

Power Struggles

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All parents have experienced power struggle battles with their children. Often, in a public situation. Parents might resort to bribing, begging, insisting, threatening and time out – just to get the child to cooperate.

A power struggle is a tug-of-war for control between a parent and child. Some children interact more than other children. This may be because of individual personality and self-determination for control. Every family experiences power struggles.

Power struggles may happen because the child is hungry, stressed or overly tired. Their emotions escalate. Learn to read your child's body language and to respond to it calmly. Children may just need to be offered a drink of water, a simply, healthy snack or a time to rest.

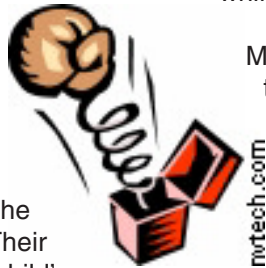
Emotions are generally the fuel source behind power struggles. Recognizing those emotions is the key to stopping power struggles before they ever start. Then use strategies that teach children how to express those emotions more respectfully and suitably.

Routines can help regulate moods and eliminate power struggles. Children need regular times to eat. Provide nutritious meals of breakfast, lunch, dinner and healthy snacks during the day. Regular naptimes and bedtimes provide your child with the consistency of schedules.

Young children are becoming independent. They want to do things for themselves. Power struggles often happen when parents are rushed or

distracted. Plan time during the day for small children to accomplish things on their own. For example, children like to dress themselves or put on their own shoes. Make sure you allow enough time for children to complete tasks on their own.

It is normal for children to want control over their lives. Parents need to make sure their expectations match the abilities of the child. However, children need guidance. Offer them choices. Only offer two choices and ones that you can live with. This will encourage children to make appropriate decisions while having a personal sense of power.



Many parents deal with control by emphasizing their authority. Parents should think about the child's request before responding. Parents should also think about what is best for the child. They should not give into requests because it is easier than dealing with it. Children will argue and whine to get parents to react. Try to end arguments early. If parents reward negative behaviors, children will use them again.

Parents should emphasize cooperation, not control. State expectations clearly and firmly. Tell your child what you want him to do, when he must do it and what happens if he does not; then calmly walk away.

Children respond to distraction. It is a good disciplinary tool for the younger years. When children engage in a power struggle, change the activity or location. This helps the child pay attention to something besides the battle.

The key to managing power struggles is to maintain parental control while allowing the child to make appropriate choices of their own. It is the responsibility of the parent to resolve the power struggle by thinking in advance and talking to children about expectations for their behavior

ahead of time. Finally, remember that adding some humor or playfulness helps break up power struggles.

Active Kids – Creative play

As children grow, they learn new skills, including balance and coordination. Allow and encourage them to experience new activities like soccer, t-ball, or swimming at the local YMCA or recreation center. If they uninterested in organized sports, that is ok! Kids themselves are the best source for choosing new games and activities. Allow a child's imagination to run wild. Give them the task of creating a new game or activity. Gather up some kids from the neighborhood and create a playgroup. By having the parents take turns supervising each week, you too will have a break to do something active for yourself. Information provided by America On the Move. Visit: www.americaonthemove.org.

Safe Kids – Lawn mowers

Each year, about 75 people are killed and about 20,000 are injured on or near riding lawnmowers and garden tractors. One out of every five deaths involves a child. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that most of the deaths to children occurred when a child was in the path of a moving mower.

No parent wants their child to be one of these statistics, Young children move quickly and are attracted to mowing activity, but they do not understand the dangers it poses. Parents should keep young children away from any outdoor power equipment.

Never assume children will remain where you last saw them. Be alert and turn off the mower if children enter the mowing area. Use extra care

Healthy Kids – Picky Eaters

According to the American Dietetic Association, it is perfectly normal for kids to be picky about what they eat. They are asserting their independence by choosing the foods they like. Here are nine tips to help get your child to try new foods.

- **Don't force them.** Kids really should be in control of how much they eat. Their hunger comes in ebbs and flows. Forcing them to finish something when they are full teaches them to overeat.
- **Hide the veggies.** One of the easiest ways to get kids to accept new foods is to put a mask on it. Chop mushrooms, grate zucchini or add a few minced onions to their favorite spaghetti sauce.
- **Try, try again.** It is rare for children to like a food on the first try. It usually takes 10 to 15 exposures to a food for a child to actually eat and accept it. Keep trying. Space out the exposures by a week or more.
- **Add new to the old.** Always offer new foods with familiar and well-liked choices.
- **Be a good role model.** Make healthy food choices and finish your veggies in front of your kids.
- **Get kids cooking.** Have children help prepare meals and snacks. Kids can wash vegetables, stir ingredients or add cheese on top of a casserole or home made pizza.
- **Visit a farmer's market.** Introduce children to how food is grown, picked and eventually sold. Allow kids to choose which foods they would like to buy. Pick out "mystery" foods to experience new flavors.

- **Make food fun.** Shapes, colors and textures make food more interesting. Use cookie cutters for sandwiches. Make a face of your salad – tuna for the face, green pepper strips for hair, and cherry tomatoes for eyes. The better food looks, the more likely it is to be eaten.
- **Snacks and drinks.** Keep snacks small. Serve them at least one to one and a half hours before mealtime. Toddlers are particularly prone to filling up on too much milk or juice.

Adapted from: Helping Your Picky Eater. Shandley McMurray. Kaboose. 2008.



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Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating.