

# 'Because I said so' works, if parents would use it

One of the more powerful parenting memes to emerge from the parenting revolution of the late '60s and early '70s was "children deserve reasons." To a large degree, that was a reaction to the previous parental policy of answering "why?" and "why not?" with "because I said so."

To my knowledge, no one has ever explained in nonsentimental terms exactly how it benefits children for adults to give them reasons for the decisions they make. As for the sentimental reasons — as in, "It makes them feel respected" — they are, well, sentimental. How does one go about determining that a

## PARENTING



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child feels respected, anyway? He likes what you do?

The fact is that "why?" and "why not?" are not requests for information. If they were, children would occasionally agree with the information given. But they don't. Instead, they take the information

and form an argument with it. Need I point out that 100 percent of said arguments are counterproductive and many lead to very regrettable outcomes?

Second fact: Said matter-of-factly, "because I said so" is simply an affirmation of the legitimacy of parental authority. If — as parenting sentimentalists claim — it was psychologically harmful, everyone in my generation would have suffered emotional collapse by age 5.

Third fact: As grown-ups, children will hear variants of "because I said so" from employers, government officials, military officers and others

in positions of authority. As such, parents do children a grave disservice by leading them to believe that authority figures are obligated to explain themselves — the very complaint I hear most from folks who employ or supervise millennials.

A reader has suggested that since "because I said so" has been largely absent from our parenting speech for nearly 50 years, I should provide parents with a script for its use. So, here goes:

Child: "But why can't I?" (Substitute "Why do I have to?" or "Why not?")

Parent: (Said calmly, without emotion.) "Because I said

so, that's why."

"But that's not a reason!"

"That's arguable; nonetheless, it's the only reason I'm going to give you."

"What's 'argue-bubble' or whatever that word is mean?"

"It means I'm not going to argue with you."

"But why can't I?"

"I'm also not going to repeat myself."

"But Billy's mom says it's OK!"

"You haven't noticed?"

"What?"

"I am not Billy's mother."

"Ugh! Right! And I wish you weren't mine!"

"Dear child, the feeling is sometimes mutual, but only

temporarily so on my part."

"I don't even understand what you're talking about sometimes."

"That's why I'm the boss."

Surely this hypothetical child is temporarily unhappy. In that regard, here's a fourth fact: Children do not know what is in their best interests. Fifth fact: They need adults who are clear on exactly that.

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