

Helping Your Child Listen to and Follow Directions



Goal

At the end of this workshop, you will have learned the steps in a process that has been shown to improve listening to and following directions, while also decreasing challenging and oppositional behavior

Objectives

- Understand the importance of being in control of environment, pairing, positive reinforcement, and consistency
- Identify potential problems in the approach and how to solve them

Source

The “7 Steps” approach described as a part of this presentation is based on presentations given by Robert Schramm and on the book *The Seven Steps to Earning Instructional Control* by Robert Schramm, with Megan Miller (see resources at end)

Outline

- Defining the Problem
- Common (ineffective) Solutions
- “In the Moment” Strategies
- The 7 Steps Approach
- Potential Problems, and Solutions, When Trying the 7 Steps Approach
- Q & A



Pause

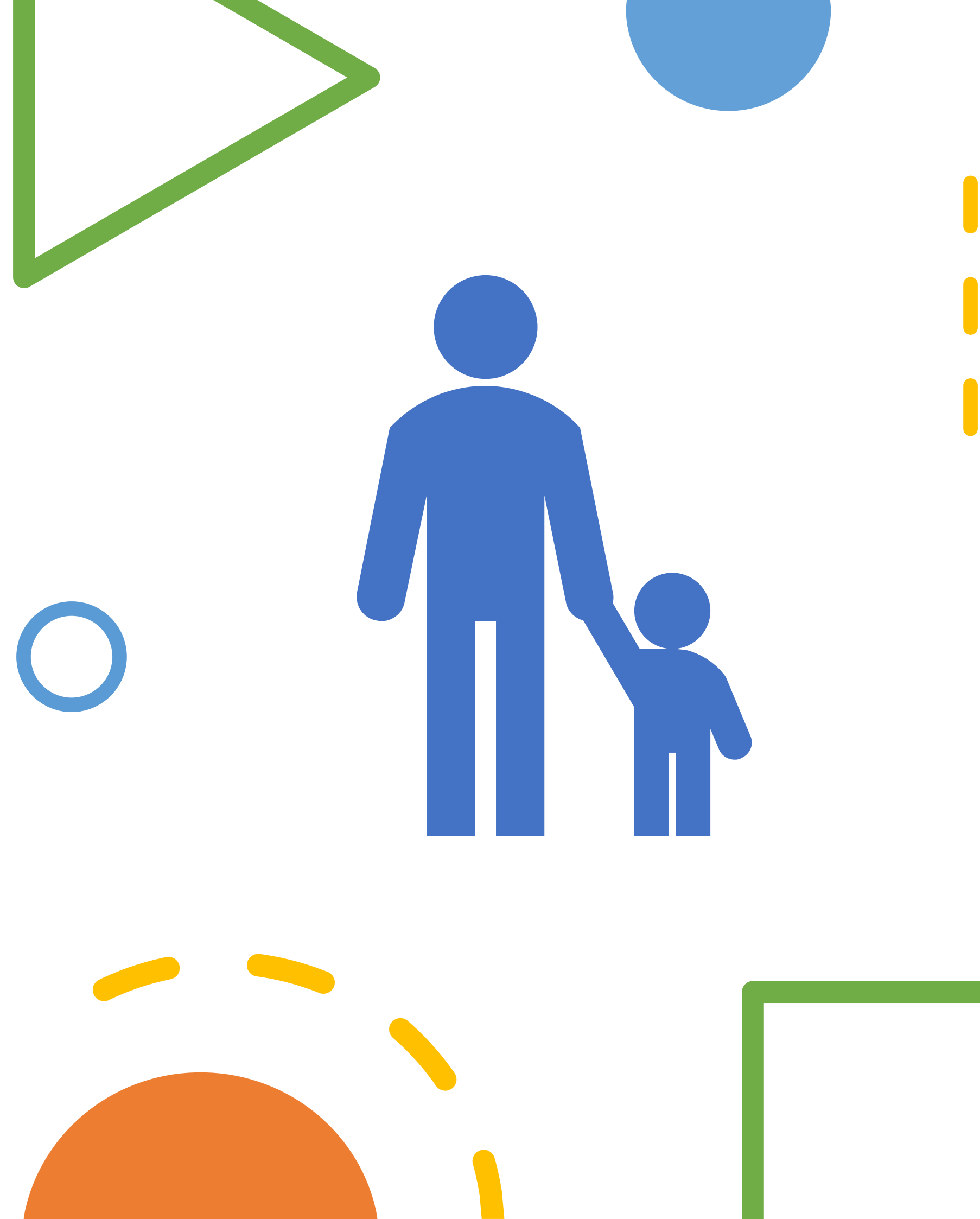
- Jot down at least one example of a time recently when you asked your child to do something and they refused
 - What did you ask?
 - What did they do instead?

