

Being the Authority

It is important for every parent to win the battle of “who’s in charge?” The answer must always be YOU! Some people have lost this battle and are demoralized as a result – they are the victims of their kids. Even if the kid may not be “in charge,” when it comes to making rules, the kid’s emotional outbursts scare the parent and cause the parent to feel like they can’t control their kid. Much of this can be changed by following the following steps.

Non-verbally: you have your eye contact, facial expression, posture, and tone of voice.

Eye Contact – You must make steady and consistent eye contact. You also must demand that your child does as well – this is the first battle that must be won. If you do not make eye contact, you are giving away your power. If your child avoids your eyes, they are avoiding you – do not allow this.

Facial expression – try to keep a straight face – like one you would use with someone you respected. Don’t roll your eyes or smirk – these are signs of sarcasm and your kids will take them as messages of contempt – they will use that as a pretext to attack you back.

Posture – stand square to your child, not sideways. Bring your eyes to their level if they don’t respond. Move your face closer to their face if they still don’t respond. Stand in their way. Put your hands on their shoulders. The rule here is use your body language to show them that you are in charge.

Tone of voice – this is crucial. Speak calmly whenever possible. It’s OK to raise your voice too, but stay firm. Be aware that you get emotional too, and if you get sarcastic, angry, frustrated, afraid – whatever – you cannot afford to show it and be in charge fully. Do not use a sarcastic tone – this will inflame your child.

Other areas of establishing your authority

Enforcing the rules – you should have a set of clearly defined rules with consequences already. When the child breaks a rule, tell them clearly and directly: “what you are doing is unacceptable. Please do ...” Or “That is not OK, stop that now and do this...” or “This is unacceptable behavior, you will now be on restriction.”

Dealing with “why” – If your child wants to debate or pretend to have an intellectual discussion about why the rules are unfair, or why they should have a consequence, don’t fall for it – it is avoidance and an attempt by them to set the agenda, and therefore be in charge. Zip-it and clip-it: use these brain-dead expressions to shut this down: “Oh?” or “I see.” Or “That could be true.” Or “thanks for telling me how you’re thinking about that.” THEN give the consequence. Examples: child says “you’re being mean.” You say, “That could be true. You’re still in time-out.” Or child says “I was only a little late – can’t you cut me some slack?” “I see. Sorry, but you still are on restriction.”

Changes of subject – you set the agenda – always. Kids try to change the subject – you must insist on staying on topic. Do not allow them to ask questions when it is nothing but avoidance – you ask the questions. Do not allow them to change the topic or to set the rules. You MUST do that, and they MUST understand that they are not in the position of control.