

Exploring

children's social-emotional wellness

a tipsheet for parents and caregivers



Capital District
Child Care Council

Giving Children Choices

Are young children simply being defiant and unreasonable for no good reason? *Probably not.*

Instead of viewing children's behavior as "bad" and reacting in a way that overpowers a child, parents and caregivers should view this behavior as a healthy, positive sign of the child's development. Try giving children choices when possible.

What Children Gain by Making Their Own Choices:

- Decision-making skills
- Empowerment
- Impulse Control
- Self-control
- Independence
- Self-esteem

Providing Appropriate Opportunities for Children to Make Their Own Choices:

- Give only choices that you can accept.
- Choices should not represent a punishment as one alternative.
- Offer young children under the age of 5 a choice between two events or objects. Try to keep it simple.

Give children choices that you can accept

Ways to let children practice making choices:

During mealtime:

- Would you like Rice Krispies or Corn Flakes?
- Would you like to serve yourself or should I serve you?

While getting dressed:

- Blue shirt or red shirt today?
- Which socks will you choose today?

While you're getting ready for naptime:

- Which story will you choose today?
- Which stuffed animal will you sleep with?

During activity time:

- Would you like to build with blocks or paint at the easel?
- Will you choose the puzzle or the play dough?
- Would you like to help put the napkins or silverware on the table?

Clean Up Time:

- Would you like to clean up the blocks or the action figures?
- Will you pick up your clothes or your shoes first?
- How many toys will you pick up, 5 or 6?



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518 426-7181 www.cdcccc.org