

8 Alternatives to Raising Your Voice With Your Child

By Lexi Walters Wright

When discussions between you and your child with learning and attention issues get heated, it's important to remain respectful—and expect respect in return. Here's how to make your point *and* teach healthy communication skills.

1 of 8 — Take the opposite tone.

Shouting “Stop screaming at me!” when you're arguing with your child might confuse him and make things worse. Instead, try this: The louder he gets, the softer the tone you use to respond. That demonstrates that raising your voice isn't the way to solve problems. And it can make you both feel calmer. If your child has trouble with social cues like voice pitch and tone, once the tension has eased you can point out how your softer approach helped.

2 of 8 — Be a broken record.

Sometimes there's no room for negotiation on an issue. In these cases, use a calm, businesslike tone and quietly repeat what you expect from your child. “Sorry, but when you hit, you sit.” No matter how he reacts, just calmly repeat the same phrase as many times as it takes. Eventually, your message will sink in. This may be especially useful with kids who have trouble

remembering or paying attention to rules.

3 of 8 — Invite discussion.

When there *is* room for negotiation, certain phrases can turn an argument into a conversation:

“**What if** you got 20 minutes of iPad time before homework?”

“**Could we try to ...** ” or “**Would you be willing to** give this a shot for a week and then see if it’s working?”

“**I wonder** what *you* think is the best time to do your homework each day?”

Using these simple, short phrases is particularly helpful for kids who have receptive language issues or trouble focusing.

4 of 8 — Be positive—and direct.

Being clear about what you want is important. And using your child’s name when giving directions gets his attention and makes your message more personal.

These things can be especially helpful for kids with listening comprehension issues. Instead of saying, “The Xbox belongs to the whole family!” try, “Tommy, I’d like you to give your brother a turn now.”

5 of 8 — Make it fun.

Could you defuse the situation with a little silliness? Rather than yelling (again) for your distracted (or

hyperactive) toddler to sit still so you can brush his teeth, try creatively coaxing him. “Quick, Nathan, I see Elmo in your mouth and I need to brush him out. Oh, and Cookie Monster, too!” Or, “You can choose what we’re having for dessert every night this week if I don’t have to remind you to set the table.”

6 of 8 — Take a break.

If you feel you’re going to lose control, call a timeout: “Let’s both calm down. In 30 minutes, we can see if we’re ready to talk again.” Then each of you can retreat to different rooms to cool off and self reflect. (Self reflection can be a tricky skill for a kid with learning and attention issues, but seeing you model the behavior can help him learn.) If you’re in public, tell him that the conversation is on pause until you get in the car or make it home.

7 of 8 — Control the conversation.

Stopping the discussion from escalating is the best way to keep from yelling. After all, it takes two people to argue. And unlike most kids, you have the self-awareness to stop and consider: “Is what I’m about to say going to help or hurt this situation? What about *how* I’m about to say it?” As the parent, *you* can choose to stop an argument in its tracks. You have the power to disengage, redirect or restart the conversation in a more

productive way.

8 of 8 — Crowdsource.

Without question, parenting a child with learning and attention issues presents unique challenges. It can help to be connected to other parents who've been there. Use our community to share your experiences and find families like yours. They may be able to offer insights, ideas and suggestions based on their experiences. And just having someone who understands to vent with may help you stay calm when an argument with your child is brewing.

About the Author

Lexi Walters Wright is a veteran writer and editor who helps parents make more informed choices for their children and for themselves.

Reviewed by

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