

Using Choices

Children who find it difficult to follow instructions benefit from adults using choices to distract and give the child (and the adult) a way out from confrontations. They also give the child some power over their own actions. Choices also encourage thinking and decision making. If there is a problem getting the child to follow instructions **careful use of language and two (adult chosen) choices will often prevent problems arising.** We are trying to avoid a confrontation so practice at a time that the child is usually happy to do what you ask. See how they react to being given this kind of choice and give yourself chance to get a bit used to thinking of choices because that is sometimes the tricky bit! The choice is about **HOW** they are going to do the thing you are asking them.

1. If it is something the child has to do then do not ask them 'would you like to/can you and will you?' Use 'I need you to/it is time to' before the instruction you want to give.
2. Take a few moments just before you give your instruction and think of 2 choices the child can be given. For instance - getting dressed - pants or socks first/tee shirt or trousers (same in reverse of course!). Coming to sit at the table - 'It's time to come and sit down/who do you want to sit next to/which chair?'
3. Keep the tone of your voice pleasant and confident. Use humour or a game to help.
4. Praise the child when they do as you ask them, this is very important.
5. If the child does not react the first time you give them 2 choices you can repeat just what you said again and wait. If they cannot decide (or are still not co-operating) you can offer to decide for them. Remember to keep a pleasant tone of voice, but be a bit firmer about who is going to choose if they don't make their mind up.

This strategy needs practice and persistence but can be very effective if consistently used. There are many situations in which it can be used if you take a little time to think about the choices you can give. If you need to talk about this, Please do not hesitate to call the EPU on Scunthorpe 01724 296679. Good Luck!

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