

## **Alternatives to the Word, "No!"**

By Judy Arnall

One day it happens. Your cute, adorable, cuddly baby has turned into a toddler. And she's discovered the word, "NO"! Emphatic, heart stopping, and powerful. The word no is a favorite among children because they hear it so often from parents when they mean business.

Children are corrected many times in a day. That's a lot of negatively thrown at them. Eventually, the word "No" loses its impact and children get so tired of hearing it, they learn to tune parents out.

How can we avoid overuse of the word "No" when relating to our child, but still get the message across that some limits have to be respected? Try using some positive alternatives:

- "Yes, later." Works well when you want to delay something such as a cookie before dinner.
- "Not for \_\_\_\_\_." The child's name can go here.
- "Not today." Tells the child that the possibility is open, but timing is wrong.
- "When.....,then....." This technique is especially good for transition times. "When we get in the car, then we can watch the hot air balloons on the way home." "When we get to Grandmas, then we can have the ice-cream we brought." This works great to establish a routine and help toddlers discover the order of events in their world. One event often follows another.
- "Let me think about it." Instead of an automatic no, you always have the right for time to think about your decision. We often make better parenting decisions, ones we don't regret later, but feel we have to follow through for consistency sake, when we've allowed ourselves time to think about what we are really being asked, and what response we want to give.
- "Yes, did you bring your allowance with you?" You are getting across the point that child can purchase the treat/toy/treasure but you are not paying for it.
- "Yes, (with qualifier inserted here)." For example, "Yes, you may eat your Easter chocolate after breakfast." "Yes, you may ride your bike after your homework is done." "Sure, lets play after the dishes are done."
- Perhaps give a reason instead of a "No", such as "Ouch, hitting hurts people!" instead of "No hitting"!

- Be sure to tell what to do, instead of what not to do. Instead of “No running!” try “Please walk.” Instead of “No jumping on the sofa.” Try “Sofas get broken when jumped on. Please jump on the floor cushions.” Or “Let’s use our church voices, instead of our outside voices.”

There is always a more positive way to state a rule. Personally, when I hit a barrage of “No this, no that.” I start to feel negative and uncooperative. No matter what their age, all people respond better when rules are communicated positively. For example, “ I’m worried about dirt on the carpet. Let’s take our shoes off in the house.” will elicit much more cooperation than “No shoes in the house”. For just one day, try to avoid the No word and rephrase all your correctives in positive language. Save your No’s for absolute safety reasons. See what a difference it makes in the cooperation of your children!

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