

POWER STRUGGLES TO POWERFUL SOLUTIONS FOR THE PARENT



Parents seek an effective technique that shifts the power struggle to a more positive interaction so that both parent and child can feel less frustrated. This proactive approach teaches accountability and gives the child an opportunity to feel confident in their decision about how to manage their own behavior, a skill any parent wants their child to have as they mature.

Here is the 5 step approach that you can use no matter what the situation or your child's age. The example here is that a 6-year old boy fights with his 4-year old brother.

1. State what happened and the emotion that accompanied the action calmly and without judgment. "You felt angry with your brother for grabbing your game, so you hit him".

You are connecting the emotion with the behavior for your child. They may not always be aware of the feeling that triggered their reaction. This can occur at any age. You are calm and stating this in a non-judgmental way.

2. State briefly and calmly your family value. "We do not hit people when we are angry or frustrated".

Prefacing this statement with "you know better", or "how many times do I have to tell you" is not effective and can create more aggravation and frustration for both parent and child.

3. Since most children feel singled out (how many times does one child feel the other gets away with everything), be fair and show compassion. "Sometimes things may not seem fair. But I want you to know that in this instance, your brother will be held accountable for his part in this, too."

4. Be clear about the consequences that he knew of in advance. "When you hit your brother you lose one hour of game time". If he becomes upset, be genuine in your response: "I can see that you feel disappointed in your choice that is now costing you your game time". Add to this "I am confident that you can find a better way to respond that will not cost you your game time next time".

Children need to know what to expect in advance. Consistency is key. They test boundaries when they believe that it is possible to change the outcome. And using the phrase 'your choice' is a reminder to him that he has control over how he chooses to react.

5. Discover solutions with him. "What do you think you can do differently the next time that you feel angry?" *Be a champion of his strengths.* "You are very creative. How might that help you find another way to react?" *Be curious* about his idea with him. This will enable him to visualize completing whatever idea he comes up with. *Show confidence* in his choice. "I like your plan!" And whether he forgets to try, tries and it did not work or is successful, encourage him to keep at it.

Notice that you are parenting 'side-by-side' with your child but still managing the 'flow' of the situation. Calmly, supportively, in charge.