

# LIFE SKILLS ACTIVITIES - INSTRUCTIONS

## EXCUSE ME MOMMY– Ages 2 ½ thru 7/8

This parenting tip and life skills activity can work very quickly if the parent remembers to follow through with the plan. Children thrive on routine, consistency and specifics. After working with one family in their home and sharing this activity, when I returned the next week to check on their progress, the 7-year-old boy said to me: *“My Daddy forgets to put up his “one minute” finger!”* Children tend to remember the details. It is very important to follow through.

This activity, like most all the others I share in *“Joy In Parenting”*, first should begin with a clear explanation of the steps and be shared with excitement and joy! You might say something like: *“You know when Mommy starts talking with her friends or on the phone...blah blah blah.. and it seems like I don’t hear you when you want to ask me a question, and then you start to shout to me and then I get upset because you shouted at me...neither of us like that do we? Well guess what, I found a way to fix that!! Let’s give it a try!!”*

Here are the steps that you play act quite a few times to help you and your child memorize the steps:

1. Mom pretends to be talking to a friend or on the phone.
2. Child comes up to mom and gently taps the mom’s leg and says: “Excuse Me Mommy” and then waits.
3. The mom immediately, raises her “one minute” finger which only the child can see right near her leg. This means: I heard you and in one minute I will give you full attention. In reality, this should be about 5-10 seconds. Just long enough for the mom to politely excuse herself from her conversation and answer her patiently waiting child.
4. The mom then turns to her child and gently says: “Thank you for saying Excuse Me and waiting patiently. What is it you want/need?”
5. The child then explains his/her request.
6. The mom quickly and respectfully responds with a YES or NO and then thanks the child again for saying “Excuse Me” and being so patient. The child then leaves and goes back to play. (When play acting this, it is important to explain that when the answer is NO to a request, the child must immediately accept that answer at that moment, but if he has questions about it, he can ask respectfully for more explanation after the mom is off the phone or the friend has left.)

Amazingly, most young children love this! If possible, it is best to start this at the earliest age possible so it becomes a habit for both of you. Children like to be praised and feel that their questions and concerns matter to you. They really do not like getting in trouble or yelled at. Even when your answer is NO once in a while, they seem to accept it better knowing you heard them, no voices were raised in frustration or anger, and, hopefully you are saying YES many more times than NO.

*Let me know how this life skill activity has worked in your home or how you adapted it.*