

The Whys of Whining

"Moooooooooooooom!"

It's irritating, it's frustrating and it gets on your last nerve. Though it's obnoxious and unacceptable, it's actually an effective for your child to get your attention. It's whining. But, like other bad habits, you can nip it in the bud early with a few simple strategies to teach your child there are other appropriate, effective forms of communicating with you.

First, try limiting the situations that trigger it. Avoid extra errands when the kids are hungry. Don't let them get involved in a frustrating game or project prior to bedtime. Pay attention when your child is talking, as sometimes whining is a reaction when a child feels you aren't giving them your full attention. Praise them for not whining and talking in a normal and understandable voice that allows you to fully understand what they are saying to you.

When the whining begins, don't overreact. Keep your response simple, calm and neutral. Ask your child to repeat the request in a normal tone. When giving in seems inevitable, don't delay. If you must finish the grocery shopping so you can put dinner on the table, for instance, and your child starts whining for a snack, offer something healthy right away.

Once a limit has been set, parents should follow through. It's imperative that both parents are on board with this limit and fully follow through when the whining rule has been violated.

If you have an older child that's developing a whining habit, suggest they come up with a solution to their perceived boredom or other voiced problem. If you suggest possible alternatives, it might just prolong the child's whining. Sometimes whining can be the result of trauma and trouble in their life. A divorce, serious family illness or problems at school may be at the root. Additional positive attention and quality one-on-one time may be just the medicine your child needs at a time like this. Your pediatrician can also suggest alternatives to curb whining should the positive attention and disciplinary actions be ineffective.