

## Ask Nurse Rona: How to Yell Less

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**Q. I don't understand why I wind up yelling at my four-year-old daughter when she doesn't listen to me. I just can't seem to get her to pay attention to what I'm saying, without getting angry and losing it.**

A. Most parents don't want to yell, but there are many things that trigger a harsh response. If you're tired, hungry, stressed, or frustrated, you may find that you have trouble managing your emotions, and yelling becomes an automatic reaction. Also, some children have temperaments that are challenging for parents, like a child who is strong-willed and intense, or one who is slow-to-adapt and sensitive. You can learn to yell less. Here are some ideas that have worked for other parents.

### Reduce your stress:

- If you're doing too much, decide what's most important to you and your family, and cut out some activities. Get enough sleep, discover ways to relax, exercise, eat well, and take care of yourself.
- Be proactive:
- If you know your child has trouble with transitions, use a timer.
- Include your child in establishing routines, and set up opportunities for them to be successful.
- Don't be afraid to set limits, and let your kids know what you expect. Get down to their eye level and talk to them about what you expect.
- Decide to yell less:
- How did you feel when your parents yelled when you were growing up? Do your children misbehave more or seem more distant when you yell? Do you miss having a calmer household? Make a decision to yell less, and let your family know.

### Come up with a specific plan:

- Tell your kids that when you feel your stress level rise you will take a deep breath, count to 10, and then let them know what you want them to do. Don't give into tantrums, begging, and pleading.
- Give positive feedback when a child is cooperative.

### Manage your anger:

- Observe what gets you upset. Keep an anger log for a week to help you see when you're more likely to yell. Is there a hard time of day? Do you yell more at home, at the park, or at the store? What triggers your yelling?
- Take some deep breaths before you respond to your children. Letting children know what you expect and following up with a consequence will often work towards reducing yelling. "I want you to pick up the toys and then we'll have breakfast. Let me know if you need some help." "If you don't turn the TV off now like I asked, you won't be able to watch any tomorrow."

Remember that kids will test the limits and look to you for guidance. Stay calm as you discipline with respect and love, and make time for family fun.

Resource: *Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles* by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka