Dealing With Power Struggles

Power is a major issue between children and adults. While still very young, some kids realize they don’t have much control over anything. A toddler unconsciously thinks, “I’m the smallest. They tell me what to do, and I don’t get to make decisions. I need to find a way to get some control.” Then, winning the power struggle becomes all-important — more important than making good decisions.

When we offer kids a choice instead of making a demand, no power struggle ever begins. When we make a demand, we own the wise choice, leaving the child with only one way to win the power struggle — by making a foolish choice. Given a range of choices, a child has endless opportunities to choose wisely.

How to Destroy the Teaching Value of a Logical Consequence

1. Say, “This will teach you a good lesson.”
2. Display anger or disgust
3. Explain the value of the consequence
4. Moralize or threaten
5. Talk too much
6. Feel sorry and “give in”
7. Contrive a consequence for the purpose of “getting even”

Rules for Giving Choices

1. Always be sure to select choices that you like. Never provide one you like and one you don’t, because the child seems to have a sixth sense in selecting the one you don’t like.
2. Never give a choice unless you are willing to allow the child to experience the consequence of that choice.
3. Never give choices when the child is in danger.
4. Never give choices unless you are willing to make the choice for the child in the event he/she does not choose within ten seconds.
5. Your delivery is important. Try to start your sentence with:
   • You’re welcome to _ or _.
   • Feel free to _ or _.
   • Would you rather _ or _.
   • What would be best for you _ or _?
Consequences With Empathy

Children learn from their mistakes when:

1. They experience the consequences of their mistakes, and
2. Adults in their environment provide empathy.

Bad choices have natural consequences. If David fails to wear a coat, he gets cold. If Jan misses the school bus, she stays home with an unexcused absence for the day.

Adults are tempted to scold and reprimand, but may be surprised to learn that children actually learn best from consequences when adults empathize:

• "I'm so sorry you're cold, David."
• "What a bummer that you missed an after-school party on the day you were absent, Jan."

If adults reprimand them, children may transform sorrow over their choices into anger with the adult — and the lesson may be lost.

If adults express sorrow, children have a significant learning opportunity. David may think, "Tomorrow I'll wear my coat." Jan may decide, "I'll get up fifteen minutes earlier tomorrow."

Consequences + Empathy = Learning

OUR FIELD OF AWARENESS

Field of Awareness Determines How We Think
How We Think Determines Our Motivation
Our Motivation Affects Our Behavior
Fact-Filtering Perception is Based on Our Sphere of Influence

OUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

We All Have a World View, Determined by:
Early Initial Experiences
Genetic and Biological Factors
Cultural Values

These Affect Our Fact-Filtering Perception

World View + Perception = Interpretation of Experiences

Interpretation of Experience Determines Behavior

Reaction to Behavior
(the only point at which teachers can enter the cycle)
Guiding Students to Solve Their Own Problems

Step 1. Empathy “How sad.” “I’ll bet that makes you unhappy.”
Step 2. Send the “Power Message” “What do you think you’re going to do?”
   “I’d like to hear your ideas.”
Step 3. Offer Choices “Would you like to hear what other kids have tried?”
   At this point, offer a variety of choices that range from bad to good. It’s usually best to start out with the poor choices.
   Each time a choice is offered, go on to step four, forcing the student to state the consequence in his or her own words. This means that you will be going back and forth between steps three and four.
Step 4. Have the student state the consequences “And how will that work?”
Step 5. Give permission for the student to either solve the problem or not solve the problem “Good luck. I hope it works out.”
   Have no fear. If the student is fortunate enough to make a poor choice, he/she may have a double learning lesson.

Using Negative Assertion

It is difficult for a student to continue a power struggle when the teacher won’t play his or her game. Negative assertion is a tool used to diffuse the power play.

