

Introducing the Privilege Thief

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Compliance will lay the foundation for everything else we are about to do. At home and elsewhere, simple instructions result in frustrating interactions because of our children's tendency to disregard, ignore, or even actively resist cooperation. In my experience, I often notice that children tend most often to be uncooperative at times when it is convenient for them, and incredibly inconvenient for us. Consequences, therefore, are best to occur at times that are convenient for us and exceptionally inconvenient for our children.

In this situation, I like to refer to parents not as an adult, but more like a bank. In our lives, banks readily step over themselves to loan out the resources, which in their case is money. As a parent, we loan our children resources, primarily in the form of effort and energy. As a parent, I want you to freely loan out effort and energy to your child if they fail to comply to a task that you have assigned them.

I want to stress the importance of only providing a single instruction for any task or request that you make of your child in the house. My goal here, is make your voice important, and something that needs to be attended to. The process of making what you say more valuable is the same way we make anything else valuable, make less of it. In this case, you are using fewer words. Additionally, I want kids to be attentive to the tone and other body language cues that go along with an instruction. Similar to your experience as an employee in the past, you have always been attentive to the tone that your boss strikes, or whether they have had a bad day based on their body language. In this sense, I want your children to be very attentive to these very subtle aspects of our communication and the still you, the parent, with the qualities the boss has. For instance, if you've had a difficult day or mildly irritated or frustrated with other issues, you may take a short and curt tone with your child. In any situation out in our world, if a supervisor or authority figure in our life issued an instruction without tone, would quickly and readily react and respond to that command. Implied in that instruction is a sense of urgency that needs no further communication than the style in which it was delivered.

Parents need to rely upon the expertise our children have on the subject of their parents. They have spent years examining and learning about us, our behavior, reactions and patterns. With this intervention, I want to explicitly call out their "expertness" on mom/dad as it relates to how the instruction is delivered. While I recommend that any instruction be given a time frame/deadline, doing so is not essential, nor is it possible to do EVERY time an instruction is given. Let your child know that if a deadline is not provided, it is THEIR responsibility to ask, not yours to issue initially. If your child asks for a timeframe, provided willingly and happily. Otherwise, if no response is given, or even resistance is offered, simply ignore anything

that is said, knowing that you have done your duty by providing the expectation or demand in the form of an instruction.

Ultimately, your child should be told at the beginning that mom/dad will ONLY give an instruction ONE time. Again, if no deadline is provided, the assumption is that parents' mean "now", or it is their job to ask for a deadline. The length of time they have to complete the task "now" will change based on how you, the parent, give the instruction (i.e., Frustrated tone = shorter time frame). Once you have issued the instruction, do not react or respond to anything that is said or done in the time after you have delivered the instruction.

****IMPORTANT NOTE:** Do not respond or react (outside of answering a question about deadlines) to anything your child says or does in response to the instruction/request – unless you are discussing one of two subjects:

1. Praise/ acknowledging their effort or completion of the task or their effort.
2. Responding to their question about deadlines for completion of the task.

If you later notice that your child has not completed the task by the deadline or implied expectation (i.e., "Now"), I want you to simply, quietly and quickly complete the task yourself.

As I stated above, I like to think of parents as a bank of time, effort, and energy. If you have provided an instruction in the task is not been completed, you as the parent will gladly loan your child the effort and energy necessary to complete the task, but as a bank, you will also hold onto this valued item or privilege as collateral until their debt has been paid. As with any loan, not only does the individual providing the loan once the resource repaid, but there is also a fine or interest added onto the loan. In your case is apparent, the interest that we are charging is simply added time and effort in addition to the time and effort you provided your child in completing the task.

Immediately after doing the instruction for your child, I want you to take or select one highly prized item, privilege, or activity and keep possession of it in a public place. It may help at the beginning to set aside an area and let your child know ("This is where I will be putting toys, activities, or privileges if I do a job that I asked you to do").

I do not want to encourage any game-playing such as "hide and go seek" where parents take privileges or items and covertly hide them in a secretive spot in the house. This often encourages kids to spend a tremendous amount of time and energy looking for and discovering hidden spots. When faced with the choice of either spending copious amounts of time looking for hiding spots versus paying the price or consequence for behavior, kids will almost always choose the former over the latter. Instead, have a place that is conspicuous in public view clearly defined as the "jail" for privileges. As a parent, you do not necessarily need to take the entire thing, but just enough to make the thing itself unusable or worthless to the child. For instance, if they love their videogames, you do not need to take all of the videogames are controllers, but instead you can take the power cord connecting the system to the wall.

