

# Parenting The Strong- Willed Child



*A Four-Week Course  
To Increase Understanding and  
Effective Parental Management of  
Strong-Willed Children*

## Facilitator's Handbook Practical Parent Education



Strengthening Families in Our Community  
[www.practicalparent.org](http://www.practicalparent.org)

# Choose Your Battles Carefully: Guidelines for Parents



Ask yourself these questions. If you answer yes to the question, stand your ground and follow through with an appropriate consequence. If the answer is no, then go to the next question:

Is this a health or safety issue?

Does the action violate a law? (Car seats)

Does the action violate our morals or values? (Respect)

Does the action violate our family rules? (Bedtime)

Whose consequence will it be?

Will it matter after 30 minutes of arguing? Will it matter in five years?

Can I say "Yes" to part of it?



Session III - Handout No. 4

## Behavior Management Techniques

Techniques	Developmental Level			
	1-2 1/2 Yrs.	2-5 Yrs.	5-12 Yrs.	12-18 Yrs.
<b>Distraction</b>				
<b>Anticipation and Avoidance</b>				
<b>Removal from Activity</b>				
<b>Positive Reinforcement</b>				
<b>Time Out</b>				
<b>Natural &amp; Logical Consequences</b>				
<b>ACT</b>				
<b>Reward System</b>				
<b>Communication and Negotiation</b>				
<b>Contract Agreement</b>				

## Session III - Handout No. 5

**TIPS FOR MAKING RULES WHICH WORK**

## BE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC

*"Toys must be put away on the toy shelf,"* versus *"Pick up your toys."*

## STATE THE RULE POSITIVELY

*"Stay by my side,"* versus *"Don't run away."*

## STATE THE RULE SO COMPLIANCE IS CLEARLY OBSERVABLE

*"Take turns on the swing,"* versus *"Be nice to your friends."*

## ONLY MAKE RULES YOU ARE WILLING TO ENFORCE CONSISTENTLY

## EXPECT RESISTANCE

## IF YOU CANNOT DIRECTLY OBSERVE COMPLIANCE, ESTABLISH CONSEQUENCES FOR DISCOVERED NONCOMPLIANCE

(Dishonesty, for example.)

## REMEMBER, "LESS IS BETTER" OR QUALITY IS BETTER THAN QUANTITY

## ANTICIPATE AND MAKE RULES IN ADVANCE

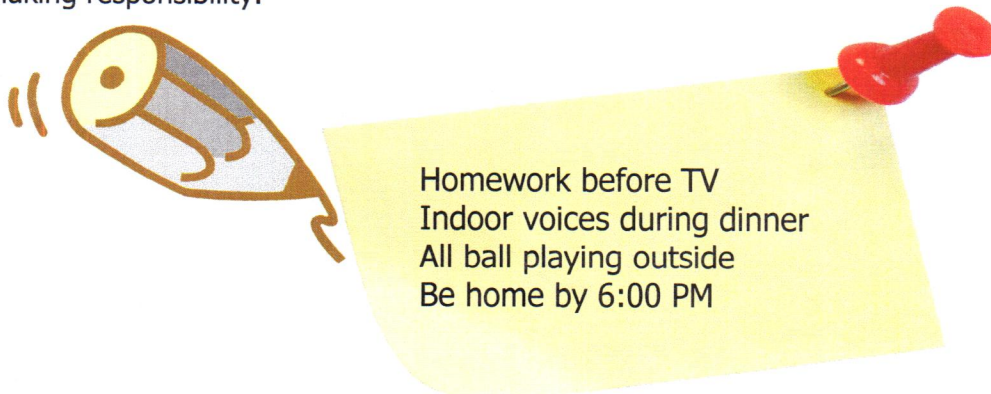
*"When Grandma arrives you must turn off the music."*

## CHANGE RULES AS NEEDED

As children grow and mature the rules must evolve.

## INVOLVE YOUR CHILDREN IN MAKING RULES

Decide if a rule is negotiable or nonnegotiable. If there is room to negotiate, involve the children in making the rules and the consequences for noncompliance. Children are more responsive to rules they have had a part in formulating. However, parents always have the final authority and decision making responsibility.





## Session III - Handout No. 6

## Tips for Establishing Routines

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- ❖ Simplify the routines.
- ❖ Involve the child in developing the routines.
- ❖ Use pictures for children who cannot yet read.
- ❖ Identify the elements of the routine with the child. For example the elements in a bedtime routine include: taking a bath, putting on pajamas, putting dirty clothes in the hamper, brushing teeth, having story time, singing a song(s), getting into bed, turning the lights out. Encourage the child to establish an order for this routine; let the child decide the order. Parents can use a chart or a checklist for a few weeks. It is important to be clear about parental expectations. Parents should not allow the child to check a box off if she has done an incomplete job or if the parents had to get involved by reminding, lecturing, nagging or threatening. The first week, parents may want to include reminders as an acceptable part of the routine. Depending on the age of the child, parents may have to be involved on an ongoing basis.
- ❖ Turn over as much as possible to the child. Establish a reward or an incentive at the onset. *"When the routine has been followed acceptably for x number of days, we will..."* The reward should involve the parents' time, not money or toys; playing a game, having a friend over, going to the park, going to a movie together, etc. The days of compliance do not necessarily need to be consecutive. Allow for success without perfection.
- ❖ How parents respond to the child's meeting the expectations or not meeting the expectations is important. When the child is successful, simply put a mark on the chart; their success is enough reward. When the child is not successful, be kind and firm: say *"That is disappointing, but tomorrow is another day. I'm sure you can do it then."*
- ❖ Be sure to set achievable goals, the goals can be reevaluated on a weekly basis and adjusted as the child experiences success. If a child is in trouble at school on a daily basis, the first goal might be a day at school with only one signature/time out. Gradually, the goal can be modified and raised until the goal is to go all week without getting into trouble at school.
- ❖ The reward can be even more immediate. If the bedtime routine is followed, then the child can have an extra story at night.
- ❖ Work on only one routine at a time. This will be a change for both the parents and the child; change is always difficult.
- ❖ Parents can expect to be tested by their child; be prepared.
- ❖ Parents need to be in agreement and be consistent.
- ❖ It is more effective when parents believe that their child will be able to succeed. Look for evidence the child is moving towards ultimate success.