Defining the Problem

We want to increase the likelihood that a child will follow directions when given by a parent or other adult

Without:

- A “power struggle”
- Physically forcing them to do it
- Nagging/repeating



Common (Ineffective) Approaches

- **The Power Struggle**

- Blocking your child from leaving the area
- Waiting until they give in and do it

- **Physical**

- Using “hand-over-hand” prompting

- **Nagging**

- Repeating the direction (over and over)
- Escalating the direction
- Warnings about consequences (for example, losing a privilege)

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Pause

- Jot down at least one example of a time recently when you asked your child to do something and they refused
 - What did you ask?
 - What did they do instead?
- How did you respond when they refused?
 - Did it lead to a power struggle, physical prompt, nagging?
 - At some point did you “give in?”
 - Was there a consequence? (for example, lost ipad time)

Common (Ineffective) Approaches

- The Power Struggle

- Blocking your child from leaving the area
- Waiting until the give in and do it

- Physical

- Using “hand-over-hand” prompting

- Nagging

- Repeating the instruction over and over (verbal)
- Escalating the direction
- Warnings about consequences (for example, losing a privilege)

WE NEED SOMETHING THAT WILL WORK



Like what?

- Strategies that can help “in the moment”

AND

- An approach that will help increase motivation to follow directions



In the Moment Strategies

Attention

Make sure that you have your child's attention before you ask them to do something

In the Moment Strategies

Tell not Question

Make sure that you have phrased the instruction as a request not as a question. Never phrase it as a question *unless* “no” is an acceptable answer. “Time to clean up the toys” not “Do you want to clean up your toys?”

In the Moment Strategies

Clear

Make sure that they understand what you have asked them to do. Use fewer, simpler words

In the Moment Strategies

Not too much

Make sure that they are able to follow the number of steps required in what you have asked. Give fewer directions at a time.

In the Moment Strategies

Complete

Make sure that you aren't leaving "gaps" in the instructions

When our instructions are incomplete, it can lead to confusion, to frustration, or to failure



In the Moment Strategies

First, then

It's 100% okay to tell your child: "first [what I ask], then [something good]"

In the Moment Strategies

Context

Don't forget to consider what else is happening when you ask. Does doing what you asked require a transition? Interrupting something they like?

In the Moment Strategies

Reward

Don't forget to let your child know that you appreciate the instruction-following with praise and/or access to the "then" item/activity

Try this!

Get their attention



Ask



Wait




No response? Ask can't or won't?



Direction followed = reward!





Pause

- What are some things the mom could have done differently

Decreasing the “won’t” and
increasing motivation to
follow your directions

Control your child’s
environment, not your child



“Why won’t she listen?”





About the “7 Steps Approach”

- Developed to improve “instructional control”
 - For improved learning of new skills
 - But also, more generally, for following instructions and doing things they don’t want to do
- Is a process, not “one and done”
- Like most things, means some upfront effort

The 7 Steps Approach

Overview:

- Arrange the environment so that your child *wants* to do what you ask because they need you to get the things they want
- After your child does what you ask, then they get things they want – from *you*
- When you give a direction, ignore everything other than their direction-following

The 7 Steps Approach

STEP 1

Show your child that you are in control of the things that they want and that you will decide if and for how long they can have them

The 7 Steps Approach

STEP 2

Show your child that you are fun. Make every interaction you have with them an enjoyable experience so that they will want to follow your directions to earn more time sharing those experience with you

The 7 Steps Approach

STEP 2

Pairing!

- Connect yourself to the things your child likes
- Let your child play with what they want, the way they want
- Don't take away things your child is playing with to "connect" yourself with the toy (from your child's perspective, you are taking away something they like)
- Don't give instructions when you are pairing (for example, don't say "Your turn")

Pairing

Limit your demands when you are pairing with your child!





Pause

- List 3 things that your child really likes to do
- List 3 things that your child really likes to do **with you**

The 7 Steps Approach

STEP 3

Show your child that you can be trusted. Always say what you mean and mean what you say. If you instruct your child to do something, do not allow them access to reinforcement unless they have complied with your request. Use prompting to completion if needed

The 7 Steps Approach

STEP 4

Show your child that following your direction is beneficial and the best way to obtain what they want. Give your child easy directions as often as possible and then reinforce their decisions to participate by following those decisions with good experiences

The 7 Steps Approach

STEP 4

Provide consistent reinforcement. In the early states, reinforce every time they follow your direction. Eventually change things so that you do not reinforce after each good decision

The 7 Steps Approach

STEP 6

Demonstrate that you know your child's priorities as well as you own. Show them you know what they like!

The 7 Steps Approach

STEP 7

Show your child that ignoring your instructions or choosing inappropriate behavior will not result in the reinforcer

What does it look like?



What does it look like?





Pause

Before we move on:

- What do you see as the challenges to using the 7-step approach?
- Questions, comments, examples

While it is possible to just ignore many things, some behaviors require more attention:

- Self-stimulatory behavior
- Destructive behavior
- Aggressive behavior
- Self-injurious behavior

What does it look like



Q & A

The 7 Steps Resources:

Motivation and Reinforcement: Turning the Tables on Autism. A Teaching Manual for the Verbal Behavior Approach to Autism by Robert Schramm

The Seven Steps to Earning Instructional Control by Robert Schramm with Megan Miller
(both available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Schramm)

FaceBook: **The 7 Steps to Successful Parenting**

Website: www.robertschrammconsulting.com

Contact Dr. Schramm: Robert@robertschrammconsulting.com

