

## **Why can't my child follow instructions?**

Do you find that when you give your child an instruction they ignore you and you have to end up shouting before they actually do the task?

Do you get reports from their teachers that they don't listen in class and disrupt the other children instead of getting on with their work?

You may have had their hearing tested and you've been told that their hearing is fine.... So why won't they do as they're told...when they're told?

A child who visited us recently told me that one day he decided to really try very hard to focus on the teacher in class. He sat on his hands and tried to listen to what the teacher was saying.

He told me that the words had to swim through something resembling Weetabix (Other cereals are available and would no doubt have the same effect). He finally put his hand up as he'd worked out the answer; only to find that the answer had already been given and the teacher had moved on with the lesson...

...At that moment he thought to himself. "I really tried and it still didn't work". In his frustration he threw a rubber across the room which hit off another boy's head. This landed him in the head masters office for throwing the rubber and disrupting the class...Understandably as the teacher would have been unaware of the thought process that this child was going through.

He told me that the harder he tried to focus and listen the harder it got.

I'm not sure how we would deal with this situation as adults but how difficult, frustrating and possibly scary must it be for a 9 year old boy?

So what can we do to help?

As parents we can help by using short instructions. E.G. We all know that when we say...

"Johnny, will you go upstairs and get your shoes on please?"

He could very easily go upstairs and get distracted. Because he doesn't come back down with the shoes on you have to start shouting....Again!

Let's face it, mornings can be exhausting and you can feel like you have a day's work done before you even get out of the house to go to work!

...Try saying "Go and get your shoes on Johnny." He knows they're upstairs so leave that bit out. It's less for him to process and he has a better chance of getting it right!

When you ask little Johnny something and he doesn't answer straight away, try not to re-phrase what you've said too quickly. Count to 3 in your head and give him time to process what you have asked. You could be very surprised at the answer and he'll be so pleased that he was able to show how smart he is.

I was taught this by a 10 year old boy who was very intelligent but just needed a little bit of time to work things out. He asked me to 'shh' and then went ahead and did the exercise that I had asked him to do a moment earlier.

That was a big lesson day for me!