

TALK, TALK AND TALK AGAIN

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When we are together for a long time, especially now (*written during coronavirus lockdowns*), we will expect each family member to perform certain household duties, including children. But if we give instructions to children, let us justify them. Let's explain why. They are more likely to do it and you won't have to repeat it several times. It is best to remind them once, just before the time it was supposed to be done.

However, it is much better, instead of giving orders, to jointly establish the program of the day. Consider what should be done and when and who should be responsible for each action. Children should be included in the discussion. This family conference is likely to take a little longer but it can save you a lot of frustration and nervousness later on.

Plan time for their study and your work, for entertainment, household chores and the rest. Of course, it will be necessary to check, remind or give advice to the child in the course of the activities. But try not to criticize, even if something is not done as you wish.

Let's eliminate the word 'No'. For at least two reasons. First of all, short, but very strongly sounding "NO" raises rebellion at once. Instead of, "Don't put a hot mug on the table," you'd better say, "Take a coaster for this mug". When looking into the room and seeing that the child is playing on the computer instead of learning, we feel like shouting, "Did I tell you not to turn on the game?" But let's control the anger, gently but firmly recalling, "You've forgotten that now it is the time to work".

Secondly, it has been proved that not only the brain of a child, but also an adult brain has difficulty registering the short word 'No'. The action that follows is much more powerful. We can give numerous examples from our own experience. "Do not fall over," the mother cries, and the baby is already lying down and crying. "Don't hold it like that or it will fall," alas and it's already broken. Instead of NO, let's say, "Try, try, walk slowly, do it carefully, carry it carefully, hold it tight", etc.

Every child, every young person goes through periods of rebellion. Sometimes these rebellions are absurd. The parents' reaction cannot be confrontation, as this will provoke an even stronger rebellion. We need to understand that rebellion is a normal step into adulthood. You should show your child a lot of patience and understanding. The child wants to prove his independence at all costs. But we must know that the fewer dos and don'ts we say, the less we create opportunities for rebellion. Should anything be allowed then? Oh, no. Quite the opposite. It is necessary to consistently present our standards, our expectations of correct reactions and behaviours in calm conversations. Such discussions should take place every day.

We usually make excuses for why we can't talk to our children, for example, due to a lack of time. However, there must be time for conversation. A great opportunity for talk is a family meal at the table. Eating is always associated with pleasure. Thus, when we sit down at the table, we already have a positive foundation for conversation. Such a shared meal does not necessarily mean a three-course dinner with starters and a dessert. These can be ordinary sandwiches, tea or drinking juice. It's important to sit down and be together.

Scientists from Harvard University have proved that talking together at the table has the same impact on the development of a child's intellect as reading books. While reading is a passive vocabulary acquisition and a development of imagination, talking at the table requires active participation. It develops vocabulary, reaction skills, brilliance and the ability of persuasive argumentation. It has been proved that children who eat at least one meal a day at the table with their family get much better results at school. The example of

scholarship holders to prestigious, private schools confirms this assumption. These children did not come from wealthy or highly educated families but they would sit down with their families at least five times a week.

Families who have not practised shared meals may find it difficult to start a conversation at the table. Of course, before eating, turn off the TV. Soft music is encouraged. The conversation at the table must be as natural as possible. It is important to start a conversation. When asked, "And what have you been doing today, Beata?", we'll probably get an answer, "Nothing special". "And you, Robert?" A similar response. So, it is better to start the conversation by telling your own observations or memories from the past day. Then there is a chance that the household members will naturally join the conversation. If possible, try to speak Polish. But if a child switches to English while telling something, let's not scold them with a "Speak Polish!" Although, we ourselves, should consistently use the Polish language. Of course, in a family not everything will always be agreeable and harmonious. If difficult situations do arise, let's learn from the Japanese. In their cultural message, there is a saying, "When it is difficult and dangerous, laugh!" Laughter relieves tension and puts our body into regeneration mode, which in turn increases our immune barrier. These days this is what we really need.

Translation - Abigail Latecki