



Detaching and Maintaining Balance

Carol and her daughter Melissa power struggle every morning. After many reminders and much coaxing, Carol feels overwhelmed and angry. She screams, "I am sick and tired of pushing you to get ready for school, Melissa! I must have told you a thousand times! Forget going to the party tomorrow young lady!" Interestingly enough, we request that our children be in control and behave responsibly when sometimes we ourselves are out of control. Here are some tips for maintaining balance:

- ♥ **Detach from the power struggle** – No one wins in a power struggle. Even if a parent overpowers a child and the child complies, the relationship suffers and the child is motivated externally. Typically, the child will not be the one to let go in a power struggle. It is our job as the parent to detach so that we can discipline effectively. Detaching isn't the only step in redirecting a power struggle; however, it is the first. No other tools will be effective if we are caught up in the tug of war.
- ♥ **Take care of you** – Do nurturing things for yourself. If we don't take the time for ourselves, we react and over-react rather than acting. We respond harshly rather than influentially when we are running on empty.
- ♥ **Create a plan** – Pick one behavior that you want to improve upon and create a plan. Include consequences and involve your child. Work on it for a month.
- ♥ **Monitor your self-talk** – Self-talk is that internal voice that either encourages or discourages us. Discouraging internal dialogue, i.e., "Why do I have to tell her to brush her teeth every single morning? I can't take this anymore." propels us to anger. Once we are angry, we aren't using the part of our brain where we can hear that dialogue any longer, making it difficult for us to talk ourselves down. Practice encouraging self-talk **prior** to becoming angry, i.e., "I am calm. I can handle this. I am going to do a great job."
- ♥ **Recognize when you are angry** – If you feel angry, take the time to cool off. No one makes the best decisions when they are angry. Postpone discussing behavior if either you or your child is angry. Rather than beating yourself up about feeling angry; simply recognize that this is how you feel. How you handle anger is the model for your children.
- ♥ **Use physical activity to burn up the angry energy** – This is a great tool to teach your children. Run, walk, climb stairs. Model this for your child.

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- ♥ **Use deep breathing to calm down** – This is another effective tool to reduce anger and anxiety for both you and children. Practice yoga together!
- ♥ **Smile and laugh more** – Physiological changes occur in our bodies when we smile and laugh. It is difficult to be punitive when we are smiling at our child.
- ♥ **Don't major in the minors** – Are you burning up your energy micro-managing your children? Pick the things of value to discipline; otherwise you will be discouraged, exhausted and resentful.
- ♥ **Take a parenting class to learn effective skills** – Learn to create closeness and team in your family.

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