TEACHER: (Calmly) I’m going to change your assigned seat, Connie. There’s too much visiting going on. I can’t teach with the distraction.
CONNIE: Geeze! You can’t even teach with little distractions! If you understood, it wouldn’t bother you.
TEACHER: There’s probably a lot of truth to that. Connie, I want you to sit in this seat right here.
CONNIE: That’s not fair!
TEACHER: That’s a real possibility, Connie.

Using Negative Assertion and Broken Record

Add the following to the above after the first two comments by the teacher and Connie:

TEACHER: I can understand how you might feel that way, and I expect you to move to this seat.
CONNIE: That’s not fair!
TEACHER: I can understand how you might feel that way, and I expect you to move to this seat.
CONNIE: But you should be making the other kids move instead!
TEACHER: I can understand how you might feel that way, and I expect you to move to this seat.
CONNIE: Oh, all right! What’s the big deal anyway?
Gaining Control By Giving Some Away

Magically, giving a child choices and ownership of his or her decisions actually gives an adult more control. Why? Because a child who has no control over his life is a child who will spend nearly 100 percent of his time trying to get it. These are the kids who work to manipulate teachers and the system as well.

A child with some control over his or her life will spend little time trying to gain more. That’s why this paradox is true:

Teachers gain control by giving some of it away!

Thinking Words and Fighting Words

In many classrooms, setting limits means issuing commands. Love and Logic teachers ask questions and offer choices instead, which places the responsibility for decision-making on the students.

Love and Logic schools help kids do exactly what we want them to do: think — as much as possible. When children choose an option, they do the thinking. This makes the choice stick with them. Note the difference between fighting and thinking words in the examples that follow. Say them out loud; practice them at home or with fellow teachers to hear what your students will hear.

Fighting Words: You’re going to have to clean this desk or I’m not letting you go to recess.
Thinking Words: I’ll be happy to let you go to recess, just as soon as that desk is cleaned.

Fighting Words: I’m not letting you go out for sports with grades like that.
Thinking Words: Feel free to stay in sports as long as your grades are okay.

Fighting Words: I smell alcohol. You’re not driving the car from now on!
Thinking Words: The car is available to you whenever I don’t have to worry about alcohol.
Choices vs. Threats

Threats work for some kids, but for many they fail. Why? When someone threatens Sandy, the first thing Sandy thinks is, “She can’t make me do that.” Her second thought is, “But maybe she can.” An internal dialogue begins. “No, she can’t.” “Yes, she can.” Soon the dialogue becomes an internal argument. Sandy gets angry and resentful. She becomes either passive-aggressive or passive-resistive.

If she becomes passive-aggressive, she hurts you back, sometimes so subtly, you don’t even know it’s revenge. When her teacher refuses to answer Sandy’s tenth unnecessary question about an assignment she was made to do, Sandy says, “My mom says good teachers make sure a kid knows what she’s doing before doing an assignment.” Or Sandy “accidentally” breaks one of her grandmother’s dishes to get back at Granma for threats made to get Sandy to wash them.

If Sandy responds to threats in a passive-resistive way, she resists without letting you know she’s resisting. When Sandy’s teacher tells her to come into the classroom, her body may move in low gear.

At home she might wash the dishes but leave the sink full of dirty water and the counters unwashed.

These kids are saying, “You might be able to make me do it, but you can’t make me do it your way.”

This cycle is easily avoided by offering choices instead of making demands.

Four Steps to Responsibility

1. Give a student the chance to act responsibly. Let a student decide, for example, whether or not to bring his homework assignment in on time.

2. Hope and pray the student makes a mistake. This provides opportunities for the student to have a “real world” learning experience. If the student does not bring the homework assignment in on time, you can empathize, “I’m sorry you didn’t get it here on time.” But you don’t offer any other alternatives. Allow the student to suffer the consequences.

3. Stand back and allow consequences, accompanied by liberal doses of empathy, to do the teaching. Students need to learn that their mistakes hurt them. Empathy or sorrow reduces the chance that the student will spend time thinking about anything but his/her own life and decisions instead of focusing on anger or other emotional reactions to the adult.

