

THREE TERRIFIC TIPS
FOR GETTING YOUR
KIDS TO LISTEN

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Welcome! Thank you so much for being here to day.

You are my kind of parent—the proactive kind.

Today, with so much parent shaming, it can take a lot of bravery to show up and admit that you have something to learn.

We all have things to learn: Parenting is not innate: It is a skill that can be taught, learned and practiced.

Today I promise you will learn something that you can go home and practice with your kids so that you have one more tool in your toolbelt.



Problem: Not setting your kids up for success.

One of the reasons that our kids don't listen to us is that we do not set them up for success. By that I mean we do not a) see to their basic needs first and b) tell them what we expect of them and give them a chance to practice it.

Seeing to our kids basic needs means making sure that we are not asking them to listen to us (and by this we usually mean follow directions) when they are tired, hungry, cold or are at the end of their tether having had too much asked of them.

For clarifying and practicing expectations my favorite tool is...



Solution: Anticipation

ANTICIPATION.

What does it say? Anticipation

Why is anticipation so important? Well, your children are no different from you: Don't you like knowing what is going on? Don't you like knowing what's the plan for the day? If your spouse came in the house and announced out of nowhere, "Hon, get in the car. We're eating at Grandma's tonight," wouldn't you be resistant? Feel a little put out that you weren't informed ahead of time (much less asked whether you wanted to do that)?!

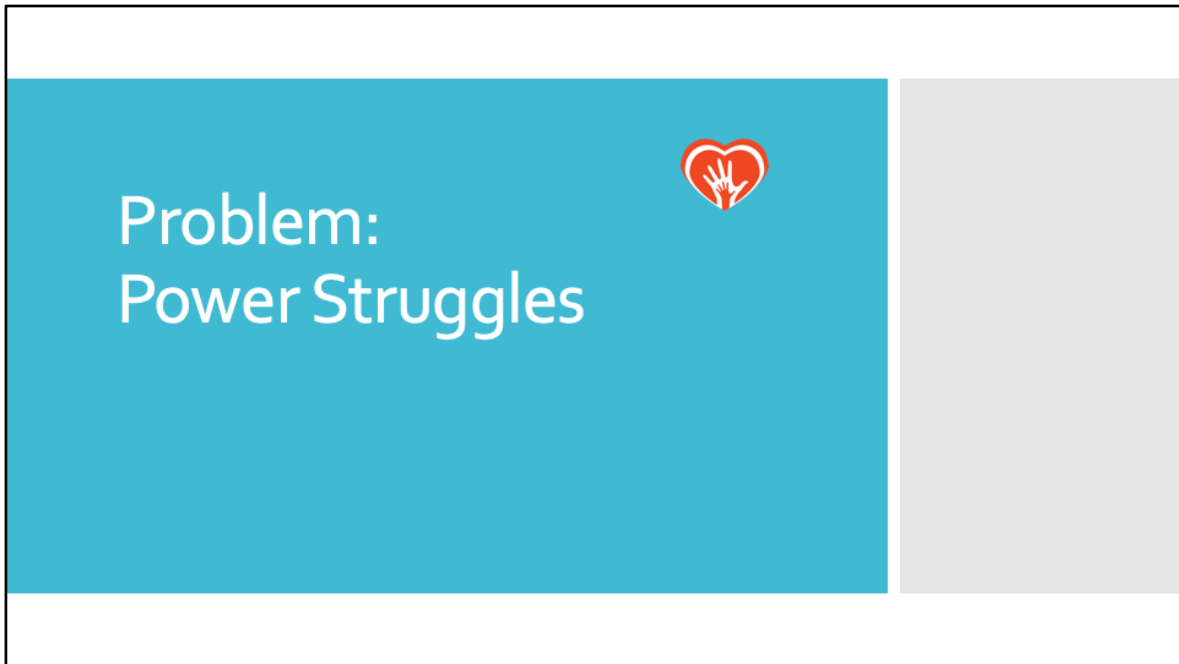
Well, your kids aren't any different. They like know what the plan is. What is going to happen first and then second and then last AND what is expected of them in each situation.

So, even if it is the same thing as happened last night after dinner, because they are kids and are learning, you are going to ANTICIPATE the expectations: Kids, you'll have around 20 minutes to play, and when the timer goes off, it is clean up time. I expect you to put down your toys—even if you are in the middle of things—and start putting

them away. Then it will be time to brush your teeth.

Then you ask your kids to tell you--even demonstrate--what it is going to look like when the timer goes off (When the timer goes off, what will I see?--kids putting their toys away!)

