



'No' is Not a Four-Letter Word

Kids need to know their parents are able to say "no" and mean it. However, Kids rarely thank us for having the strength to set limits for them. Instead, they may pout, stomp around, run to their rooms, whine or talk back. This often leaves the adult angry and confused.

Why are kids so testy when we are doing what's best for them? Kids who do not have external controls often misbehave as a way of getting us to provide enough control for them to feel confident about their place in the world. Kids need to test limits to make sure that the limits are firm. Some kids use anger, some use guilt, some are sneaky, while some prefer to use forgetting to test our resolve when we say "no".

It helps to remember that kids hear the word "no" far too often. "No" is a fighting word. Kids may wage war against "no" in a subtle way. They try to get the parent to do all the thinking while they stand back and judge the parent. Their opening ploy is often, "Why?" "Why can't I?" "Why do I have to?"

Parents who are busy reasoning with kids have neither time nor energy to win battles. Caring parents feel guilty about saying "no" so often and are soon hooked into doing lots of thinking and explaining. All the youngster has to do now is to interrupt the parent's explanations from time to time with, "*But Dad, it's just not fair. You just don't understand.*" Soon the parent is worn down and gives in. "*All right! Take it! But this is the last time.*"

You can turn the tables on children, forcing them to do most of the thinking. State your decision without saying "no". Then, whatever the youngster says, simply agree that it is probably true and repeat your original decision. This is called Negative Assertion. Here's how it can work in practice:

Teen: *I need to use the car to go skiing.*

Dad: *Feel free to use it as soon as your gasoline bill is paid up.*

Teen: *But, Dad. I promised my friends.*

Dad: *I'm sure that's true ... and feel free to use it as soon as your bill is paid.*

Teen: *Yeah, but then I won't have money for the lift ticket.*



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Dad: *I bet that's true, too ... and feel free to use it as soon as your bill is paid.*

Teen: *Geez! Money is everything to you.*

Dad: *That could be true, too... and...*

Teen: *Yeah, I know. Don't say it again!*

Tip of the day

Remember, "NO" is a fighting word.
State your decisions without saying "no".

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For more information, contact the Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE (in Washington State)

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