Waiting Games

Sometimes life is so booooring. We’ve got six tips that can help your child learn to deal by SUSAN A. MILLER, Ed.D.

As having patience can be tough enough for grown-ups, so it’s no surprise that kids can sometimes struggle, too. In fact, it’s normal. Young children simply cannot sit around with nothing to do for long periods of time. But that doesn’t mean you can’t start practicing the art of waiting.

**Distract.** Sing songs, play I Spy, or ask questions (“What will you put on your hot dog?” or “What parts of your body will the doctor check?”).

**Avoid rushing.** You actually encourage patience by giving your child time to finish an activity. It allows him to focus on what he’s doing without feeling stressed out.

**Set a timer.** If you’ve got a battle over a toy, giving each kid a turn for five minutes can help keep tempers in check. Plus, listening for an alert makes the time more concrete.

**Plan ahead.** Anticipating a long ride in traffic? Pack a small bag with books and little toys. As your child gets older, you can have him take the responsibility for bringing along things to occupy the time.

**Delay gratification.** If your child demands something, like ice cream before lunch, tell her she needs to eat her meal first, but acknowledge that you know it’s hard to wait. If you do this routinely, kids start to get the message that things don’t happen instantaneously.

**Practice patience yourself.** When kids see that you can handle the waiting, it helps them manage better, too. P&C

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No matter what you thought when Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise announced their split, you had to give them some credit for reigning in the name-calling and promising to work together toward their daughter’s best interests. Although experts agree that that approach is exactly what’s best for children’s emotional health, it can be difficult to do when you’re dealing with the anger, loss, and uncertainty. But understanding how your 6- or 7-year-old processes divorce can also help you get her through.

Children at this age believe deeply in the strength of their wishes, which is why so many feel that they must be to blame for their parents’ separation. You can ease this overwhelming burden by explaining that the decision to stay married is always the parents’ choice—it has nothing to do with anything the child did or said. Because the situation can feel very out of control for kids, it’s vital to give them back some sense of power. When you play tea party, for instance, let her run the show. Got a superhero fan? Play Robin to his Batman. Give them important jobs to be in charge of. With time (and lots of kisses) you will all adjust to your new version of normal. P&C

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