

Erasing The Battle Lines

The one thing that was most important in helping me get out and stay out of power struggles was the realization that power struggles begin and end with me. It became clear that my words and actions/reactions in each situation were the cause of and, ultimately, the cure for power struggles. Once I started changing the way I was saying and doing things, the power struggles started going away.

Strategies for staying out of power struggles.

Never argue with a child. I know this is easier said than done and it is extremely effective.



Don't be fooled by tears or words of anger. Like adults, children feel angry and lash out with words they don't mean. When they have worked through their anger, they will check in with you to make sure they are still loved.

Don't take things personally. Children are just learning about behavior and interacting with people.

Separate the behavior from the child. "I love you dearly and I don't like what you did. Please change what you're doing; don't change who you are!"

Say what you mean, mean what you say, and follow through with what you say. If you don't know what to say, it's best not to say anything.

Never ask a question. Instead of asking "Would you like to pick up your toys?", say "It's time to clean up your mess." Instead of asking "Would you like to put your coat on?", say "It's time to put your coat on."

Choices. "You can wear this coat or this one." "You can eat this or this." "You can sit here quietly or over there." "You can pick up your toys now or during snack."

For the Younger Child (1-2 years)

Redirection – get the child interested in something else or remove the child from the situation

Proximity – children hear things more clearly when the speaker (usually Mom, Dad, or teacher) is within an arm's length of the child.

Favorite Phrases:

"Nice try!"

"I talk to people who talk nicely to me."

"People in this room play nicely. People who don't play nicely are going to sit in the corner."

"People in this room are using inside voices."

"People going outside are wearing coats."

"People who get their toys picked up in 5 minutes get a story read to them."

"I expect you to do your best."

"We are leaving this house at 7:45 with your clothes or pajamas on."

"I love you dearly and people who hit are going to sit over there."

"I know this is really tough for you and you are going to make it. You're a great person and I love you dearly."

"You are welcome to solve your problem any way you want--as long as it doesn't cause a problem for me or anybody else."

"You get what you get and you can't throw a fit."

