

## Choice and Control

### Give Limited Choices

Children have little choice, or control in their lives, and this can lead to frustration, stress and rebellion. Giving children limited choices where you can, enables them to learn to take responsibility. Over-control of children usually encourages dependency, or rebellion.

So, instead of the struggle of a 'logger heads' situation,

"Put your sweater on!", "No I don't want to!" "Put your sweater on", "No!"

Try to give a limited choice that you are happy with

"Do you want to wear your red sweater or your blue one?"

"How do you want your hair today? Pony tail, or a plait?"

### 'Choices and Consequences' (Strategy for inappropriate behaviour)

'Choices and Consequences' is a very useful strategy for helping children learn to take responsibility for themselves by encouraging positive use of Personal Power. Children quickly become more co-operative than when coercion is used. The strategy keeps the adult in charge, whilst also empowering the child. It is an excellent way of defusing power struggles. It works wonders with all age groups.

e.g. A child is refusing to tidy their toys away.

(calmly point out the choices)

George... you have a choice

You can...choose to help me tidy the toys away **(Positive)**

Or you can....leave it for me to tidy up. **(Negative)**

If you.... help me tidy up

We can do it quickly and have time to play another game before bed. **(Positive consequence)**

If .....you leave it for mummy to do

It will take me longer and there will be no time for another game. **(Negative consequence)**

It's up to you...

It's your choice. ....I'll give you a minute to think about it.

Always start by pointing out the positive choice (using an enthusiastic voice)

(Child's name)..... You have a choice

You can choose to ..... (Positive choice)

Or you can ..... (Negative choice – normally the behaviour they have already chosen)

If you choose.....(+) then .....(positive consequence)

If you choose to .....(-) then unfortunately .....(negative consequence)

It's up to you

It's your choice

I'll leave you to think about it for a minute.

This is much more effective than children ignoring repeated instructions and then it ending in confrontation, where both adult and child are likely to feel resentful and angry. This offers them a way out, and a clear choice between two ways of behaving.

- Choose consequences that mean something to the child or relate to the behaviour
- Don't use threats, or ultimatums
- Choose consequences you can keep to. (Don't say "you're not going on the school trip, party, no screen time for a week etc. unless you are prepared to follow through)