

Non-Verbal Cues for Unacceptable Behavior

Parents can use non-verbal cues to communicate that their child's behavior is not acceptable:

The Stern Look:

A serious, unwavering look can immediately convey disapproval. It's the look that says, "Stop that right now," without a word.

Shaking Your Head:

A slow shake of the head can indicate that the behavior is not acceptable, communicating disappointment or disapproval.

Finger to the Lips:

Placing a finger to your lips can signal the child to be quiet or lower their volume.

Pointing:

A firm point can direct attention to what needs to be done or to stop a particular action.

Examples from Our Own Parents

Many of us remember the non-verbal cues our parents used to convey that our behavior was unacceptable:

The Eyebrow Raise:

My mom would raise one eyebrow, and I knew I was pushing my luck.

The Finger Wag:

My dad would wag his finger, and I knew I needed to stop immediately.

The Tight Lips:

My grandma would press her lips together in a thin line, and I knew she was not happy with me.

Examples of Redirecting or Ceasing Behavior

Here are some common behaviors and how you can use body language to address them:

Interrupting Conversations:

When your child interrupts, place your hand up in a "stop" gesture and maintain eye contact until they stop talking. This one drives me nuts!! Parents!! Do not allow your child to interrupt!!!!

Playing Roughly:

If your child is playing too rough, step in between the children and use a firm "stop" gesture with your hand. Kids who play too rough need to learn that they can hurt someone and they don't always have to win a "play" fight.

Ignoring Requests:

If your child ignores a request, stand still with your arms crossed and maintain eye contact until they acknowledge you. Ignoring is a way kids tell their parents they are in charge and how dare they ask them a question or request them to do something. Remember, your child will and has interacted with adults who will not put up with it.

Tantrums in Public:

Use the "stare down" technique to show your disapproval and maintain a calm, firm posture to signal that their behavior is not acceptable. Embarrass me and you will get "the look." If you don't think other adults are irritated and thinking, "Can't they control that maniac kid?" you are not in the same reality that most adults are in.

Taking More When Told "Just One":

When your child insists on taking more after being told "just one," use a firm "stop" gesture and a serious look to communicate that their behavior is unacceptable. Take the candy or cookie or whatever their fancy and put it up. No treat.

Ignoring "We Are Leaving Now":

If your child ignores you when you say, "We are leaving now," walk over to them, get down to their level, make eye contact, and use a firm gesture to indicate it's time to go. Walk out of the door and don't look back. Let little Lilly experience the fear of being left. She will soon come looking for you...screaming all the way.

Not Listening to "Stop Doing That":

When your child doesn't listen to "stop doing that," stand directly in front of them, make eye contact, and use a hand gesture to indicate they need to stop immediately. Take their little arm and remove them to a fun place called "time out."

Throwing a Fit When Told "You Can Have the Cookie After You Eat":

If your child throws a fit, remain calm, and use a firm, steady posture. Place your finger to your lips to signal quiet, and if necessary, guide them to a calm-down spot until they are ready to listen. No cookie, you do not deserve it and no negations. Period. You can have one tomorrow when you decide to listen to me.

Final Thoughts

Body language is a powerful tool in parenting, capable of enhancing communication and making disciplinary actions more effective. By being mindful of your non-verbal cues, you can build a stronger, more understanding relationship with your children. Remember, your actions often speak louder than words, and mastering body language can help you connect with your kids on a deeper level.

Incorporating body language into your parenting toolkit not only brings a touch of the "old school" approach but also provides a fresh and effective way to communicate and discipline. So next time, instead of lecturing or repeating yourself, try using "the look," hesitation, walking away, ignoring, or a gentle touch to see how your child responds. You might be surprised at the results.