

## Wee Builders (3 - 4 years): Diffusing Power Struggles with Young Children



Power struggles can be defined as a time when the adult and the child are not on the same page. Often power struggles occur when the child feels that their boundaries are being affected or violated, as a result, there's a behaviour that occurs through shouting, anger and non-compliance.

Experts suggest that the more we can do to give the child appropriate power the better. Just because you are giving the child power doesn't mean you're leaving the adult powerless- you're providing power within reasonable limits.

Top takeaways for eliminating power struggles:

### **Consider their Feelings and Emotions and Offer Support.**

Validate their feelings and emotions while giving them choice will help curb the power struggles overall.

### **Involve Children in the Process**

Children may feel that change is happening to them rather than with them. Provide options for the child to choose from- for example 2 different shirts for the child to choose from during the morning routine- either way they'll be wearing a shirt.

### **Bridge One Activity to the Next Activity**

For example, state to your child "your clothes are on, it looks like you're ready for breakfast now". This allows them to see the sequence between events and better understand what may happen next and lean into the routine.

### **Use Positive Reinforcement**

This will go a long way for children, the more you can say 'yes', the better. Save the phrase "no" for when there's a health and safety issue present so the "no" is taken seriously by the child.

### **Offer Turn-Taking.**

By offering to take turns, (for example, during lunchtime if the child does not want to use their utensils, offer to take a turn using the spoon to help the child eat one bite of lunch and then invite them to use the spoon to eat one bite) it makes the child feel special that as an adult you gave them a "turn" to do something. This is super impactful for children.

Experts recommends that when providing choices to children it's important to remember that we should avoid having high-stakes choices available. For example, stating that the child can either "wear the red shirt or no shirt at all", with a choice like this you risk the child wearing no shirt at all and that's not the ideal outcome we want, we want the child to wear any shirt. Instead, try offering the child the option of a red or blue shirt. Make sure the choices you provide are tangible, accessible, and ready.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2QJVZEa>