## Session III - Handout No. 7

## Strategies for Easing Change

- ✓ Give plenty of warning in language your child can understand:
  - "After dinner..."*
  - "After your favorite show is over you will have to..."*
  - "When the timer rings..."*
  - "After you shoot three more baskets, it is time to come in."*
- ✓ Play music and say, *"When this song is over it will be time to..."*
- ✓ Your child may need stages of warnings:
  - "In 15 minutes, then..."*
  - "In 10 minutes, then..."*
  - "In 5 minutes, then..."*
  - "In 2 minutes..."*
- ✓ Be sure you are consistent and follow through on the timetable; parents can get distracted and two minutes stretches into ten.
- ✓ Do not expect your child to find making a transition easy, even with warnings.
- ✓ Reduce transitions during the day.
- ✓ Establish routines and be very selective about varying the routine.
- ✓ Allow transition objects; take a toy truck in the car to ease change from play to running errands.
- ✓ Warn your child when a change is about to occur, *"I hear the school bus. Your brother will be home very soon."*
- ✓ Model flexibility; use words to describe times when you are flexible: *"Well, I had planned to go to the grocery store this morning, but I could change my plans and go this afternoon."*
- ✓ Allow plenty of time; rushing is very difficult and escalates the stress of change.
- ✓ Anticipate times when the normal routine will be altered, i.e., holidays, visitors, vacations, new babysitter, parties and prepare the child.
- ✓ Saying hello and good bye is hard for your child. When Grandma comes to visit, it may take the child time to adjust and when Grandma goes home, it may take time to readjust.
- ✓ Use words to describe your child's feelings: *"I know you feel grumpy we have company, it changes your routine."* Remind your child of previous positive experiences: *"Remember last time Grandma came it turned out to be lots of fun."*
- ✓ Understand any event which occurs differently than your child expected is likely to be experienced as a disappointment, at least initially. This is true even when the change is a positive change.
- ✓ When changes in their expectations leads to an emotional reaction or even disintegration, be as flexible as you can (before the unacceptable behavior happens) and reward acceptable responses. Encourage your child to verbalize her expectations so they can be met as much as is reasonable and possible.



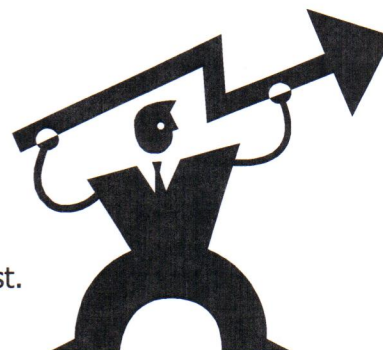


## Session III - Handout No. 8

## How to Give Effective Directions

### Be sure you have your child's full attention. Is your child listening?

- Make eye contact
- Get close to child; get on the child's level
- Remove distractions such as the TV's video games, cell phones, etc.
- Make physical contact; touch his arm or shoulder
- Some children do better with written directions; use them as a checklist.
- Use a firm voice



### Give one direction at a time. As your child improves, you may increase it to two directions at a time.

#### Be clear and specific:

*"I'd like you to put the book back on the book shelf."*

*"Your job is to put the blocks back in the block bag."*

*"I expect to find dirty clothes in the hamper."*

#### State your direction in a positive way; what you want your child to do:

*"Use your indoor voice," versus "Stop shouting."*

#### Be sure your child understands the direction; ask him/her to repeat it or tell you what he is going to do.

#### Use positive reinforcement, notice and comment whenever your child complies or begins to comply:

*"I appreciate you getting started right away on putting your toys on the shelf."*

*"I am so proud of you for staying right by my side."* This is said as it is occurring.

#### Think first: "Is this direction really necessary?" Monitor yourself and observe how many instructions or directions you give your child each day.

- How many are necessary?
- How many do you expect to be obeyed?
- Ask yourself: *"Is this behavior simply annoying and would I like it to stop or am I willing to insist it stop?"* (Go back to the *Conflict Reduction Decision Tree*.)

#### Issue instructions as directions without asking for agreement.

**Only issue directions when you are ready to demand compliance.** If it is a wish or if you hope it will be obeyed, or if the child has a choice, issue it as a request:

*"Would you please...?"*

#### Be prepared with consequences for noncompliance and be consistent.

**Session III - Handout No. 8 (Cont.-Page 2)****If you must explain, offer the explanation before giving the direction:**

*"Grandma is coming to visit. She could trip over the toys on the floor. Put your toys away on the toy shelf."*

**Use fewer words; keep it as short and simple as possible:**

*"Put your toys on the toy shelf." Is better than "OK, it's time to put your toys away, time to stop playing and put those toys on the toy shelf."*

Even one or two word instructions can be very effective; e.g., "Toys" or "Toys...toy shelf."

**If change is difficult for your child, give a warning change is coming:**

*"When the timer rings it will be time to stop playing and pick up your toys."*

**Act as if you assume your child will comply with your direction. Expect compliance.****Develop Strategies:**

- Charts
- Routines
- Checklist

