

M A R C H N E W S L E T T E R

FROM DANIEL HODGINS

"Do You Want A Spanking?"

Choices that I often hear that are not real choices:

- "Do you want to wash your hands for snack?"
- "Do you want to get ready for outside?"
- "Do you have to go to the bathroom?"
- "Do you want your friends at school to like you?"
- "Lets pick up so we can go outside, okay?"
- "Do you want me to tell your mother?"

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I was sitting in a restaurant enjoying a meal when a young couple with a toddler came in. Fortunately they chose to sit in the booth next to me. I thought not only am I going to enjoy my meal, but now will be entertained by the toddler. The toddler was placed in a high chair and the father immediately gave him a spoon to hold in one hand. He began to bang the spoon on his tray. Then he reached, with his empty hand, for another spoon but his father said, "You already have one spoon, that is enough." The toddler began to scream, because in his mind, he needed to fill the empty hand. The father asked, "Do you want a spanking?" The toddler said nothing but continued to scream.

Is that really a chose? If it is

I can't imagine any child answering, "Yes". It is essential that we offer young children choices. The choices we offer need to be real and ones we will accept the response to.

"Do you want to get your pajamas on now? It is time to go to bed," is another example. What if the child responds with, "I am going to watch David Letterman, but thanks for asking." Is this a real choice? What usually happens is the adult will then say, "I said get your pajamas on and go to bed." That is not what the adult stated. So the child makes a choice and the adult takes it away. It is important for young children to make choices. It develops decision making skills. Make sure the choices build rather than destroy confidence.

Strategies for Giving Choices:

- ***Avoid choices that are not real choices.*** For example, if you see a male child holding onto his penis, jumping up and down do not ask him, "Do you have to go to the bathroom?" If he has to choose between playing and going to the bathroom he will choose playing.
- ***Make sure the choices that you give are choices you will accept the response to.*** "Do you want to wash your hands, it is time for snack" What if the child says, "NO". You would have to accept that answer.
- ***Make sure the choices you give are clear and precise.*** For example. "Do you want to use a sponge or this paper towel to wipe up the milk on the table?"
- ***Never end a sentence with OKAY?*** For example, "Let's clean up this room to get ready to go outside, okay?" When you end a sentence with "okay" it means there is a choice.
- ***Make sure you give the number of choices that a young child is able to understand.*** On the average young children can only handle about four choices at a time. If there is more than four he/she might not be able to make the choice.
- ***Allow the child to come up with the choices.*** For example, "You both want that truck, what choices can you come up with that might solve this problem?"
- ***Remember choices are not made in "stone".*** If a child makes a choice and then changes his/her mind, it's okay...