

How to Overcome the Habit of Child-Nagging



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Executive Summary

All nagging springs from good intentions. Yet, both parties (the “nagger” and the “naggee”) – experience stress and frustration – why is this so? Doesn’t all action with good intentions result in a happy ending? Apparently not.

In this special *Monday Insider Report*, you will discover, as a parent, that nagging is symptomatic of a myriad of deeper personal issues – reflecting on the state of the adult rather than the child. Discover four steps to go beyond nagging and uncover alternative ways to motivate your child.

Beyond Nagging #1: POSTPONE THE TONE

The fine line between nagging and anger is not the content of your conversation but the tone of your words. If you take the following nagging statements at face value i.e. read it with a neutral tone, it actually sounds like very good advice! Try it for yourself ...

1. “*You should be doing your homework soon.*”
2. “*When you meet an adult, make sure you greet them audibly.*”
3. “*Don’t leave your toys all over the place. Pack up when you are done.*”
4. “*Please wash your hands before dinner.*”
5. “*Show more enthusiasm when you play the piano.*”

Not many parents are aware that their words convey more than just instructions – there is such a thing as an “emotional aftertaste”. Just like the waves generated by a passing boat, so your nagging generates a certain ethos which is felt even after the words are long spoken!

Here are a few examples of the “emotional aftertaste” of nagging. A child senses the following....

- *My parent is accusing me and being judgmental.*
- *My parent is disappointed with me and wishes that I could be someone else.*
- *My parent thinks poorly of me and expects me to fail even before I try.*

Here’s the tip : When you feel the urge to nag, think of the “nagging emotional wave” that you will create as a result of your tone of voice and the disappointed look of your countenance. Remember, that the child’s countenance is a reflection of yours. Whatever emotions you want the child to demonstrate, *you must show it first.* Here’s the irony: the calmer you are, the more effective is your source of authority. We discuss this in detail during the one-day *Character-Wise Parenting* workshop. <http://www.goodmonday.com/parenting.html>

Beyond Nagging #2: THINK CONSEQUENCE

Nagging is a sure signal that the parent is relying on the child’s memory to modify his own behavior. Is the child’s memory reliable – it sure is – when it comes to remembering things that he likes! Often, the parent’s nagging is what the child needs and not what she wants.

This is what I call the *Never-Ending Nagging Cycle* – parent nags – child thinks he remembers – parent thinks that the child remembers – the child forgets – parent nags – child shuts off the parent’s voice – the parent nags more – the child forgets, etc. *Now you get the picture!*

Here’s the tip : A repeated offense requires the introduction of a significant consequence. For example, no homework, no going out to the park – *period.* Let the consequence do the talking. Most parents are frustrated because they think that they can lecture the child to goodness – *forget it.* Make it your primary job to be a Consequence Enforcer rather than a Customer Service Executive! When a child is young, he does not possess the moral capacity to be changed by reason alone – he needs the drilling of *consistent consequences.* Relax!

Beyond Nagging #3: EXAMINE EXPECTATIONS

The way one parents is often a reflection of unmet desires and expectations. For example, if I did not do well in Chinese, I will double my effort to make sure my child does not repeat my failure. It then becomes my life calling to make sure that my mistake (or unfulfilled dream) is not repeated in the next generation. *We are a generation of imperfect parents aiming to raise perfect kids!*

What we are witnessing today is a generation of *parent-driven* children! The child's unique temperament and talent is lost in the ocean of parental expectations (the trouble is – some of these expectations exist in our subconscious and it shows up regularly in our nagging habit). Here's what so tragic – the child does not grow up with her own identity and she feels the overriding pressure of conformity to parental wishes. Unfortunately for some, it has become so unbearable that the logical (or rather illogical?) outcome is to run away from home.

Here's the tip : Schedule in regular “no-expectations”, “no-agenda” sessions with your child, one on one (do not bring any revision books, please). Learn to once again enjoy the presence of your child for who she is. Let her talk about anything under the sun without interrogation. Show interest in what she has to say and listen, ask questions and then listen some more. *Do you realize that you cannot ask sincere questions and nag at the same time?*

Beyond Nagging #4: GET A LIFE!

People who are enthusiastic realize that life is too short for energy-draining pursuits. An absence of purpose (and passion) in life causes one to be critical of everything (and everyone, children included). Here's the soul-searching question:

Are you so child-centered in your parenting that you have forgotten what life is all about?

Take a long walk with your spouse (or even with yourself) and examine your life values. Ask yourself the following questions :

1. What are my talents and expertise?
2. What are my hopes and dreams before I got married?
3. What legacy do I desire to leave behind?
4. How can I contribute to society?
5. Who can I serve?

Here's the tip : Start a journal and begin to pen down your thoughts, ideas, maybe even a wonderful business plan! Learn to have meaningful conversations with your spouse and with other adults. When you are excited about life, then the so-called irritations in life fall into proper perspective and you will realize how energy-draining nagging really is. Who knows, when you are excited about life, your child will be inspired to follow your footsteps. After all, character is more *caught* than taught.