



familyconcerncounseling

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Follow the Leader?

By Sarah Andrews, MS, MFTi #58849

Mom: "You need to do your chores now."

Child: "No." Sammy goes back to playing a game.

Mom: "I am not going to tell you again, you need to stop playing and pick up your dirty clothes and put your books away."

Child: Pretends to not hear.

Mom: "Sammy, stop playing and get your work done."

Child: Drops toys and runs away

Mom: (in a louder voice) "Sammy get back here right now and do your chores."

Have you ever experienced this? Ever wonder who the real leader is as a parent? Parenting a strong-willed child can be emotionally draining. Yelling, tantrums, and repeating phrases over and over can take a toll on parents' emotions, as well as the child's. You may have heard about the "terrible two's"—a time when a child learns to say and use the dreaded word "No". Children often yell, throw fits, and say "NO!" many times. This is such a key developmental time for a child as they learn to distinguish that they are separate from those around them, often also saying the word "Mine". Children begin to develop limits and boundaries which can help them in their relational skills for the rest of their lives. I may not want my child to say "No" and "Mine" when he is suppose to be sharing his toys with his friend/sibling or cleaning up his room instead of playing games. However, I pray and plead that my child will say "No" and "Mine" when he gets to his teen years and faces choices like sexuality and drugs.

So, how can we as parents avoid these power struggles? The first goal is to **remain CALM** as the parent. In order to help the child remain calm too and not escalate their behaviors, model calmness for them. Next, **provide a CHOICE** for your child instead of a direct command. Empower them to be a separate individual and have control over their decisions. For example, "Sammy I know you want to keep playing. You can take a break to finish your chores right now, or we can set the timer and play together for five more minutes then you can do your chores, which would you like to do?" Finally, you can help your strong-willed child **DEVELOP PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS** by asking good questions. Example: "Sammy, it seems you really want to keep playing your games, but I really need you to do your chores right now, how can we solve this?" Then, listen to your child for and coach them towards a win-win idea.



Remember: strong-willed children often grow up to be wonderful teens, who are leaders, self-motivated, and not easily swayed by peer pressure. It takes time and energy to direct their behaviors. but the pay off is worth it.

**"As far as it depends on you, live at peace with those around you."
Romans 12:18**

OUR STAFF

All of our staff are master's level clinicians, who are registered with the Board of Behavioral Sciences, and members of various professional associations. Our MFT Interns are supervised by a licensed Marriage and Family Therapy Supervisor*.

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SERVICES

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