Practical Communication Strategies: Improving Compliance at Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Michelle Gorenstein, PsyD
Jessica Zweifach, PhD
Pilar Trelles, MD

April 16, 2020 12 – 1 PM

https://mssm.zoom.us/j/99306322457
Meeting ID: 993-0632-2457
Agenda

• Brief Introductions
  • Pilar Trelles, MD
  • Michelle Gorenstein, PsyD
  • Jessica Zweifach, PhD

• Compliance and listening as a behavior

• Antecedent Strategies
  • Relationship
  • Predictability
  • Effective Instructions
  • Other ways to use Language

• Consequence Strategies

• State of Mind

• Question and Answer
Compliance as a Behavior

• Why should we make this a focus?
• Right now we are: parents, teacher, coaches, chefs, therapists
• Listening as a behavior
  • We can think about how to improve it through changing antecedents and consequences
Compliance as a Behavior: Antecedent Strategies

- Building on positive relationship through daily special time
  - Consider number of demands we place daily
  - Use validating language at other times

- Increase predictability through using visuals and routines
  - Visuals for school day and other routines
  - Mealtime, bedtime, any other moments that are a struggle
  - If-Then Boards, Visual Schedules, Token Economies
Compliance as a Behavior: Antecedent Strategies

Effective Instructions:
1. Direct (avoid questions, let’s): Please bring your plate to the sink
2. Specific: Clean up this mess! vs. Please put the blocks in the bin
3. Only 1-2 at a time
4. Be close, obtain eye contact
5. Followed by 5-10 seconds of silence

Avoid: buried, chain, questions, repeating, vague, let’s
Compliance as a Behavior: Antecedent Strategies

• **Say it in the Positive:** what you want *to* see

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of this…</th>
<th>Try this…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t touch that box</td>
<td>Just look at the box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t be rough with her</td>
<td>Use gentle hands please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop screaming</td>
<td>Please use a quiet voice</td>
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• **Transitional Warnings** – Language in additional to visual prompts

• **When-Then Statements** – reinforce with a more enjoyable task

• **Offer a choice** – when possible, gives child a sense of control
Compliance as a Behavior: Consequence Strategies

- **Praise (increases behavior)**
  - Give child labeled praises throughout day for LISTENING
  - Motivating, reinforcing

- **Active Ignoring (decreases behavior)**
  - Helps us focus on the positive
  - Take attention away from negative behaviors
  - Extinction burst

- **Rewards / Behavioral Plans**
  - Concrete reinforcements for compliance
Thinking about Tone of Voice to Increase Compliance

Goal is to give directions or a command in **a calm, neutral tone**.

- Using a questioning tone may be interpreted to mean the command is optional.
- Using a loud or angry tone makes the interaction unpleasant and establishes a cycle where your child learns they do not have to listen unless you are yelling.
Staying Calm to Increase Compliance

- Do not get dragged into an argument or long discussion as it will not end well.

- If you find yourself engaged in this pattern, it is important for you to disengage immediately
  - Create a tagging-out system with another adult in the household
  - Model taking a break

Example: “I am getting frustrated as I asked you to put away the blocks or the cars three times and you did not listen, so I am going to take a five minute break to calm down.”
Caregiver Self-Care: The Basics

**Physical Health**
- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Medical health

**Emotional Health**
- Stay connected
- Spirituality
- Find internal space for yourself
Questions & Answers

• Thank you for your attention and participation!
• Please write questions into chat feature and let us know of additional topics you would like covered
• For copies of slides, please email: audrey.rouhandeh@mssm.edu or bari.britvan@mssm.edu