

They're Not in Your Head

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Lisa here. I hope you've been using the tips we've been providing in our series on communication. Today we're talking about another common source of miscommunication. Do you ever find yourself getting frustrated because your kids (or partner/friend/coworker/etc.) did not do the thing they "should have" done?

Many times, we fall into the trap of expecting people to do things or do them a certain way because we've asked them to do it before, they've seen how we do it, or we figure they should already know how to do it. Sometimes we hold others accountable for things that we think, but do not express. Have you ever found yourself saying something like, "They know me, so they should know that's what I wanted?" or, "I said it last time, they should have remembered"?

We're all human. Sometimes we don't fully express what we want and then expect others to figure it out. This frequently happens with parents and their kids, especially when it comes to things like chores or getting permission to do things (e.g., going to friends' houses, using electronics, etc.). But unspoken expectations are not fair to anyone- to yourself or to your kids. The quick rule of thumb here is: If you didn't say it, they don't know it. You can't really hold your kids accountable for something you didn't tell them about or fully explain.



It's okay to feel frustrated, disappointed or even angry when these types of miscommunications happen. But, if you slow down and think it through, you will realize that your child is not

responsible for the mix-up. Instead of reacting based on your feelings, take a minute to think through what you actually wanted them to do and whether you explained it to them clearly. If not, the good news is, you now have a chance to fix the miscommunication. If it's something you know you'll be asking them to do in the future (e.g., a particular chore), explain that what you're asking for now is what you will also want in the future. But be aware that the next time you ask, you will probably need to remind your kids how you want it done until they get the hang of it.

Remember, communication is a learning process. When you are the one who wants someone else to understand something, the lion's share of responsibility is on you. Your kids are not mind readers, so be clear in what you want. It also doesn't hurt to check in to make sure they actually understood you. Making sure you communicate what you want and not expecting your kids to be in your head with you will lead to fewer misunderstandings, less frustration and smoother communication for you and your kids.

