



Parenting during pandemic

Day 21: When one adult says “no”, ask another! Consistent parenting during pandemic.

As part of growing up, children start to understand that people have different minds and think different thoughts from each other. We call this “theory of mind”. Alongside this, they learn about their own thinking and how to get what they need and what they want. Sometimes, then, this looks like going to different adults and asking the same thing until they get what they want. While this can be annoying for the adults, it does show their development in action and their ingenuity!

Given that children learn a lot from the adults around them, it is important that they get a consistent message. While pushing the boundaries and asking different adults for the same thing is part of growing up, getting the same message from each adult also helps with understanding, processing of information and therefore development over time.

Giving children consistent messages also makes them feel safe because it sets up beliefs that the world is clear and understandable. Inconsistent messages can set up beliefs that the world is unclear and this can lead to insecurity and anxiety.

Unsurprisingly, communication is key here. We can’t read the minds of the other adults in our child’s life so we need to talk to them. Talking through any issues that come up with children can also be helpful for our own processing and understanding of what is happening with our children and for our children.

What happens if it goes wrong? What if one adult says one thing and another says something else? This is likely to happen sometimes and it can be helpful to talk about it and try again. This can prove more or less difficult depending on a number of factors including where children are living during the pandemic. Some children are spending time in one home with one or more adults, others are moving between different homes due to parental separation and others are living apart from those they would usually be at home with to avoid health risks at this time.

Another issue here during lockdown is that with children at home, we may be tempted to “give in” sometimes and go against our own rules or those agreed with other adults for a number of reasons. Sometimes this may be due to feeling guilty about having to do other things when children want to play; sometimes this may be due to needing a few minutes to do something, sometimes this may be due to feeling sorry for children who seem bored stuck at home etc. This can mean that not only are we inconsistent with what other adults may be telling children but we can even be inconsistent with our own rules.

Given that this is a time of uncertainty for all of us, it is a particularly important time for children to know that they are as safe and secure as possible so giving consistent messages can be helpful in this. Some extra reassurance may even be required at times.

We hope these tips are helpful. Well done on managing another day off school and we hope you will join us again tomorrow.

Tomorrow’s topic: Parenting from the frontline. Protecting your family while looking after everyone else’s.

Please contact us with questions, comments or topics you’d like to see covered. We’d love to hear your feedback.

Wishing you a safe and healthy path through this pandemic.