



Five Tips to Get More Cooperation from Your Kids This School Year

It's almost back to school time again

by Victoria Kindle Hodson

If you're feeling helpless and hopeless remembering how old challenges have taken you to the "battle zone" in the past and would like to spend more of the next nine months in a calmer, more fun place, you can start now with these five tips to set the stage for a "new, more cooperative way of doing business" this school year.

1. Change Your Focus

Whatever your challenges, when things start going your way, it is usually you who have changed directions. If you have been doing the same old things year after year to change your kids' behavior, this is your year to do a U-turn and change your behavior instead.

For many of the nagging, annual school problems, it's just quicker and easier to change focus and learn some new ways of doing things for yourself.

2. Learn Together as You Go

If you're like most parents I've met, you think it's your job to fix kids' problems and manage their behavior. It's a heavy burden that can be frustrating and exhausting. Plan to be one member of a team, instead, who works together to find solutions to problems.

Encourage all members of the family to have input on decisions that affect them. Your kids are full of great ideas for how to get things done. From chores and homework to bed times; they are just waiting to be asked. When their suggestions are combined with yours, you can decide together which ones to try.

Check in periodically to see how things are going. If an idea just isn't working, try another one. You will be teaching your kids a practical, "experimental method" for handling life's challenges.

3. Meet Regularly in the "No Fault Zone"

In the middle of arguments, when you and your kids are reactive and defensive is no time to try to explain yourself, talk things over, or work things out. As soon as you notice you're caught in the grip of upset and anger, it's best to press the stop button, and cool down.

Spare yourself and your kids the struggle; instead, plan to have regular, proactive get-togethers, about once a week, in a neutral space where no one

can be blamed or shamed and where you can do your problem solving together.

In the protection of this neutral space, these meetings give everyone a chance to connect about accomplishments, upcoming events, strategies for getting things done that are and aren't working, hurt feelings, wants, and needs.

4. Make A Family Agreement

A Family Agreement gives assurance to all members that everyone has a voice, everyone will be heard, and you will work together to provide for one other. At a family meeting before school starts you might tell your kids that you want to provide a place for them where they feel comfortable learning and living together.

Ask your kids, What would help you to feel safe and comfortable in our family—safe to speak up about what's going on, safe to ask questions and share your feelings? They are likely to say things such as, I want you to listen to me. No yelling. No tattling. These are all fine. You might say that you want your kids to listen to you, that you want to work things out together, you want to have their input for problems that come up, and you want to have a time and place to do all this. Write these ideas on a list and refer to them, add to them, and refine them at family meetings.

5. Take Care of You

You know your kids need sleep, nutritious meals, help and support, time to have fun with friends, time for hobbies and interests. You have these needs, too.

This school year it's time to take time for you. Get your rest. Eat healthy, regular meals. Redefine taking a time out and trade childcare with friends or family member so each of you can have time out of the house every week or so; take a class, go to a movie with friends or something else you enjoy. And, when you're feeling confused, upset, frustrated about parenting issues, don't wait it out. Form your own support group or talk with a friend, read/study. Do whatever it takes to get new information and break out of old, habitual ways of doing things.

When you feel alive, supported, and connected to life you will be able to connect with your kids in new, more respectful and purposeful ways. You will feel more open to their ideas, and their desire to connect with you. And, this kind of connection is bound to lead to new kinds of solutions.

Call it what you like, it's your chance to try a new way of doing business—one that is likely to enlist more of the cooperation you have wanted all along.

This article is based on *Respectful Parents, Respectful Kids* by Sura Hart and Victoria Kindle Hodson. For more information about the book you can go to www.thenofaultzone.com. You can also download a free copy of a new offering — **The Bully-Proof Your Home Checklist**.

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