4. Give the same task again. This sends the message that you believe he or she is wise enough to learn from the mistake that was made.
Punishment vs. Discipline

When a child misbehaves, an adult can decide to either punish or discipline. The purposes of these two actions are different and so they produce different results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punishment</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong> Punish the child's past behavior.</td>
<td>Shape the child's future decision.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Techniques:</strong> Isolation, time-out, withdrawal</td>
<td>Isolation, time-out, withdrawal</td>
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<td>of privilege.</td>
<td>of privilege.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emotions:</strong> Tension, frustration, rage,</td>
<td>Disappointment, love and concern.</td>
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<tr>
<td>raised voices.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Results:</strong> Child feels angry, out of control;</td>
<td>Child feels adult's disappointment, concern;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feels loss of self-esteem; focuses on revenge,</td>
<td>can focus on second-chance opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regaining control.</td>
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We punish a child for past choices; we discipline a child to shape future ones. Whereas punishment comes out of frustration and rage; discipline comes from love and concern. Although both actions may use similar techniques — isolation, time-out, or withdrawal of a privilege — the emotional atmosphere of the two is different. The results? Find out for yourself. We find that discipline is the more effective choice every time.

Styles of Teaching

Helicopters

**What they do:** Rotate their lives around students. Do students' thinking and work for them. Whirl, whine, and complain.

**What they say:** "Why can't you remember your homework?" "I'll think through that problem for you."

**Their hidden message:** You are helpless. You are unable to handle the hurdles in your life, so I have to rescue you.

Drill Sergeants

**What they do:** Bark out orders and call out their list. Turn up the volume and threaten. Command their troops to follow their instructions.

**What they say:** "Don't talk that way in my classroom." "Don't leave without your pass." "When will you learn to hand in work on time?"

**Their hidden message:** I know better than you what's good for you. You can't think for yourself. Follow my orders and you'll be fine.
Consultants

What they do: Sympathize with the situation. Listen and provide choices. Leave the decision to the person with the problem.

What they say: “I’m sorry you forgot your homework.” “Are you planning to stay in class today?” “I argue at 12:15 and 3:15 daily __, which works for you?”

Their hidden message: “I know you are strong and wise enough to handle the rough sections of your life.” “I care about you and I’m here to encourage you while you travel this path.”

Affordable Price Tags

It’s important for children to learn to make wise choices while they are young, when their mistakes have smaller price tags. If an adult loans a grade-school child money for rollerblades, the adult can create a real loan situation like “First National Bank,” drawing up a promissory note with a payment due date and a repossession clause.

If the child misses the payment due date, the adult becomes the owner of a pair of rollerblades, and the child learns a lesson in financial responsibility — while the price is still affordable. Learning that lesson with a $100 set of wheels at age ten may save that child from having to learn that lesson over a $15,000 set of wheels later on.

A Core of Beliefs

Empowering beliefs are beliefs based on developing an internalized sense of control in kids, rather than trying to control them with rewards and punishments.

Many school staffs want children to:
1. Be responsible for owning and solving their own problems, with some guidance.
2. Do more thinking than adults.
3. Face logical consequences instead of punishment, whenever possible.
4. Learn to make a connection between their infraction and the action taken — a logical consequence.
5. Learn to make decisions and then live with the consequences of those decisions.
6. Be able to take some control over their lives and yet have the school retain some control.
7. See adults as helpers, rather than judges who dole out punishment.
8. Learn in their school that problems are an opportunity for personal growth.
When Consequences Don't Work

Ask Yourself:

