Power Struggles

Remember:
Power struggles can occur when an adult asks a child to do something and the child refuses OR the adult may intrude on a child’s activity or demand that a child comply without much consideration for the individual child. Children need opportunities to do things for themselves and to make their own decisions which helps them learn to develop inner control and lead to healthy independence. Once a power struggle starts, it is hard to call it to an end.

Techniques For Avoiding Power Struggles.
- Develop a positive relationship.
- Be firm, fair, and friendly.
- Keep a sense of humor.
- Give this child opportunities to be powerful and to make decisions.
- Offer choices.
- Keep schedules and routines predictable.
- Be consistent with expectations for cleanup and chores.
- Move close to the child before giving directions.
- State directions once, then help the child get started.
- Choose your fights. Insist on your way only when it is really important.
- Call arguments to an end.
- Ignore further protests. Detach yourself from the argument.
- Comment on times a child is being cooperative and following directions.

Ask Yourself These Questions When a Child Will Not Comply:
- **Does the child resist adult requests without thinking?** Toddlers and some young preschool children will automatically say no. Instead of saying do you want juice, ask the child how much juice he/she wants. Childproof the play area. Instead of saying NO say STOP. Find ways to say YES to the child.

- **Does the child know how to do what you are asking? Does he understand all the instructions?** Keep directions simple. Do not assume that the child knows what you are asking.

- **Does the child refuse or delay doing as asked because he is involved in an activity?** Warn a child when it is time to clean up. Keep the daily schedule predictable. Promise that he/she can return to the activity.

- **Does the child refuse when you ask him directly?** If the child does not begin to do as asked, offer the choice, “Do you want to do it yourself or shall I help you?”

- **Does the child continue to argue even after you’ve set a limit?** Some children have learned that if they argue long or effectively enough they will get what they want. Call the argument to an end. Say, “You are trying to get me to change my mind and I am not going to. You need to stop asking me.” Ignore further protests.

- **Do power struggles with this child usually turn into a tantrum?** Choose your fights to avoid unnecessary power struggles and tantrums. Make sure you are not asking the child to do too much.

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