

Pet Peeves, OK?

By Paige Trevor, PEP Leader

After educating parents for almost a decade I've developed some pet peeves. I thought it would be fun to share them with you. Don't worry, I'm not judging, I do these annoying things too. You know the old saying, "It takes one to know one."

"Ok?" At the park or in the grocery store do you ever hear parents issue commands as requests? It drives me nuts. Parents, very nicely, believe that if they phrase instructions as questions then the kid will go along nicely. "We are going to leave the park now, ok? It's time for dinner, ok? Mommy has to get home and get the pasta cooking on the stove, ok?" Kids are no dummies, they see right through this game. Being declarative and assertive about the *needs of the situation* gets the job done more respectfully and quickly. "It's time to leave the park to get dinner started. We can walk or skip to the car, do you have a preference?" Rip the band-aid off, people, kids can handle it. When there is no choice, do not ask a question. "You may clear the dishwasher now" (not, "Would you help Mommy clear the dishwasher, ok?"). Not in a mean voice, not commanding, just calm, respectful and full of authority.

"My kids don't listen to me." Here's the thing, when we say someone isn't listening it usually means a.) they can't hear us. b.) they are ignoring us. So to solve the problem of someone a.) not hearing us we usually talk louder (yelling) and to solve the problem of b.) being ignored, we repeat ourselves (nagging and cajoling) . What we really mean is that our child is not obeying (they generally hear us). I hear you saying, "Why, yes Paige, I'd love an obedient child!" Now, don't get me wrong, obedient children can be very efficient, but think about an obedient teen – eek! Teens tend to obey their peer group . . . scary thought. So let's modify it slightly and agree on, 'My child is not *cooperating* with me'. Solving the problem of cooperation takes more work than yelling or nagging and is ever so much more respectful. Next time they aren't *listening*, think of ways to elicit cooperation. Maybe issue the task verbally once, "Everyone may wash their hands now, dinner is in 10 minutes." Wait 5 minutes. Sometimes small people need a bit more time to put toys down and switch gears. If you do not hear scurrying after 5 minutes, you might try going to where they are and tapping them on the arm and miming hand washing? I see your collective eye roll Glover Park! Yes, sometimes parenting takes standing up and being creative. Actions speak louder than words.

With spring upon us in the Park, let's all talk declaratively, when we mean it and let's all strive for cooperation instead of obedience, ok? (cheap joke, I couldn't help myself).