



Building Blocks

for Parents

STOP the World

What:

"Stop the World" brings the child's world to a complete halt until a task that needs to be done is accomplished. He is not allowed to do anything he wants to do until he has done what you want him to do.

When or Why:

Use "Stop the World" when a child does not do a specific task he has been told to do. When he fails to follow-through (preferring to dawdle, stall, complain, or argue), talking with him or trying to persuade him will do little good. It only helps to keep him away from doing the task and may give him attention he likes, thereby teaching him to not do the task in the future.

How:

1. Clearly state the job to be done.
2. Ask the child what the next thing is he must do.
3. Check back on the child periodically to see if he is doing what he should. Do not allow the child to participate in any other activity until your initial command has been complied with. If he insists on disobeying you, use "Time-Out" technique, and then return to "Stop the World" technique.
4. Divert or instruct other children not to interrupt the child until he has finished his task.
5. Praise the child as soon as he begins the task, again as he does it, and when he completes it.
6. Whenever possible, "reflect" his feelings about doing the job after he has started doing it (see "Reflection of Feelings" technique).

Examples:

How Not To: Jimmy decides he wants to go outside. He leaves his toys on the floor and goes to get his coat. Mom calls after him, "Pick up your toys!" Jimmy mutters, "O.K." and continues to put on his coat. Mom calls out, "What are you doing, Jimmy?" Jimmy answers, "Going outside." Mom yells, "I told you to pick up your toys!" Jimmy approaches Mom pleadingly saying, "Can't I do it later?— I promise I'll pick them up after I come inside." Mom waives— "Well, O.K., if you promise. You know you forgot yesterday and I'll spank you if you forget again." Jimmy's already halfway out the door.

How To: Seven-year-old Jimmy has been playing with his toys. He now wants to go outside. He gets up to get his coat, leaving a mess on the floor. Mom, "Jimmy, you have to put your toys away before you can go outside." Jimmy keeps walking away. Mom says, "Jimmy, what do you have to do before you can go outside?" Jimmy stalls; Mom waits for an answer. Jimmy finally says, "Pick up my dumb old toys." Mom says, "Good. I'm glad you know what you have to do," and moves away. Little brother Bobby goes over to Jimmy and says, "Let's go outside." Mom moves in and tells Bobby that Jimmy has to pick up his toys first. She then ignores Jimmy's stalling and helps Bobby get ready to go outside.

After a while, Jimmy picks up one truck and starts to put it away. Mom immediately praises Jimmy, "That's good, Jimmy. I know you want to play outside" (reflection of feeling). Jimmy begins to work a little faster as he sees Bobby playing outside. Mom praises each small step and then heaps on more praise

— continued on reverse —

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GRANT WOOD
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when Jimmy finishes picking up: “You did a good job— I know it’s hard to wait to go outside” (reflection of feelings). Jimmy says, “Yeah, I hate cleaning up messes!”

Follow-Up:

Be sure to praise the child for all movement toward getting the job done. Tell him clearly when he’s completed the task and what it is he can do from then on— for example, that he may continue other activities.

— **Home and Community Treatment Project**
Mendota Mental Health Institute