THE END OF “BECAUSE I SAID SO”:
POSITIVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS
A CSCH Brief by Ireti Adegbesan

The Issue

The phrase "because I said so" is commonly used by caregivers. However, the phrase can lead to children being fearful, anxious, less confident, and ultimately poor communicators. Given that the ultimate goal for caregivers is to promote a child's self-regulation, it is important to create a culture of better communication, and social-emotional responsiveness. Thus, it is critical that caregivers across all settings (i.e., parents, teachers) use positive re-directing strategies as a replacement for “because I said so” in their communication practices.

Key Points Connected to Child Development

- All caregivers play a crucial role in helping with the development of a child's prosocial skills. Positive redirection and scaffolding are important communication practices to prevent negative social and emotional responsiveness.
- Alternatives to the phrase "because I said so" can be found in the table below, and offer positive communication practices that help develop a child's problem-solving skills, prosocial skills, and prosocial development. (See list on p.2.)
- A child's self-esteem and self-regulation can be directly impacted by the quality of the communication response (negative or positive) given in times of frustration, and exasperation.

Key Terms

- **Self-Regulation**: Ability of a person to guide their own behaviors, thoughts, and feelings to control impulse and sort-term desire
- **Emotional Intelligence**: The ability of a person to be aware of, control, and express their emotions
- **Prosocial Skills**: Helping, sharing and cooperating in social situations
- **Self-Worth**: The sense of one’s own value and worth
- **Social Responsiveness**: The way someone responds to a social situation
- **Emotional Responsiveness**: The way someone responds emotionally to another person
Alternative Communication Phrases to “BECAUSE I SAID SO”:
Promoting Social and Emotional Responsiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Responsiveness</th>
<th>Positive Responsiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Because I said so!</td>
<td>• My answer is no. Here’s why…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No!</td>
<td>• Nothing has changed in the last five minutes. My answer is still no. The reason is still…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Because I am the parent!</td>
<td>• I hear you. But, we're going to do it this way first because….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Don’t ask me again!</td>
<td>• I said ‘No.’ Can you tell me why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Because I am the boss!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stay in a child's place!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do what I say or else!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why do I have to tell you 100 times?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You just do not listen!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Takeaways

➢ Caregiver communication should emphasize consistent positive responsiveness - recognizing that it takes persistence, gentleness, and understanding.
➢ Use of positive responsiveness phrases in caregiver communication can help a child develop self-regulation, emotional intelligence, communication skills, and self-worth.

For Additional Information


---

4 To find additional information on the role “because I said so” plays: Poindexter, J. (n.d.). What’s Wrong With “Because, I Say So” and How to Replace It. Retrieved from afineparent.com