

## TOOLS FOR FOLLOW-THROUGH – PART I

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Did you ever feel like one of the adults in a Charlie Brown special? Droning on and on, knowing that you're having little impact, but not knowing what else to do? You know you have to do or say something! Setting limits respectfully with children is essential to their sense of security and emotional well being, and setting them effectively is essential to ours, as adults.

It is important to understand that children learn best experientially. Children are still developing the ability to reason from ages 4-7. The younger a child is, the more important it is to be concrete and use fewer words. In order to develop trust and connection, children need to know that the adults in their lives will say what they mean and mean what they say. Here are three simple tools to do just that, while maintaining the dignity and respect for both the adult and the child:

1. Give limited choices: "You may have peanut butter and jelly or tuna. You decide." When your child says, "I want liverwurst," simply reply, "That's not one of the choices."
2. Describe what you see: "I noticed that you left your laundry on the floor." Then, simply say nothing and wait patiently and presently until your child cooperates.
3. Use non-verbal communication. E.g. simply point or look at the mess on the floor, and say nothing verbally. Simply wait for cooperation. If the child walks away (they just may), take them by the hand and lead them kindly back to the mess and wait silently for them to cooperate.

The key to using these tools is to do your best to remain silent after the follow-through. Our silence should communicate that we're serious, but also that we respect the child and have faith in *their ability* to make respectful decisions.

Next month we will discuss three more tools for effective follow-through.