Session 4

GAINING YOUR CHILD’S COOPERATION WITH MORE EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Give clear, direct instructions.** Avoid vague instructions (e.g., “Be careful”). We cannot assume that children know that this means not to walk into the street. Be specific and say: “Do not walk out into the middle of the street.”

2. **Give the instruction.** Avoid phrasing instructions in the form of a question (e.g., “Would you like to take your bath now?”). Requests are directives that you want your child to follow, so say: “It’s time to take your bath now,” or “Go get your bath now.”

3. **It is important to be specific and give one instruction at a time.** Avoid giving a series of instructions (e.g., “Make your bed, clean your room, pick up your toys, and afterward take out the trash.”). This is too much for your child to remember. As a result, your child is less likely to cooperate.

4. **Be flexible**—don’t overdo it with commands and instructions.

5. **Offer a choice**—children often respond better when they are offered a choice.

6. **Give children adequate time** to respond to instructions.

7. **Describe the positive consequences** that will follow when they comply with your request (e.g., “After you pick up your dirty clothes, you can go outside and ride your bike”).

8. **Make and maintain eye contact** and use a **firm but warm** tone of voice.

**HOMEWORK**

Pay more attention to your style of giving instructions. This week, try to follow the above guidelines when giving instructions to your children. Keep track of errors you make, as well as successes you have in gaining your children’s cooperation. Remember to praise your children when they follow your instructions. Giving them positive attention for cooperative behavior will increase the likelihood of them following your instructions more often.