

Behaviour Tips

Offering Choice

Children's behaviour can often be improved when offered the right to choose.

Offering choice can help avoid power struggles or tantrums/melt downs.

When can you offer choice?

Offering choice is not always appropriate, but there are ways to add a choice to many situations. Try adding offering choice during some non-preferred tasks or activities.

For example:

Eating dinner before dessert is not a choice BUT

- Do you want your sandwich cut in half, or quarters?
- Do you want to use the red plate, or blue plate?

Bed time is not a choice BUT

- Do you want to wear your plane pajamas, or your puppy pajamas to bed?
- Do you want to read this book, or that book?

Getting dressed is not a choice BUT

- Do you want to put your shirt on first, or your pants?
- Do you want to wear your red shirt, or your blue shirt?

Taking a medication is not a choice BUT

- Do you want to take your pill with a little juice, or water?
- Do you want to use the Cars cup, or the Batman cup?
- Do you want to read a book, or watch a movie after?

Leaving somewhere is not a choice BUT

- Do you want to walk to the car like a bear, or pretend to fly like a bird?
- Do you want to sing a song, or listen to music in the car?

Brushing teeth and brushing hair are not a choice BUT

- Which would you like to do first?
- Mint toothpaste or bubblegum flavour?

Remember: Try not to offer too many choices at once, keep the choice between 2 or 3 items, and try to have the item, or pictures of the items available to show your child, if necessary.

Try to avoid asking "What do you want?"

- Your child may choose something that isn't an option.
- Your child may not understand the options, or may not have the language to respond, you may need to prompt them with the words "Do you want red, or green?" and show them their options.