

NEWSLETTER

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STUCK? STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN!

A distraught mother told me the other day that the hardest thing about parenting is “You have to keep doing it over and over again!”

She went on complain that she is sick and tired of the same hassles day after day. Same-old, same-old with 12-year-old Jessica who argues about wearing lipstick to school and wants a nose ring. Argument after argument with 8-year-old Paul about watching television. “I feel as though I’m stuck in parenting quicksand and I’ll never get out. My kids know how I feel. Why do I have to keep saying it over and over again?”

She’s right. Parents do a lot of repetition. It’s part of our job description.

But if you feel stuck maybe there’s something wrong with your performance. If you repeat yourself a thousand times maybe you aren’t saying it right.

A phrase from my childhood about what you do before you cross the street popped into my head while this mother was talking. STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN!

STOP what you’re doing long enough to ANALYZE YOUR PERFORMANCE. How many stars would a reviewer give your parenting? Why aren’t your kids listening? Do they know you’re going to say it dozens of times? Have they been able to wheedle you in the past so “Just this once, let me watch TV until the program is over.” gets the desired effect. Do they know they can wear you out and get what they want?

LOOK at your kids while you are talking to them. Get information from their eye-rolling, body language, and grimaces. Are they as bored with this scenario as you are? Are they tuning you out? Are they puzzled by your behavior? Are they trying to con you as well as wheedle you?

LISTEN to what your children are really saying. Most of us think that “having a talk” means we keep repeating what’s on our mind. In truth, the most important part of talking is listening. Ask Jessica why she wants to wear lipstick. Ask Paul why he wants to watch a certain program. Then LISTEN to their answers. Don’t wimp out but let your kids have their say.

And LISTEN to yourself. Are you nagging? Are you repeating everything a dozen times? Do you keep explaining what you mean or why you want your daughter's lips to be a no lipstick-zone?

If so clean up your act. SAY IT ONCE AND MEAN IT! No compliance? An appropriate CONSEQUENCE.

Getting "unstuck" doesn't happen overnight but it will happen if you stop, look, and listen.