

# Better Parenting: Never Argue With Your Kids!

By Sonia Spackman MA, MFT

Arguing grows out of different interests. Arguing is a power struggle, a contest of wills.

**So why do you do it?** You got into a wrong way of communicating your wants. You're trying to get your child to agree with what you want. You think you need to explain your decisions to your child.

**Why do your kids do it?** They are interested in what they want. They want to point out the mistakes in your reasons. To them it is not about the issue, it's about getting what they want.

**When does it go bad?** After ONE minute, since it is a contest of wills. When you are not the one asking the "why" question. There is never a good reason for parents to argue with their kids! NEVER. DON'T DO IT!

**What makes you do it then?** Because you believe your kids should understand your reasons. You believe you should explain your reasons. You believe when your kids see your reasoning they will instantly agree and be happy about it.

**What should you do instead?**

#1 Set Limits: Give your reasons, do not argue. Say: "Here are my reasons, one..., two..., three... and say: "I don't feel right about it." Add: "And my decision is final." To curb further hassles go to the next step. #2 Give Empathy: Say: "I understand. I imagine I would be disappointed too, if I were in your place. Just the same, the decision is final." If your child continues arguing, go to the next step. #3 Give Choices: Say: "This is the final word, any more hassles will result in consequences." And then give your child two options, make sure that either one will work fine for you. For example: "What would be best for you, stay here or go home?" If your child does not choose or decides to do something else, then you choose.

**What should you not expect and what should you expect?** Do NOT expect: that your kids will understand-or that your kids will agree-or that your kids will be happy about it. DO expect: your child will not understand your concerns-and your child does not have the advantage of your experiences in life- that in life we all are sometimes

required to follow decisions we don't like or understand.

**Why then do my kids STILL argue with me?** 1. Kids get to put off doing what they are told. 2. Kids want to talk you out of your decision. 3. Kids want to bargain for a better deal. 4. Whoever is asking the "why" question is in control. 5. Kids cause a hassle so you will give in. 6. Kids enjoy the contest of wills with you. 7. Kids make you suffer first. 8. Kids expose your objections to argue longer, and it's fun sometimes.

**What can stop this arguing?** Things you can try to stop the arguing:

**1. THE SPONGE** Gather information. YOU become the one who asks "why". When your child begs and pleads, ask: "Why should I let you?" and "Why do you think you need this?" And "Tell me more about it." You might ask your child to write out all the reasons and bring you a list. Gather his/her entire argument so they will use their energy thinking and feel more heard, and say: "No, you can't, but thanks for asking." or "I am sure it would be fun, but the answer is no."

**2. THE BROKEN RECORD** Acknowledge your child's wants. Say: "I understand that ...". If your child continues to protest use the words "nevertheless," "regardless," "in spite of that." For example: Child: "That's a stupid reason." You: "Honey, it may be stupid but nevertheless the answer is no." Child: "It's not fair." You: "Regardless of if it is not fair or not, the answer is no." Or you can repeat over and over again: "I love you too much to argue." And if you need to, give choices again.

**3. ZERO TOLERANCE** Do not allow ANY harassment. If you do, you are teaching your child to mistreat you. This is a boundary issue. You need to set clear boundaries. Say: "I am your mother/father, when you are disrespectful you will have consequences."

**4. DELAYED CONSEQUENCES** Immediate consequences are usually better than delayed consequences. However if you don't know what to do or if you are angry you may make a poor decision. Delayed consequences will give you time to think of a consequence or talk to someone to get help. It is important that you do not let things get out of hand. Stop justifying your decisions or you will make things worse. If your child gets angry, makes threats or follow throughs, say: "I am going to have to give you a consequence for this but don't worry about it right now." Then add: "I will be discussing this with you (then state a time that is convenient for YOU. Then stop talking immediately, stop eye contact, slowly turn your face in another direction and walk away slowly. You want to guide your child in love and not do anything that will hinder the relationship you and your child have.

Resources: Dr. James Jones, American Parenting Institute, Jim Fay, Cline/Fay Institute.

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## Planning Commission Approves Zoning Changes

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because they had to and it truly feels like they are not taking into consideration the concerns of the people who live there. I think that everyone who is going to be affected by it definitely needs to stand up and continue to create dialog with the City to try to work this out so everybody comes to a mutual agreement."

Willard noted that he is concerned about changes to setbacks that would occur to the affected parcels and the possibility that unwanted businesses could be opened right next door to someone's home. Willard says he was unable to attend the Planning Commission hearing on September 20, 2012 due to work commitments.

"People want to be left alone and maintain the integrity of their neighborhood," says Willard. "I'm not against development, but I think the city needs to find an alternative. I would like to see the City hold some


workshops with the residents to fully explain the impact before they move forward with this."

Planning Commission Chair Dan Brown, when asked, says he believes the Commissioners have addressed most of the questions raised by citizens during the meetings.

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