1. Did I implement the consequence with compassion? If not, the student focused on my emotions rather than on his/her problem.
2. Was I in the emotional state when I implemented the consequence? If so, the student focused on my emotions instead of the problem.
3. Did I deliver the consequence in a questioning manner? “Where are you going to eat now that you can’t use the cafeteria?”
4. Did I try to reason with the student while he/she was still in the emotional state? This usually results in a power struggle.
5. Did I tie the time and location of the violation to the consequence? The consequence has to be reasonable in the mind of the student; otherwise, he/she will see it as retaliation.
6. Did I use the consequence to get even with the student? We cannot hide our intentions. Trying to get even will cause resentment. As a result, the consequence will lose its value.
7. Did I use a consequence when a disciplinary intervention would have solved the problem instead? Save consequences for the big lessons children need. Use quick and easy classroom interventions to break the emotional spell whenever you can.
8. Did my attitude or behavior indicate that I was trying to teach the student a lesson? We can’t hide our attitudes from students. If they think we’re implementing consequences to teach them lessons, they spend their time trying to show us that it won’t work.
9. Did I implement the consequence immediately? Delayed consequences are usually much more effective than immediate ones. Take your time, talk it over with friends. Deliver consequences when both you and the student are in the thinking state.
10. Did I tell the student in advance what the consequence would be? Students either decide the consequence is worth it or act out to see if the teacher means what he/she says.

Setting Limits

Most people set limits on themselves. When they are unable to, but need to, limits must be set by others. To avoid limit-setting turning into a control battle, we can always give choices and allow consequences.

To insure that limits you are setting are effective, make certain: The limit is definitely needed. Otherwise, why set it? Consequences are possible. Enforcement of the consequences will change the behavior.

The most common mistakes teachers make are setting limits that: They cannot enforce. Do not consider consequences in advance. Are stated as demands. Have not been approved by the building administrator.

Remember to calmly state the limit in the form of an enforceable statement: “I’ll accept all papers that are prepared in the correct form.”
Better Ways to Say “No”

The word “no” triggers resistance more easily than any other word in the English language. It’s a student’s call to arms. Kids hear it far too often — so often that it’s the first word many kids learn to say.

When they hear “no,” they often ignore it. Having heard it so much, they come to think it means “maybe.” Other times they think it really means “yes.” A good rule for “no” is to use it as seldom as possible. When you do use it, make sure you mean business. At other times, you can make a statement positively and still deny a request. You are saying “yes” instead of “no,” but you are still in control. The behavior you want can be established without triggering resistance. Here is an example:

“No” Statement: “No, you may not watch television until the dishes are done.”

“Yes” Statement: “Yes, you may watch television as soon as the dishes are done.

What a difference a turn of the phrase can make in how a child learns and responds!

The Two Basic Philosophies of Discipline

The Systems Approach:

Rules are developed and established.
Staff is expected to take action whenever a rule is violated.
Discipline is based on specific punishments for given infractions.
Staff is encouraged to impose uniform punishment, regardless of comfort level with specific elements of the system.
Consistency is encouraged by adhering to predetermined rules and punishments, administered equally to all, with no individual consideration of differences.

The Principles Approach:

Rules are developed and established.
Staff is expected to take action whenever a rule is violated.
Discipline is based on an accepted set of principles.
Staff is encouraged to apply whatever discipline is necessary, on an individual basis, based on established principles.
Consistency is encouraged by adhering To a predetermined set of values in administering consequences with regard for Individual circumstances.
Bloom's Taxonomy

**Knowledge:** Recalling or recognizing information as it was learned.

**Comprehension:** Understanding the material communicated without relating it to anything else.

**Application:** Using this information to solve a problem with a single correct answer.

**Analysis:** Breaking information down into its component parts.

**Synthesis:** Creating something new from parts not previously related.

**Evaluation:** Making judgments, putting opinions in order, and applying standards.

There is ample evidence that how we ask a question and the level of question asked (relative to the taxonomy) can predict how much mental energy the listener will exert in response.

**How we ask a question + Level of question asked = Amount of mental energy exerted**

Guidelines for Student/Teacher Interactions

1. **Give messages of unconditional respect by interacting with kids as we would well-respected adults.** Personally, I can think of very few instances within the school situation where kids should not be afforded dignity, even in situations of misbehavior.

2. **Be mindful of the role of nonverbal language.** Nonverbal aspects of language carry the most meaning. An impatient facial expression is often remembered for a lifetime.

