

10 Positive Discipline Tools

For Managing and Preventing Power Struggles

1 Connect before you Correct/Redirect

Acknowledge and validate your child's feelings while offering support, understanding and empathy.

EX. "I can see you're having a hard time. It's ok to feel frustrated, it's not ok to hit/throw things/talk to me with disrespect etc. I'm here to help. What words can you use to tell me how you feel/what you need?" (With older kids you could add, "Would you like to try that again/have a do-over?") In other words, allow feelings, while limiting hurtful actions or behaviors.

2 Set Limits and Boundaries

Using kindness and firmness at the same time (and offer limited choices)

EX. "I know how much you want to keep playing on your device AND it's time for dinner. Would you like to put out the napkins or the silverware?" or "I know you want to keep playing legos AND it's bath time."

3 Ask More Than You Tell

Asking vs. telling empowers your child while building decision-making and problem-solving skills.

EX. Instead of "Go get your jacket." Try, "What do you need to bring so you won't be cold outside?"

4 Focus on Strengths/ Use Encouragement

Acknowledge when your child is cooperating, acting respectfully.

EX. "Thank you for telling me what you need in such a respectful way." "I appreciate the way you came inside the first time I asked."

5 Do the Unexpected

Have a sense of humor. Turn the "chore" or request into a fun game.

EX. "Here comes the tickle monster who gets little children who don't pick up their toys/brush their teeth/get in their car seats." "Let's put on our favorite song while we clean up!" "Time for a dance party!"

6 Look for "Yes" Opportunities

Reserve the "no's" for when you really need them!

EX. "Yes, we can read a story after your teeth are brushed."
"Yes, you can play a video game after your room is cleaned."

7 Establish Routines and Make Agreements Ahead of Time

Kids thrive on structure and routine. Involve them in the process of setting up a schedule or routine for homework, bedtime, getting out the door on time, remembering what to bring to school etc.

EX. Brainstorm ideas together and make agreements ahead of time. Re-evaluate as needed. This is a great way to teach decision-making and problem solving skills. Asking questions such as, "What is your plan for _____?" or "What do we need to remember before we _____?" can be very helpful as well.

8 Decide what YOU will Do

EX. "I will read a story when teeth are brushed."
"I will pull over to the side of the road when children are fighting." Then, follow through!

9 Establish 1:1 Time With Each Child (aka "Special Time")

EX. Label it, "Mommy/Jake time; Daddy/Suzy time." This is your time to connect with your child and send the message "I'm all yours!" Let your child know how meaningful the time is to you, "I love having this time just the two of us." Kids who feel connected to their parents have much less need to misbehave.

10 Model Self-Control and Self-Calming

EX. For example, "We are both getting very upset. I need to take some time to calm down. I am going to walk outside and take some deep breaths like this (show child) and then I hope we can come up with a solution to our problem together. I love you." Reconnect with hugs/connection.

Lastly, take care of YOU!

We can't pour from an empty cup! Be sure to do things that bring you joy, no matter how little they may seem. Have compassion for yourself in those challenging moments with your children. Know that when our cups are full, we 'show up' better – for ourselves and our families!