Anticipation also works for future events like going to visit Grandma at Thanksgiving. Let your kids know what it will be like (crowded? noisy? hot? a long wait for dinner? new people to meet?). Help them BRAINSTORM what they can do if they are feeling overwhelmed (ask a parent for a hug? bring some books to look at quietly in the corner?).

The slide features a teal background on the left and a light gray background on the right. The text 'Problem: Power Struggles' is written in white on the teal background. A red heart icon with a white hand inside is positioned to the right of the text.

Problem: Power Struggles

The next reason our kids don't listen to us is that (just like us!) they want to feel in control. They want to feel they have personal power. Deliberately not hearing you is very powerful. (It sure gets a reaction from you, doesn't it?)

While we want to be clear about our expectations and have clear limits, we want to do our best not to back our children into a corner. When we shut our kids down too soon without considering their point of view, we are setting ourselves up for a **POWER STRUGGLE**. It is up to not to fight back.

How do we disengage from a power struggle AND still hold clear limits? ...

Solution: Leaving an Exit Open



You LEAVE AN EXIT OPEN.

In other words, you give your child SOMETHING they can have power over by offering them a choice:

Are you going to eat your peas with a spoon or a fork?

Are you going to eat six peas or 16 peas?

Are those peas little green bombs that are going to explode in your mouth as soon as you eat them or are they buggers left in the refrigerator by a giant banana slug?

Notice how there is no question about whether or not peas are going to be eaten, but in each case the child has something to decide--power over her next action.

Particularly with the last example, the parent has also ENGAGED THE CHILD'S IMMAGINATION. That's very powerful. As soon as a child is considering whether she is eating bombs or buggers, her brain is no longer in the place of resistance. Instead of being fixated on the idea of NO, I will NOT eat PEAS. Her brain is now considering which would be more delightfully horrifying (bombs or buggers). The more dramatic her parent is in presenting the choices, the more willing she will be to imagine the

implications of each choice.

Let's practice the skills of 1) offering choice and 2) engaging our kids' imaginations

Example 1:



It is time to pick up and
go brush teeth...

[Pair parents up to brainstorm solutions.]

Possible answers:

- Are you going to start the teeth brushing with me finishing OR am I going to start with you doing the final polish?
- Am I brushing shark teeth tonight or crocodile teeth?
- Am I brushing your teeth with frosting or with ketchup tonight? (make show of miming holding the two imaginary bottles up)

Example 2:




You need to get shoes
on and out to the car...

[Pair parents up to brainstorm solutions.]

Possible answers:

- Are you wearing sneakers or Mary Janes today?
- Are you putting on your left shoe or your right shoe first?
- Are you a giraffe wearing galoshes or a pig wearing high heels today?

Example 3: 

It is time to practice piano...

[Pair parents up to brainstorm solutions.]

Possible answers:

- Are you going to start at the end of the piece and work backwards or at the beginning of the piece and work forwards?
- Are you going to play like a robot or like a 103 year old Granny?
- Are you going to practice scales in the style of Bach or Brahms?

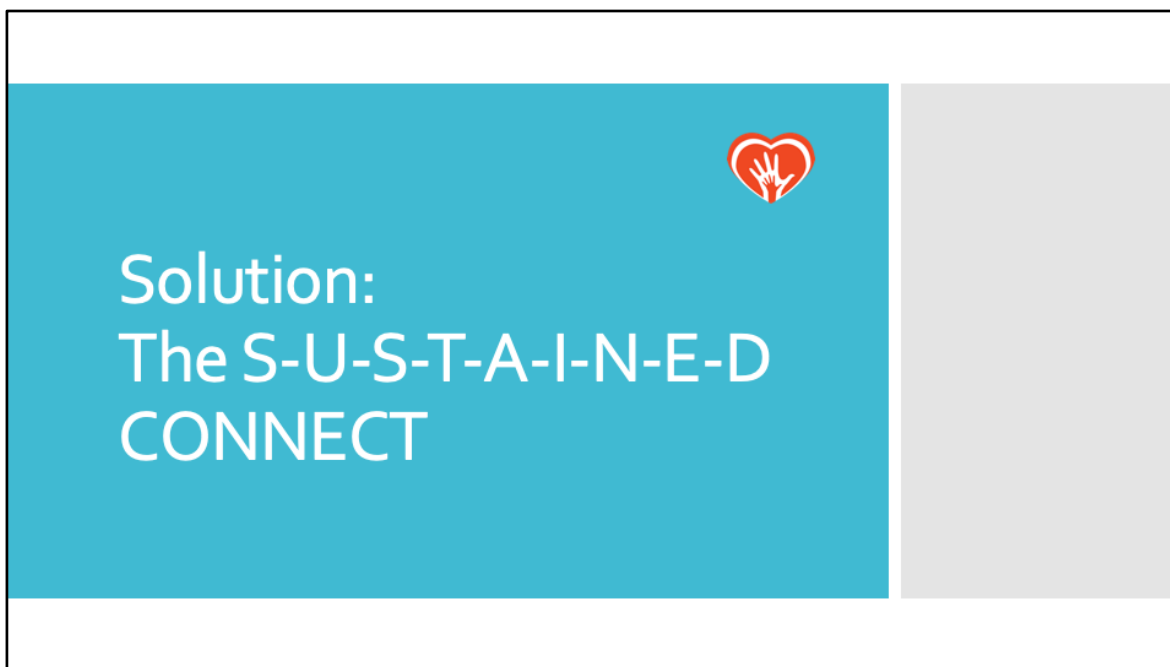
Problem:
The kids STILL aren't
moving into action

