



## **"And I Mean It!" Making Your Word Gold**

How many times have you heard a parent give an order to a child, then add, *"Do you understand me?!"* Kids can't wait to hear a parent talk like this because it means the parent is at the end of his/her rope. The parent has once more reduced his/her authority through hollow, meaningless words.

This happens each time we make statements that cannot be enforced - when we tell a child what to do or not do, rather than what we will do.

In cases where parents frequently make unenforceable statements, children learn that they do not have to do what the parent says or asks. Parental authority is hurt as children test limits, act out and feel a general lack of control.

Some parents do not have these problems because their word is gold. They understand that they actually have control over themselves and no one else. The art of making enforceable statements is to talk about ourselves and what we will allow, what we will do, or what we will provide. For example:

Unenforceable: *"Don't talk to me like that!"*

Enforceable: *"I'll be glad to listen when your voice is as soft as mine."*

Unenforceable: *"Study NOW, young man!"*

Enforceable: *"Feel free to join us for some TV when your studying is finished."*

Unenforceable: *"Be nice to each other. Don't fight."*

Enforceable: *"You're both welcome to be around me when you're not fighting."*

Unenforceable: *"As long as you live in this house, you won't be drinking any alcoholic beverages."*

Enforceable: *"When I don't have to worry about alcohol use, I'll let you use my car."*

Parents who make only those statements which they can and so enforce raise



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children who believe their parents mean what they say. Their children seldom test limits.

This technique needs practice. You might try, *"Hey kids. From now on you need to know that I will be giving dessert to you when you protect you teeth by brushing."* It's much easier to withhold treats than to cram a toothbrush in a kid's mouth.

### **Tip of the Day**

Talk about what you allow--*not what your child can or can't do.*

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