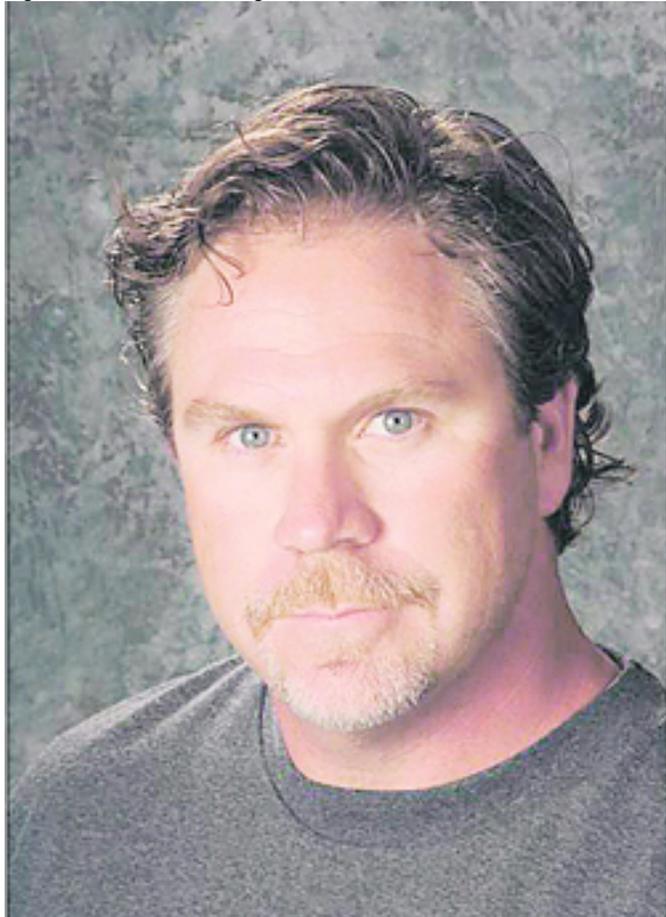


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Ask Dr. Harold May I Have Your Attention, Please

By Dr. Harold Hoyle, Ph.D.



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this," or "Why are you being such a drama queen/king?" Again they want to spend time with you they just don't have the vocabulary yet to say, "Hey mom can you hang with me for a while I want to get your opinion on something?" So instead you could say, "Hey seems like this is a big deal to you, let me put the stuff I was doing aside and deal with your stuff."

In case three, kids often hear: "You need to do your own work", or "We already went over this and you know what to do." If they do know what to do and are just trying to get you to hang out with them a bit more then a better response might be: "Okay, I will bring my work over and we can work together", or "Hey, you want to go to the coffee shop and we can do our work together?"

It isn't always the case that shy or well-behaved kids are looking for time from you but many times when they are, we have turned off our antenna to them. Be more aware that they want to spend time with you and be with you.

And by the way, try the Fra' Mani salami, and Humboldt Fog at Diablo, it is the only way I can get my 14-year old to go to the store any more and he still sits in the car.

I was recently shopping at Diablo Foods and got into a conversation with a parent about their child and an interesting subject came up. How do good or shy kids get the attention they need? So here is an introduction to this issue and some tips to help your child get your attention.

Design problem

People enjoy attention from people they care about. Research has long shown that even when we believe that our kids do not want us to be there with them, they want to know we are there for them. Kids who have good behavior many times get attention only because of their good deeds and not because of who they are. That is how many children have explained it to me. At the same time, they see kids with bad behavior getting more time (translate that to attention) with their parents or other important adults. These well behaving kids often hear from adults, "I wish we had a world full of kids like you, keep up the good work," while the adults go spend time with the kids with behavior problems.

What it looks like

1) Your child may come up to you and show you something that seems quite simple and ask you to look at it. It could be a school project or something they drew or made. 2) Your child may be making a big deal out of what seems like a small issue. 3) Your child may continue to ask you to help them out on something that they have demonstrated they are proficient at.

What you can do

I will take the three examples above and give you the most common response and then a better response. In case one, kids often hear: "You know how to do that," or "Good job keep up the good work." Both of these ignore that the child wants to spend time with you. Undistracted time is the preferred mode. Imagine if your boss asked you to come into her office and help with a simple presentation slide and you stayed on your phone or laptop when talking to her. So instead of the above how about: "Hey let's see what you have here, Ok, talk me through what you were thinking about when you did this."

In case two, kids often hear: "Do not make such a big deal out of this," or "Why are you being such a drama queen/king?" Again they want to spend time with you they just don't have the vocabulary yet to say, "Hey mom can you hang with me for a while I want to get your opinion on something?" So instead you could say, "Hey seems like this is a big deal to you, let me put the stuff I was doing aside and deal with your stuff."

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