Now, let's say that you have done everything right as a parent.

You set your kids up for success by helping them ANTICIPATE what was expected of them and when they were ready to argue you ENGAGED THEIR IMAGINATION by LEAVING AT EXIT OPEN.

What if they STILL won't listen?

That's when I use a technique I call...



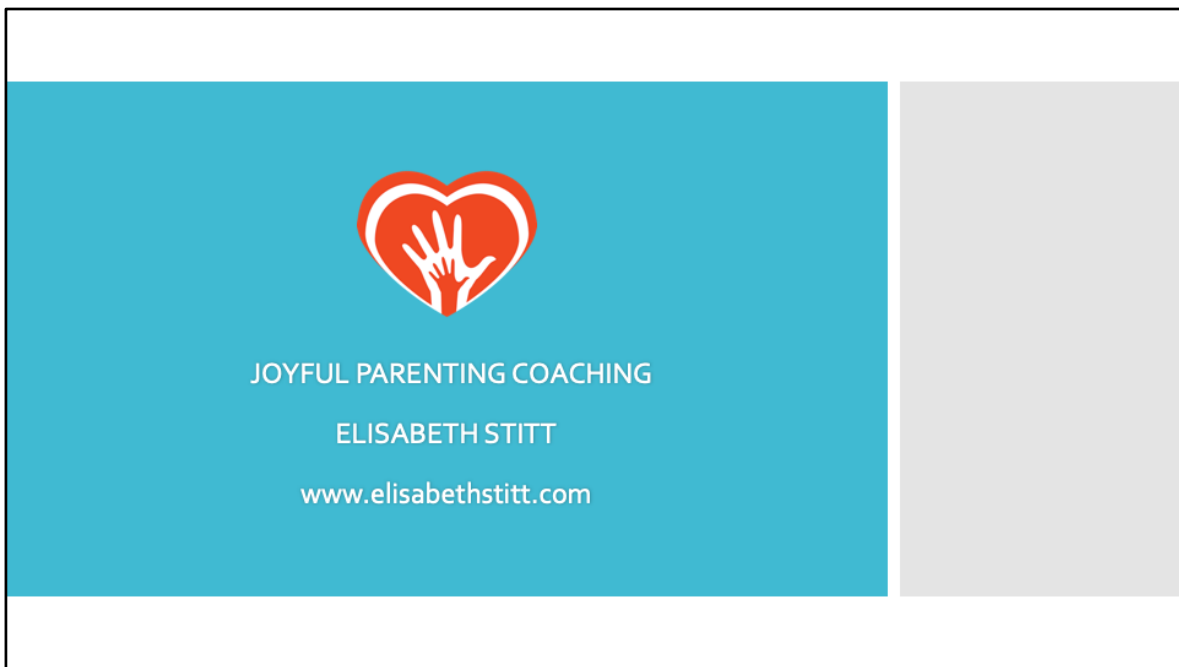
the S-U-S-T-A-I-N-E-D Connect.

Now--when they still aren't transitioning to cleaning up--you go to them and quietly kneel down beside them. You gently put your hand over whatever they are focusing on (block, puzzle piece, book, ipad) and look at them with ALL THE LOVE IN THE WORLD until they stop what they are doing and they start cleaning up.

What? That's it? Just look at them?

Yep. That's the trick. As long as every cell in your body is LOVINGLY communicating the idea that a) I know you know what is expected of you in this situation and b) I know it is hard to stop playing and nonetheless [just like last night and the night before!!], it is time to clean up, EVENTUALLY [maybe after you have counted to 100 as you gaze at them benignly], they will give up the fight and move towards cleaning up.

As soon as their body shifts away from resistance, you cheerfully distract them (perhaps by asking do they know how much the African Swallow can carry and could it carry a coconut).



That's it!

Three simple but very powerful tips for getting your kids to listen to you:

Anticipation

Leaving an Exit Open

The Sustained Connect

Give them a try and let me know how it goes by emailing me at eli