**Dodging the Power Struggle at Home**

It is a common occurrence for children to engage in power struggles with their parents, particularly when they are asked to complete homework or a chore. . In this “power struggle” no one wins! Parents who want to dodge the 'power-struggle' trap can do several things to ensure their child complies with their expectations in a positive manner.

**Disengage**

The most important thing to do when faced with a defiant or noncompliant child is to remain calm! Try not to react to the child’s behavior. Becoming visibly angry, raising your voice, or attempting to discipline the child may succeed in making the behavior worse! Simple strategies to disengage include:

* Use a brief, simple stress-reduction technique before responding.
  + Take a deep breath
  + Have a pre-planned appropriate response (e.g. re-state the initial directive)
* Respond in a neutral, calm voice.
* Keep responses brief and to the point.
* Avoid reacting in a confrontational manner to 'baiting' remarks that are deliberately intended to draw you into a power struggle (Walker, 1997).
  + If the comment is mildly annoying, ignore it.
  + If the comment is serious enough to require that you respond (e.g., insult, challenge to authority), briefly state in a neutral manner why the remark is inappropriate and impose a pre-selected consequence.
  + Then move on.

**Interrupt**

When your child becomes upset, use interrupting tactics---well timed, supportive techniques that 'interrupt' the escalation of their anger. Interruption strategies are positive and respectful in nature. Some examples are:

* Divert your child’s attention from the conflict.
* Remove the child briefly from the setting by sending him/her to another room, or on an errand, with the expectation that by the time the child returns he/she will have calmed down.
* Allow the child a “cool down” break.

**Deescalate**

Children may demonstrate poor judgment and impulsive decisions when angry. Strategies to deescalate include:

* Replace negative words with positive words (Braithwaite, 2001).
* Use non-verbal strategies. Watch your tone of voice, your volume, and your body language.
* Acknowledge that the child is in control and must make their own behavioral choices.

\*\*Adapted from Dodging the Power Struggle Trap, www.intervtioncentral.org.