

Choosy children

So much is written about parenting styles that parents often feel confused, not knowing what to do for the best. Do we allow our children lots of freedom, and worry they might become out of control, or do we dictate our children's lives, and worry they might become unable to make good choices?

Certainly, allowing children to make decisions allows them to contribute to their own lives, to make mistakes and to learn from these in a supportive environment. So, perhaps forced choice is the best parenting option.

Forced choice involves parents thinking of solutions to a problem and then presenting them as a choice to the child. For example, you are late for work, but your child will not wear the outfit you have chosen. At this point, you could force them to put it on or give them the choice of wearing either this or another outfit.

Providing choices can be very effective in de-escalating parent-child struggles and can help prevent feelings of anger or frustration too, however there are some golden rules to follow.

- Offer genuine choices and make sure you follow through on them.
- Be open to ideas for choices that children may have themselves, and offer praise for them, so your child doesn't lose faith.
- Don't offer more than two choices to very young children as it can confuse them.
- When a child makes a choice and the outcome isn't good, discuss this with them so they can learn for the future.

- If a child refuses to make a decision, remind them of the choices and tell them if they don't choose, you will make the decision for them.

MORE INFORMATION

We offer therapy for children, young people and families at our First Psychology centres. For more details contact your local First Psychology Centre.

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