Inevitably, your child will notice that one of their favorite items is missing, they will repeat what they have asked you many times in the past, "Mom/dad, where is _____?"). When you hear that question, I want you to respond in a pleasant happy way, "Yes, I have that. As soon as you pull a job from the jar and have completed the task?". Here is where the fun starts.

The aim of this intervention is reciprocity, or returning back what is given. In your child's case, they borrowed your energy, time and effort. In order to get back their favorite thing, they have to return what they borrowed, plus a "finder's fee" or "interest".

For this part, I want you to imagine 10 to 15 various tasks in the home that are mildly unpleasant to complete, and don't need to be done on a regular basis, but would also take approximately 10 minutes to complete yourself. Define each one of these jobs as tasks in as much detail as needed to sufficiently complete the task for someone who may have never done that task in the past. I want the job title and detail listed clear enough so that no further instruction is needed beyond looking at the paper. Once each of these tasks have been written down in detailed, cut each of them up and put them into a container or jar that will be stationed near the area where you have held the privilege or activity that has been taken as collateral. It is up to your child then to independently take a job from the jar, complete the task, and indicate to you that it has been completed. Until your child has sufficiently completed the task to your expectation, the privilege or item remains yours until the debt has been paid in full.

However, if they don't choose immediately to complete the task, that is acceptable as well. **You as the parent don't care either way. They don't get the privilege back until the job is repaid, and you will always get more effort in repayment for a task you complete. Let them know however, that if you have taken something and it remains in the basket for two weeks, it will be thrown out or given away.** Think of this like bank making a 10,000 loan on a 1972 Datsun. In that case, if the bank loaned someone that amount of money and didn't stop to check and make sure the value of the collateral was solid, they just have to write off the loan. In your case, you made a bad loan and you paid the price for it.

****Note: Only take a privilege and hold on to it if you have actually done the task you had originally instructed your child to do. Going back to the aim of this intervention, reciprocity or payback, they only owe you, the parent, if you did the work for them.**

Now there are two lessons that we have learned as adults, and often times attempt to teach our children through discussions or lectures. These are summarized in the two points below:

1. The first lesson involves both the speed of completing tasks and the anger/frustration that occur in response to punishment. What we know as adults is that if we spend time discussing our frustrations with the task or we spend extra time doing the task because we are going slowly, we simply make the unpleasant event last longer than it needs to. This is a lesson as a parent that I want you to

allow your child to experience. While you may be tempted to explain or discuss with them the moral or life lesson, this will simply self-destruct and allow them to continue, robbing them of this wonderful learning experience.

2. The second life lesson that we have learned through our experiences surrounds work quality. Specifically, if we take the time to do it right the first time, we don't have to do it more than once. Again, as with the first life lesson, it is essential that you allow your child to experience this. If they come to you and indicate that the job or task has been complete, and it is clear upon inspection that it is not complete, respond initially by praising what they have done or attempted, and quickly point out what they need to do to complete the task in full. Once you've done these two simple statements, immediately walk away from your child and ignore anything else that your child says or does. Anything we do or say in that moment to react or comment robs them of this valuable life experience that they are given.

Outline Summary:

1. Provide your child with a single instruction for any request. Keep it short, and only provide it a single time.
 - a. Ignore anything said or done after the instruction has been given.
2. If they comply and complete the task within your stated or expected time, praise and acknowledge their accomplishment.
3. If they fail to complete the task, complete it for them, without upset or frustration (doing it silently).
 - a. If you start it, finish it. (i.e., if your child sees you making an effort to start the task and they rush over to intervene.... Sorry, too late!)
 - b. Immediately, "hijack" or "kidnap" an essential, or highly prized possession (or enough to make the privilege unusable), and station it in a public place in a highly conspicuous location in the home.
4. Once your child recognizes the privilege is gone, and they ask for it back, say "Of course, once you take a job from the jar and have finished it."
 - a. Do not respond or react to anything your child says or does, outside of grabbing a job from the container and starting work on the task.
 - b. Praise any effort or attempts to cooperate, starting their task, cooperating with the job, etc.
5. Allow your child however long they want to complete the task in repayment. Just make sure to keep possession of the privilege, activity, or item until they have repaid you in the form of a job.