

Counselor's Corner

by Louise C. Berman, M. Ed

Dear parents,

This month, I thought I'd address nagging. I'd like to share an alternate strategy to, "I said no." or "What did I say?" These responses seem to push our buttons and drag us into the conflict..... ending in frustration and occasionally raising our voices.

How can I stop my child from nagging?

Like any learned behavior, child nagging can be unlearned. This solution comes from [Lynn Lott](#), co-author of the Positive Discipline series of books, and it works on kids as young as two or three, all the way through their teens.

It only takes three simple words: **"Asked and Answered."**

The concept is simple. When seven-year-old Daniel begs to dig a giant hole in the front yard and gets "no" for an answer, chances are he'll be back in five minutes asking again – this time with a "pleeeeeeease" just so you know he really, *really* wants to dig the hole.

Instead of repeating yourself or jumping into a lecture, avoid child nagging by getting eye to eye and follow the process below:

Step One:

Ask, **"Have you ever heard of 'Asked and Answered'?"** (He'll probably say no.)

Step Two:

Ask, **"Did you ask me a question about digging a hole?"** (He'll say yes.)

Step Three:

Ask, **"Did I answer it?"** (He'll probably say, "Yes, but, I really")

Step Four:

Ask, **"Do I look like the kind of mom/dad/teacher who will change her/his mind if you ask me the same thing over and over?"** (Chances are Daniel will walk away, maybe with a frustrated grunt, and engage in something else.)

Step Five:

If Daniel asks again, simply say, **"Asked and Answered."** (No other words are necessary!)

Once this technique has been established, these are the only words you need to say to address nagging questions.

Consistency is key! Once you decide to use "Asked and Answered" with your nagging child, be sure to stick to it.

If the questioning continues even after you've responded with "Asked and Answered," simply walk away. Once your child sees you won't even engage in the discussion, they will learn very quickly that nagging isn't an effective behavior to achieve their goals.

If 14-year-old Emma is particularly determined to keep asking to get her eyebrow pierced, stay strong. **Answering her question again – or worse yet, changing your answer – will reinforce to her that nagging works.**

Although it'll take some patience, your child will eventually connect the dots and you'll see results