although they may look up and say, “Yes mom,” they may still be thinking about the show they were watching. Their brain still may be on the previous task. So you want to confirm the request. What did I just say? What did I just say? So when we say get your shoes on, get in the bath, wash your hands for dinner, we need to confirm that they heard us.

Expect that at least 50% of the time they're going to look up at you and say something to the equivalent of, “Uh, I have no idea.” Your job is to just stay calm and say, “Okay. Let me state it again.” You don't need to get frustrated, upset, mad, disappointed, yell at them. They've just told you they didn't hear you. Okay. Let me state it again.

The average adult has to hear something seven times before they remember it. So your child with an underdeveloped brain is probably not going to hear you the first time you make the request. So we want to confirm that they heard the request. And teach them if they didn't to admit that so we can restate the request.

I say to my son all the time, “What did I just say?” He looks up at me and he's like, “Uh, mom I have no idea.” I always respond with, “Awesome. Now that I have your attention, let me make the request again. Please put the dishes away. Please get a shower. Please get ready to go.” Step three can save a lot of heartache and disappointment in the relationship with your kids. Confirm the request.

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Step one, gain their attention; step two, make the request; step three, confirm the request. Now step four is to gain the commitment. This last step is really going to resonate with anyone in sales. When you're in sales, particularly in big ticket sales, you learn to gain micro commitments from the potential buyer along the way. You get people to say yes. When people say little yesses along the way or yes in general, humans are more likely to follow through on what they committed to.

Let me say that again. When we gain a commitment from someone, especially out loud verbally, they're much more likely to follow through. As I mentioned, this is why salespeople gain micro commitments along the way. If you're gaining commitments along the way, you're most likely to close the sale.

So in step number four, what I want you to do is ask your kids, “Are we good? Can you get it done? Are we all set? Can you make that happen? Will you follow through? Are you going to do it?” Gain a commitment in a way that works for you and your child. Get them to say, “Yes, I will do that. Yes, I'm going to in four minutes put the dishes away. Yes, I'm going to take a shower at 8:00.” The success rate will go up dramatically when you gain a verbal commitment from your child in regard to your request.

So in my house it might look something like this. “Malcolm. Malcolm, honey, look at me.” “Yes Mom?” “Malcolm, I need you to put the dishes away.” “Okay Mom.” “Malcolm, honey what did I just ask you?” “Um, I don't know Mom. I don't know.” “Okay. No problem. No problem at all. I need you to put the dishes away.”

“Okay Mom. You need me to put the dishes away.” “Yes. Can you get that done right now? I need you to stop what you're doing and put the dishes away.” “Mom, I'm almost done with this show. I've got 10 minutes left.”

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“Okay. I understand that. So when your show is over in 10 minutes, you will put the phone down, get up, and put the dishes away.” “Yes.”

“All right. Tell me Malcolm exactly what you're gonna do.” “I don't know Mom. What did I just agree to?” “Okay honey. I understand. Listen to me for a second. Do I have your attention?” “Yes Mom. Yes.” “Okay. You told me you have 10 minutes left in your show. We agreed that when the show's over, you're going to put the phone down and put the dishes away.” “Okay Mom.” “All right Malcom. Tell me what we agreed to?” “I'm going to put the dishes away when the show's over.” “Okay. Can you get that done?” “Yep.” “Great. Awesome. Thank you.”

Now right now in your mind, you might be like, “Wow Lisa. That's a lot of work.” Okay. Yeah, it takes some effort in the beginning. It's a new system. It's a new way. I'll tell you what. It takes about the same amount of effort as yelling with your kids and having an argument over the yelling. It feels a whole heck of a lot better. What I can tell you is if you bring the four step process of getting your kids to listen the first time into your home and practice it over and over again, you will train both of you to follow the steps. It will get faster and easier for both of you. It's a total game changer.

It leads to much more connection with your kids because they feel seen, heard, and valued. It leads to much more connection on your part because you feel seen, heard, and valued. It increases the cooperation that you'll experience with your kids all without having to yell at them constantly. And you'll drop the story that my kids only listen when I yell at them. This is an absolute game changer in your parenting. I 100% promise you.

So let's review the four steps. Step one, gain their attention; step two, make their request; step three, confirm the request; step four, gain the commitment. How do these four steps sound? Can I get a commitment

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from you that you're going to try this the next time that you want your kids to do something? Awesome. This is such an important parenting tool that I created a resource for you that you can download to support, remind, and reinforce what I'm sharing today.

So I want you to go to thepeacefulparent.com/eleven. You'll find a PDF that you can download, print out, carry with you, put on your phone, tape up to your refrigerator. Whatever works for you. You can print out this resource to reinforce, remind, and support you in learning the four steps to get your kids to listen the first time. Sound good? Awesome. Okay. Until next time, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

To celebrate the launch of the *Real World Peaceful Parenting* podcast, I'm going to be giving away a \$50 gift card to one of my many Peaceful Parent courses. I'm going to be giving away one gift card to 10 lucky listeners who subscribe, rate, and review the show on Apple podcasts. It doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I sure hope you loved the show. I want your honest feedback so that I can create an awesome show that provides tons of value.

Visit www.thepeacefulparent.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. That's www.thepeacefulparent.com/podcastlaunch. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode. So stay tuned.

Thanks for listening to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. If you want more info on how you can transform your parenting, visit thepeacefulparent.com. See you soon.