



Wee Learn

Wee Mentors
(6+ years):
The Cure for Whining!



Should children get what they want by whining? Absolutely not.

Here are six parent-proven secrets to stop the whining:

1. Whining because the child doesn't have the internal resources to cope with what's being asked of him.

When humans feel overwhelmed, they get whiny. Meet his basic needs for food, rest, down time, run-around time, and connection with you, or you can count on whining.

2. Whining because she needs more connection. Be pre-emptive. Make sure that your child gets enough of your positive attention, unprovoked. Pre-empt whining by giving attention BEFORE she gets demanding. The secret is to take the initiative and give attention the child hasn't asked for, often, so she feels your support and connection.

3. Whining because she doesn't like what's happening but feels powerless to get her way. "When children whine they are feeling powerless. If we scold them for whining or refuse to listen to them we increase their feelings of powerlessness. If we give in so they will stop whining, we reward that powerlessness. But if we relaxedly, playfully, invite them to use a strong voice, we increase their sense of confidence and competence. And we find a bridge back to close connection."

4. Whining because he needs to cry. He has a lot of pent-up emotions about things that are stressing him, but as they get older they gain more self-control, and begin to whine instead. Be kind in response to his whining until you get home and have a few minutes to spend with him. Then draw him onto your lap, look him in the eye and say "I notice you were feeling so whiny and sad, Sweetie. Do you just need to cuddle and maybe cry a bit? Everybody needs to cry sometimes. I'm right here to hold you."

5. Whining because it works. Don't reward whining, meaning don't give in and buy the candy. Responding to the child with empathy ("You are so disappointed that I said no; you really wish you could have that candy...") helps him feel less alone with his disappointment. And there's nothing wrong with finding something else that will make him happy, like a shiny red apple or a trip to the playground. That teaches him to look for win/win solutions. If, by contrast, he feels like he only gets what he wants by whining, he'll become an expert whiner.

6. Whining because you'll do anything to stop it. Why do parents hate whining so much? Because the minute you hear that whine, you react with anxiety. You'll do anything to stop it. But if you can take a deep breath and remind yourself that there's no crisis, you'll feel a lot better, and you'll parent better. Don't feel like you have to solve the problem, just smile at your child and give her a big hug. Most of the time, the whining will stop.

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