



THE END OF “BECAUSE I SAID SO”: POSITIVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS

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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.¹ 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 re-direction 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.²

Key Terms³

- **Self-Regulation:** Ability of a person to guide their own behaviors, thoughts, and feelings to control impulse and short-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 Responsiveness⁴

Negative Responsiveness	Positive Responsiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because I said so! • No! • Because I am the parent! • Don't ask me again! • Because I am the boss! • Stay in a child's place! • Do what I say or else! • Why do I have to tell you 100 times? • You just do not listen! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My answer is no. Here's why... • Nothing has changed in the last five minutes. My answer is still no. The reason is still.... • I hear you. But, we're going to do it this way first because.... • I said 'No.' Can <u>you</u> tell me why?

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

Dann, L. (2015, September 9). [How to Help your Child to Behave Out of Consideration Rather than Compliance](#). Gordon Training International

Strauss, V. (2015, September 30). [Why parents should talk a lot to their young kids — and choose their words carefully](#). *The Washington Post*.

¹ Alegre, A. (2011). Parenting styles and children's emotional intelligence: What do we know? *The Family Journal*, 19(1), 56–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480710387486>

² To find additional research on this topic: Collins, M. R. (2015). *Student self-worth/esteem, humanity-esteem, and self-regulation: Uncovering early childhood teacher beliefs and practices*. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*. ProQuest Information & Learning. Retrieved from <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2015-99190-033&site=ehost-live>

³ Berks, L. E., & Meyers, A. B. (2016). *Infants and children: prenatal through middle childhood*, 8th edition. Boston: Pearson.

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