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Why? — because I said so

Why?

That's the word my granddaughter used eight times in a row the other day in response to something I said to her. It's the one non-swear word you don't want kids to learn because it can drive you crazy.

After a while I had to do it. You don't think you would do it, but everybody has their breaking point. I finally said to her: "Because I said so."

They don't give up at this age. If you tell them no for something they want, the automatic response from them is, "Please." Please please please, until eventually you just give in to save your sanity.

It doesn't work that well the other way, though. She was doing something recently she shouldn't and I told her to stop. Her response was direct and to the point. "No."

That threw me. No? That was a new one because previously she did what she was told, or at least said 'please' or 'why'. I raised my voice in response to her 'no' and said, 'Yes!'

Her voice remained calm, she looked at me and said: "No, Pop Pop."

"Please?"

It was all over at precisely that moment, and we both knew it. It went from me being in control to



with MURRAY TOWNSEND

On the loose

her being in control and there was nothing I could do about it. Parents can discipline and threaten them, but that's not the grandparent's job, so we're stuck.

Once kids learn how to get what they want, they decide that they want it right away, and they want to make sure they're going to get it.

That leads to, "Are we there yet?"

Every parent with a car has heard this a million times, and of course we try to explain how long it will be. Of course that doesn't work when they ask the same question a couple minutes later. I used to say, no matter how long it was, that it was, "Five more minutes." When they asked again in three minutes, I'd say, "Five more minutes."

This actually works because eventually they know the answer to their question and don't need to ask it as often.

Theoretically, of course. They still ask.

When parents have to resort to bribery to get things done, the kids aren't likely to take them for their word. They say, "You promise? You promise?"

Eventually, you have to promise, which is when kids learn that promises don't always come true.

The next problem is going shopping where kids want everything in the store. "Can I have that, can I have this?"

When you see screaming kids in the store, the parent has made the mistake of saying 'no'. What I used to do, and still do with my granddaughter, is say 'yes'. I put it in the basket and then sneak it back onto a shelf later when they've forgotten about it. No screaming kids.

Next up is, "Can I have some money?"

No way out of that. And then when they get older they change it to, "Can I borrow some money?" — which really means, "Can I have some more money for free?"

And at some point, with every kid, they're going to be mad and say to their parents, "I hate you!"

That's when you hit them with this useless zinger: "Just wait until you have kids some day."

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