

5 steps to taking back your power

It's time to start a revolution in America. Bit by bit, day by day, parents are slowly giving away their power. To whom you ask? To their children! There seems to be an epidemic of kids and teens running their households and parents are left with their hands in the hair, shrugging and wondering, "Where did I go wrong? How did this happen? Or "Why don't my kids respect me?"

Step 1: Ask Yourself, "Have I given away my power?"

Some parents may not be aware of how they've given away their power. It happens over time and it can be such a slow and subtle process, (and kids are so darn clever) that many parents don't realize it, until it's too late. Here are some signs you've given (or are giving away) away your power:

- When you ask your kids to do something, they frequently say, "No because..." or "First I'm going to..." or "I can't because..."
- Your kids throw tantrums or get furious if you won't take them where they want to go, buy them what they want, or help them with something.
- You often find yourself threatening and warning over and over again until you're so frustrated you lose your temper.
- Your kids make decisions about what they'll attend and not attend, when they'll go to bed, or when they'll turn off the t.v. or computer at night.
- Your kids ignore or laugh at your rules – even if you say there's a curfew or a bedtime, it's not really enforced and the kids know it.
- You often feel frustrated at the lack of respect you get from your kids and feel like, "My kids do what they want to do and don't ever listen to me."

Step 2: Reflect on "How did this happen?"

Some of the current popular philosophies of raising and educating children are disastrous for our families. We allow the child too much freedom and put the child in control. We are encouraging our children to be free and outspoken, to be empowered. But we are not helping them build their character. We are not teaching them enough about limits and discipline, about empathy and respect. Someone once told us, it's good to give your child choices, but we've taken that mentality and gone to an extreme.

Step 3: Redistribute the power appropriately (i.e., fill up your water gun!)

There are small things parents do every day that allow their children/teens to have power. **Quiz question 1:** If you ask your teen to take out the dog and he says, "In a minute, I'm busy" you have two choices: One: You respond by saying, "I said take the dog out now please." Two: You sigh with frustration, accept his response and walk out of the room. Which one maintains your power and authority as the parent?

Keep your water gun filled. Imagine parenting as a big water gun fight. Every time you give away your power to your children, you're giving them water from your water gun. If this happens enough, you will have an empty water gun. Then guess what happens when you come face to face with your child in the living room with your water guns raised, your child looks at your empty water gun and laughs saying, "What are you going to do?" You don't have any ammo left.

- Many parents argue too much. They go on explaining the same thing dozens of times. If you have said something two times, then that's enough. After the second time, you should ACT and not TALK.
- Follow through: If you say, "If I find your shoes in the living room again, I'm going to donate them to Goodwill", donate them to Goodwill if you find them again! Once your children know that you will do as you say, then you won't have to do it. They will respect your word!
- Too many choices! Yes it's good to give kids choices. But you shouldn't be asking them, "Do you want to go to bed now?" "Do you want to go to church today?" If it's something you want your kids to do, make it a statement, "Time for bed." "We leave for church in 10 minutes."

Step 4: Maintain the new power structure and BE CONSISTENT!

- Follow through with consequences: If you ground your child for a week from his phone, don't let him have it back in two days because he's harassing you for it. If you put your child in time out for 4 minutes, and she giggles and runs away in 2 minutes, bring her back again. See punishments through!
- Keep it simple. Don't try to focus on too many behaviors and issues because it will overwhelm you and you won't end up following through on anything. Choose the top 3-5 behaviors you struggle with, and try your best to correct and discipline those behaviors every single time.

- Keep looking out for sneaky power suckers – small things like kids ignoring you when you make small requests, kids refusing to cooperate, kids telling you what they are willing to do...small things eventually add up to filling up their water guns and depleting yours.

Step 5: Watch out for regression to the "old ways"

Many parents enthusiastically embrace new parenting strategies and do a great job...for about 1-2 days. Then reality hits....long days at work, tired parents, smart kids...and parents lose their resolve and get sucked into the bad habits again.

- Find an accountability partner – whether it's your spouse, your parent, your best friend...You need someone who will ask you DAILY – "How are you doing with Billy? Are you still following through? Are you still being consistent? Are you correcting his behavior every time he misbehaves?"
- Another idea is to keep a parenting log and at the end of the day, take 5 minutes to write a summary of the day. Example: "Sent Suzy to time out twice for noncompliance but she was great the rest of the day. I verbally corrected Tommy a few times for disrespect and enforced grounding from t.v. which was given to him yesterday, etc."
- Finally, remember these things aren't to give your ego a boost and wear your kids down. Kids NEED and WANT boundaries and limits. It makes them feel safe, secure, and loved. So know that what you're doing isn't just going to make you feel good, it will ultimately make them feel good too!

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