

POWER

The struggle for power in a home can leave a parent exhausted

Parents can easily become locked in fierce power struggles with children over sometimes trivial issues.



Power struggles between parents and children are common in many homes. Often “I want to make you” becomes more important than the issue we may be fighting or arguing over.

Power-drunk children frequently argue, throw temper tantrums or procrastinate in an effort to assert their authority over parents. They value control and love getting their own way. Parents, in turn, usually feel angry and challenged when confronted with power-seeking behaviour.

It is useful if parents can recognise their part in the power-struggle. It takes two to fight as a quest for dominance cannot occur on its own. Refuse to be drawn into an argument or fight with a child. Use consequences to teach children to take responsibility rather than exert your power to win control. It sounds easy but it is difficult for those parents who value power rather than influence.

GETTING COOPERATION FROM STRONG-WILLED KIDS

- 1. Choose battles wisely with power-seekers.** Parents often fight with power-seekers over relatively inconsequential matters and become worn out by this. Also it can damage your relationship. Let them win on minor matters particularly those pertaining to food, clothing and bedrooms.
- 2. Focus on you rather than them.** Most of the time parents tell power-seekers what they should be doing. Instead focus on what you will do as a parent. Rather than saying “Come to the meal table” tell them “I’ll serve ice cream when you are seated.” It is amazing how much difference one little word can make!
- 3. Use choices.** Some kids value being in control so by giving them a choice they feel that they have power. To a noisy child playing inside you can say: “You may play that noisy game outside but if you want to remain inside you must play quietly. It’s your choice.” Only give them a choice of one or two options rather

than a smorgasbord to choose from.

- 4. Use consequences like a good cop.** Refuse to fight or argue with power-seekers. Consequences work very effectively with power-seekers so be prepared to move to action rather than repeat yourself if you don’t get the cooperation you want. The key is to implement consequences in a pleasant way so children become mad at themselves rather than you.
- 5. Develop their personal power by giving them more control over their well-being.** Hand over power and authority to children when they are capable so they can take some responsibility for their own lives. For instance, give them pocket money and allow them to choose how they spend it within set guidelines.

Power-seekers like being given some latitude so cut them a little slack or you may well fight them over every little issue, which can be damaging to your relationship with them.



Parenting ideas
MICHAEL GROSE