

Script

How to Stay Calm When Your Child Isn't Listening

Scenario: Bryan's dad tells him to get his things together because his piano teacher is about to arrive. Bryan ignores his dad and continues playing his video game instead.

Dad (thinks): I JUST told him to get his stuff ready! And he's playing VIDEO GAMES? I cannot believe it!

Dad (says angrily): BRYAN! I just told you to get your stuff together for your piano teacher!

Bryan: I just need another sec, Dad! I'm almost done!

Dad (thinks): He's been playing his game for an hour. He does not "need another sec"!... Wait, how would I feel if I'd been working on something for an hour and I was almost done and Bryan interrupted ME? ... I'd be annoyed.

Dad (more calmly): I see you're right in the middle of something.

Bryan: Yeah. Let me finish?

Dad (thinks): I can't let him finish. But I also know the situation will get worse if I yell at him and tell him how wrong his behavior is. He's not going to like getting off of his game, but at least I can set a boundary in a way that is respectful... and then I won't feel awful about it later.

Dad: I'm sorry, but we don't have time for you to finish. We have to turn it off now.

Bryan (getting angry): Dad, that's not FAIR!

Dad (thinks): He has a right to be upset. I'd be upset too if someone told me I had to stop doing something I'd planned to finish and I had zero control about it.... But he needs to learn to stay calm when things aren't going his way. This is a great time to model that. I'm going to stay calm even though I don't like how he's acting.

Bryan (yelling): I don't want to do stupid piano! I hate piano!

Dad (thinks): I know he doesn't hate piano. He loves it. That's obviously his Yuck talking. I'm going to focus on staying calm rather than on what he's saying. Yes, I'll repeat that to myself. I'm showing him what it looks like to stay calm... I'm showing him what it looks like to stay calm...

Bryan: I'm NOT going to play today when the teacher comes.

Dad (thinks): He's still getting out his Yuck. I can do this... I can stay calm... I can show him what it looks like to stay calm...

Bryan continues to complain for a few moment. His dad lets him.

Because his dad doesn't engage and make it worse, Bryan calms down much more quickly.



- **KEY TAKEAWAY:** Although Bryan's dad did not appreciate that Bryan was not listening to him, he knew that if he focused on that, he would go into Yuck and the situation would go downhill quickly. Instead, he focused on staying firm in his boundary and regulating himself. In that way, he didn't give in to Bryan and he was able to model what it looks like to stay calm even when things don't go your way.
- **TIP:** This situation will go much better in the moment if Bryan's dad is taking care of himself on a regular basis. When he's not taking care of himself, his own Yuck will prevent him from caring about Bryan's perspective or seeing the big picture.