

Raising strong-willed kids

Many parents have at least one child who they describe as 'strong-willed', 'stubborn' or 'determined to have his or her own way'. They may celebrate their determination in some settings ('I love the way she never gives up in a game') but abhor it in others ('She is determined to go to bed when she wants').

Strong-willed children often set the agenda for parents as they become locked into a dispute where winning and losing becomes the main concern rather than gaining sensible outcomes.

Following are some approaches to use with strong-willed children:

Channel rather than change your child's behaviour. Recognise strong-mindedness is desirable in many situations but children need to learn that there are times when they must give way.

Avoid being drawn into petty disputes of your child's making. Step back a little and allow your child some minor victories.

Focus on what you will do, rather than tell your child what to do. For instance, rather than arguing with your child to go to bed tell him or her that you will begin reading a bed-time story in five

minutes. Then just do it – begin the story whether your child is there or not.

(This example will not work for every child but the principle is important – focus on your behaviour and tell children what you will do rather than tell them what they should do.)

Use choices, which gives strong-willed children the illusion of control. For instance, "Jessica, if you want to play inside you must be quiet. If you want to make a noise then outside is the place to be." Strong-willed children like to think they are in control.

It is interesting to note that often strong-willed children remind parents of themselves, which is enough reason sometimes for the sparks to fly!



Quick Parenting Quiz

- According to a recent study children challenge the boundaries that parents set in place approximately:**
 - One in two times
 - One in three times
 - Two in three times
- What percentage of Australian families has an only child?**
 - 11%
 - 16%
 - 21%
 - 26%

Answers: 1b) 2b)

Vitamins for parents

If you are tired of saying No to every request your child makes here are two alternatives to try:

No.1. "Yes, you can _____ when _____"

Example: "Yes, you can watch television when you have finished your homework."

No.2. It is great that you want _____

When you _____ I will _____

Example: "It is great that you want to walk to Nan's place but she lives a long way away. When you are able to walk to the shops on your own then I will consider allowing you to walk to Nan's."

Bright idea



Use the language of cooperation

Be aware that your choice of words and tone of voice can invite cooperation or invite a fight from children. Using words such as 'must', 'should' and 'got to' can illicit an uncooperative response from a strong-willed child. Such children are more receptive to the language of cooperation – 'please', 'could you?', 'I would appreciate it if you could.' I am not suggesting that you get down on bended knee each time you want cooperation from a child, but a little respect usually goes a long way.

Wise & Witty Words

"In work, do what you enjoy. In family life, be completely present."

From the Tao Te Ching by S. Mitchell

"A man finds out what is meant by spitting image when he tries to feed cereal to his infant."

Imogen Fey