

STOP YELLING!

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Why do we end up yelling at our kids? The most common answer is, "Because they are driving us crazy!" What parents haven't raised their voices to 120 decibels at fairly frequent intervals in their children's lives? Why do kids yell at their parents? They yell because their parents do it. Can we stop doing it to each other? Yes, we can! Oh, really? Absolutely!

Let's look at some reasons why parents yell at their kids. Most commonly it is because the kids have been asked a number of times in a low level voice to do something and they have ignored their parents. We think that the louder we talk, the more likely the kids will jump to it. Maybe that worked a few times, but now they have tuned us out. Why do they tune us out? They don't bother listening because our asking, begging and pleading just becomes gray noise.

We were visiting a young family recently and the mother was on the computer when I asked her a question. She was so engrossed in what she was doing that she didn't even acknowledge me. She told me that she knows she does it. She has done it all her life and because of that she thinks it is fine to just ignore people. Her children do the same thing. If they are playing, nine times out of ten they will not respond when spoken to. She excuses her children's lack of attention to others, because she does it. They do it because she does. So, poor parent role modeling has created exactly the same issue in her children.

Before I say our kids ignore us because there are often no consequences for disobedience, there are some other factors we should consider. Sometimes we demand our children's attention when they are seriously trying to concentrate - and I am not talking about watching TV or playing computer games. The best thing to do is to catch their attention (eyeball to eyeball) for a few minutes and tell them exactly what you want them to do and when. For example, "After the program ends I want you to pack up the toys, wash your hands and sit at the table." You may even get them to repeat the instructions to make sure they understand. You don't have to get angry. Praise them for doing as you asked. If they do not follow the instructions, repeat your request with a consequence attached. Don't raise your voice, but make sure they are eyeballing you when you tell them. Issue the consequence if they do not comply. If you are consistent they will learn to do as you ask the first time.

Another reason we shout is because we allow ourselves to get so angry we lose our temper. A loud, sharp tone of voice is usually fueled by a growing frustration, so when we feel the pressure rising we need to just STOP. If it is possible we should go outside, go to the bathroom, the bedroom, somewhere away from the situation and GET A GRIP by counting to at least 20 slowly. We say that others make us angry, but much of the time we allow ourselves to lose control as we throw our own adult tantrum. Whatever it takes, we need to learn how to control our own anger so that our children learn how to control theirs.

When our children start shouting, we need to check it out before we jump in. Have we been ignoring their questions? Have we not been watching for the cues to be able to divert an outburst? Have we not taught them that there is a more productive way of solving arguments? Do they know that yelling is disrespectful? Do they have a hearing problem? Have we actually asked them what is troubling them? All of these considerations need to be investigated honestly and often.

We all long for a peaceful home and this can be achieved if we look behind the frustration, deal with it in ourselves and then in our children. It can be done and it isn't very hard to achieve if we all contribute – quietly.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.