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Dr. Mayer's Memo

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TO NAG OR NOT TO NAG, THAT IS THE QUESTION *SHOULD TEACHERS/PARENTS REPEAT NEEDS TO KIDS OVER AND OVER?*

The word 'nag' is derived from the Scandinavian word 'nagga' which translates in English as, 'to gnaw.' (Wikipedia entry) Many adults gnaw at young people unconsciously but most kids feel the gnawing immediately. Nagging a young person results in: destroyed communication; ruins relationships; leads to yelling and arguments; and plain just doesn't work to get young people to obey.

The plain and simple of it is that nagging just doesn't have any power. A common scenario in the home is the parent yelling from two rooms away for the child to do something, the parent returns to whatever they were engaged in, then later repeats the yelling louder and more aggressive because the child didn't obey. This cycle is repeated until the parent loses control and physically confronts the child. Then the proverbial 'all hell breaks loose.'

In the classroom, the scene is similar. A teacher raises their voice at a student with a command to stop a behavior. The teacher turns their attention to something else (Like that pesky lesson plan for the other 28 students that always gets in the way of good classroom discipline techniques.) returns their attention to the recalcitrant student and yells/nags over again and we are off the races like the household example.

Here's the problem in both examples: the flaw is found in the basic principle of reinforcement. The adult nagging has no real incentive value for the young person. The child knows that the nag (yell/threats) will be repeated over and over until the adult finally 'gets in the child's/student's face' and with the adult's physical presence demands the corrective behavior to be performed. So, the child wins. They have delayed their obedience to the adult command, continued their activity (which is their priority) until they absolutely have to obey. In the mean time, the adult has turned 6 shades of red, raised their blood pressure and wasted a great deal of time. In the mean time #2, the child has trained the adult that this is going to be the future of their relationship together.

So, what do we do different to get better results? I advise to completely reverse the typical strategy. If you want a young person (any age) to obey a command, you stop what you are doing, get directly in the physical space of the child, do not become upset, and LEAD the child into the desired behavior. Sure, this interrupts what you were doing, but review the examples above. The few moments out of your time to do this first saves you 10 x's the time that the nagging cost you and with less aggravation to you!

ADULTS: ACT DON'T YELL!

YELLING IS A SIGN YOU'VE ALREADY LOST

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