3. **Model self-acceptance.** One of the best ways for kids to accept their limitations and recognize that they have strengths is to see their teachers doing the same.

4. **Concentrate on the development of trust.** Components of trust when dealing with kids include having no ulterior motives, being consistent, and acknowledging mutual experiences — the same thing that applies to our relationships with adults.

5. **Place emphasis on individual uniqueness rather than on some hierarchy within the class.** Most people respond positively to those who treat them as respected individuals.

6. **Give credibility to kids' feelings.** Don't discount their emotions by such phrases as "You don't really feel that way, do you?" Of course, they do! This is not to say that we must condone all feelings, but to discount them as invalid is to attack the kid's very inner being.

7. **Keep in mind that our self-worth is wrapped in our field of awareness.** Teachers with the most "power" can change kids' fields of awareness and still allow the kids' perception to change on a volitional basis.

8. **Remember that almost all behavior has a positive purpose.** Most kids misbehave to hurt back or hide weakness. If we can address these issues rather than only the overt behavior, we are further ahead in the long run.
9. **Attempt to understand a student’s mind-set and world view.** Be cautious about seeing kids’ behavior through only your own colored glasses. The key to relationship building is to understand another’s point of view. Again, this is not to condone a misperception or misbehavior, only to understand it so that effective action is possible.

10. **Make kids’ learning tasks manageable and put components of success within their grasp.** This may be because of the students’ ability or effort, but, nevertheless, make success available to them, regardless of the abilities or efforts of others in the classroom.

### Guidelines for Avoiding Control Battles

1. Keep in mind that your students’ feelings of success are a primary component of achievement. Also, these feelings of success do not have much relationship with actual performance unless kids are engaged in competitive achievement. When achievement is defined in terms of approximation of a goal rather than in a hierarchy compared to peers, positive connotations are present.

2. Make conscious attempts to avoid the Cycle of Defiance by giving kids alternatives, using questions, and speaking to them in the language of respect. If you find yourself in this cycle with a kid, you may need to initiate a unilateral “cease fire.”

3. Follow the pattern of sustained, continuous achievement, which states that the student is responsible for his/her own progress, with aspirations in advance of current achievement, yet attainable through effort and practice.

4. Allow as much self-regulated learning as possible. Give students control of the learning elements within appropriate parameters that are, ideally, set by mutual agreement between students and teacher. There is an accountability element, and students at some point are responsible for demonstrating skill mastery.

5. Value judgments about a student’s behavior or work can be made; however, generate these from the student, not from the teacher. Normally, this can be accomplished with such questions as, “What did you think of your work on that project?”

6. The ideas of “fairness” and “equity” are identified as meeting individual needs, not treating everyone the same.
Guidelines for Utilizing Consequences in the Classroom

1. Combine consequences with empathy rather than with pity, blame, judgment, or anger.

2. Allow students to own their own problems. The teacher can guide a student in solving a problem but should never let the kid’s problem become hers/his. When we see others highly involved in solving our problem, our tendency is to let them.

3. Hurting and struggling are part of gaining wisdom. However, there is a difference between making kids hurt and allowing them to hurt. When kids are allowed to experience the consequences of their own behavior, their "inside pain" forces them to make a decision about that behavior.

4. Reduce any opportunity for a student to transfer any of his/her hurt to the teacher after making a mistake. Too often adults, with high emotion overlay (e.g., anger, sarcasm, frustration), allow kids to focus on the adult's emotions rather than on their behavior.

5. Focus on effort as an attribute of success rather than luck, preferential treatment by a teacher, or other external loci of control issues.

6. Reduce “toxic” rewards. Be cautious about orienting kids toward working for grades or making grades a measure of the student’s worth.

7. Measure success on the basis of approximation to an individual goal or objective standard rather than to relative rank with other students in the class.

8. Maintain consistency. Utilization of the Key Principles of Love and Logic significantly reduces the stress that interferes with consistency.