

INVITATIONS FOR LEARNING

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Teachers report the most common behaviors children display during power struggles are:

- biting
- hitting, kicking, pushing
- whining
- tattling
- yelling
- not wanting to participate
- refusing (defiance)

Who is in Control Here? Power Struggles

How many times have you heard a child say to you, "You can't make me, you're not my MOM!" Sometimes you might even secretly be thinking, *I am so glad that I am not.*

A power struggle is an individual need for control or power. Sometimes a child will do anything to attain control/power. Even if that means creating "hurt" or "chaos".

When do Power Struggles occur most likely?

- mealtime
- clean up time
- nap time
- group time
- when sharing is requested
- arrival and departure

Notice the basic similarity in all of these is that the times are directed and/or decided by the adult. My observations of young children show that the more the child is in control of their schedule the fewer power struggles. We need to look at our daily routines and see how much of the day is "Teacher Decided" versus "Child Decided".

When children are allowed to make "real" choices about what happens and when it occurs during the day they develop a strong sense of self-control.

Think about how you feel when you are included in the decision making process. Being included in the process creates a feeling of belonging.

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Preventing Power Struggles:

- **Provide choices for children** - *make sure the environment is set up with activities they are interested in*
- **Allow children to make changes to experiences you provide** - *place props in child's reach and watch what he/she will do with them*
- **Flexible time boundaries** - *children need some control of how much time it will take to finish an experience*
- **State what you want children to do** - *avoid telling children what they can't do and focus on what they can do*
- **Avoid getting your "buttons" pushed** - *never take what children say or do personally, it is not about you it is about them*

Remember that children are always looking for power and/or control. It is our responsibility to provide lots of opportunity for them to attain it.