

Pre-K Skills

by L. Carol Scott, PhD

Huh. You adults think you're all that. You've got skills, yeah. Maybe even what some might call *mad skills* in some arena or another. But I am here to tell you that you have nothing on most four-year-old kiddos' ability to get what they want.

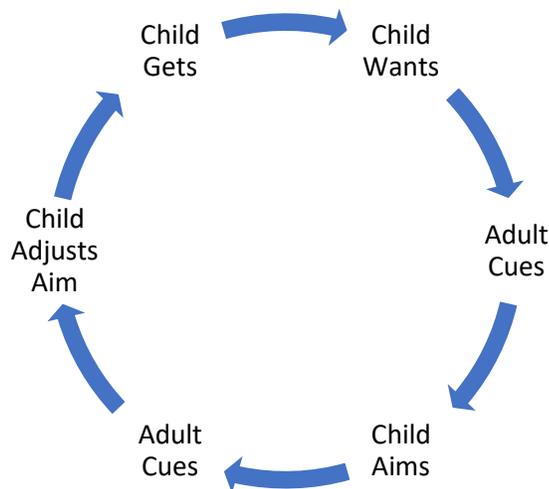
Some of them can negotiate the skin off a snake, I swear.



Here's a challenge for you: without bullying, power-tripping, pulling rank, demeaning or minimizing your opponent, manipulation, trickery, or in any way using the "because I said so" factor of your size, age, and position, win a negotiation with a four-year-old trying to get something they *really* want. Well...with a Four who hasn't been already oppressed by such treatment as they strive to get what they want.

I'm serious. These littles don't play. They're practicing what you maybe forgot a long time ago as two success factors in life: it's crucial to know your goal and to read your opponent clearly.

Here's how this developmental process of learning to use **Self-Aware Negotiation** as a **Success Strategy** works for Fours:



Child wants a snack.

Adult offers peanut butter and celery OR cheese and crackers

Child asks for crackers and peanut butter

Adult says crackers are onion flavor

Child asks for crackers and cream cheese (knowing there is some) and gets that snack

If you've ever wondered why Fours ask "Why?" so much, I swear it's because they're learning all the adult limits, rules, and expectations, for use in their negotiations with us. Kidding. Not kidding.

What Fours can be learning, if we adults play fairly, is that each of us has some limits, some rules, and some expectations about how things should go. Adults want snacks to be healthy foods that are already on board—no store run needed. Adults are thinking about how snacks fit into a whole day of nutrition. All children need do is figure out how to get what they want *inside our limits* and—ta-da!—a win-win negotiation is achieved!

It's enough to make most foreign affairs ambassadors and labor negotiators envious. If you can't negotiate for what you want like a four-year-old, it's time to get SASSy!