AGES 3–12 | QUICK-RESPONSE GUIDE

When Your Child Refuses to Listen



WHAT THIS IS

Children may not hear or follow directions when they are absorbed, overwhelmed, or testing limits.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Get close
2. Be short
3. Give a moment

EXAMPLE

"I need you to put your shoes on. I'll help if you need me."

Why this happens

Children may not hear or follow directions when they are absorbed, overwhelmed, or testing limits. It often is not defiance.

What your child may need

Your attention first, short directions, and a little time to switch gears.

Try this

1. **Get close**
   Move near, make eye contact, and say their name.
2. **Be short**
   One clear direction: "Shoes on, please."
3. **Give a moment**
   Wait 5 to 10 seconds before repeating.
4. **Follow through**
   Calmly help, or use the consequence you named.

Try saying:

"I need you to put your shoes on. I'll help if you need me."

Avoid:

Repeating louder, long explanations, or yelling from another room.

My plan this week

Educational self-help resource from Therapy with Sazzy, an initiative of Beyond Boundaries Consulting, LLC. It is not a diagnosis or a substitute for individualized professional care. In a crisis call or text 988, or call 911.