

WHEN YOUR KID PUSHES BACK, SAY THIS!

Matter-of-fact responses for everyday parenting moments



By Jaci Finneman

No-Problem
PARENTING



You don't need the perfect response. You need a steady one.



When kids push back, it's easy to over-explain, get pulled into emotion, or second-guess yourself. This guide gives you simple language you can use in the moment — without fixing, rescuing, or escalating the problem.

**Read it once.
Keep it handy.
Use what fits.**

NOTE: What This Tool Is (and Isn't)

This is important to understand before you begin. This guide is not designed to make your child comply immediately. It's designed to help you stay in the leader's seat when behavior shows up. Your child may continue to push back. They may test again. They may not respond the first time — or the fifth. That doesn't mean this isn't working. The goal is not to force compliance or convince your child in the moment.

The goal is for you to pass the test:

- Say less
- Stay steady
- Don't engage in arguing, explaining, or emotional back-and-forth

When you hold your response and don't escalate, you change the direction of the moment — even if behavior hasn't changed yet.

In the meantime:

- Life continues
- Expectations stay the same
- There are no extra privileges or add-ons
- There's also no anger, lecturing, or power struggle

You matter of factly the expectation or response as needed and allow time to do its work. Eventually, your child decides how they're going to handle it. That decision is theirs. Your role is leadership — not pressure.

RESPONSES

When your child refuses to do what's expected

“That’s your choice. You can let me know when you’re ready.”

When your child argues or debates

“What did I ask you to do?”

When your child says ‘This isn’t fair’

“You don’t have to like it. You do need to handle it.”

When your child melts down

“I’m here. We’ll talk when your body is ready.”

When your child blames you

“I hear that you’re frustrated. Take your time. This part is still yours to handle.”

When your child demands help

“I trust you to try first.”

When your child shuts down

“I’ll give you some time. We can talk later.”

When your child tests limits

Stay steady and repeat the expectation

When your child wants an immediate answer

“I’ll think about it and get back to you.”

When your child repeats the same behavior

“We’ve already talked about this. Go ahead and take care of it.”

RESPONSES

When your child drags their feet but still does the task

“I know you don’t want to. Thanks for doing it anyway.”

When your child says “I don’t know what you want me to do.”

“Thanks for asking.” Repeat the direction

When your child says ‘This isn’t fair’

“You don’t have to like it. You do need to handle it.”

When your child is stalling before leaving

“Take your time. I’m happy to bring you to the park when you’ve finished, i.e cleaning up.”

When your child is angry and melting down

“It’s okay. I get mad too. Feel free to throw a fit and get it out of your system.”

When your child finally speaks up or shares a feeling

“Thank you for letting me know.”

When your child admits the truth — even if it’s not great

“Good job being honest.”

When your child is overwhelmed and crying

“Bring it in. Sometimes we just need to cry and let it out.”

When your child argues or talks disrespectfully

“Sounds like you need a minute. Come talk to me when you can be kind.”

When your child needs space to calm down

“Take your time. Let me know when you’re ready.”

RESPONSES

When you're on a time crunch and your child starts a meltdown

"I need to get to work. We don't have time for you to throw a fit."

When emotions hit right before leaving the house

"I need to get to work. You'll have to throw a fit in the car on the way."

When your child wants to argue instead of solve the issue

"I'll be happy to talk to you when you're ready."

When your child is stalling before leaving

"Take your time. I'm happy to bring you to the park when you've finished cleaning up."

When your child is snappy and unfocused

"Are you hungry, or crabby, or both? Let's get you something to eat first."

When your child avoids the request

"What did I ask you to do?"

When your child tries to pull you into an argument

"I only argue on Saturday mornings at 6:00 a.m."

When you need to disengage without escalating

"Oh — just a second. I forgot to feed the dog."

When your child is demanding an answer while emotions are high

"I'm too mad right now to answer you. Give me a few minutes."

When an argument is brewing

"I love you too much to argue."

RESPONSES

When your child needs help but you're drained

"I'll help you, even though I don't feel like it right now."

When your child is clearly stuck or overwhelmed

"I agree. This is frustrating."

When your child is struggling but still in charge of the solution

"Let me know if you need some ideas."

When your child is stalling before leaving

"Take your time. I'm happy to bring you to the park when you've finished cleaning up."

When your child feels wronged or defeated

"I bet it feels that way. How can I help?"

When your child avoids the request

"What did I ask you to do?"

When your child is upset and venting

"Is there anything I can say that will help you?"

When your child is emotional and you're unsure what they need

"Do you need me to help you, or do you just need to be upset right now?"

When your child is being unkind or disrespectful

"I'd be happy to help you when you're being kind to me."

When your child speaks disrespectfully or uses an unkind tone

"Try again."

RESPONSES

When your child can't regulate in the moment

“Pop off to your room. See you when you can be kind.”

When you're waiting for your child to calm down

“Let me know when you're ready.”

When your child has a big emotional release

“Whew! That was a big screamer. Are you okay?”

When the conversation is going nowhere

“Let's get back to this later when we're both calm.”

When your child calls you unfair or annoying

“You're right. I can be frustrating.”

When your child needs reassurance after big feelings

“I'm right here when you need me.”

When your child feels hopeless or wronged

“I bet it feels that way right now.”

When your child is yelling or raising their voice

“I'll be happy to talk to you when your voice is calm like mine.”

When your child is rude at the table or during conversation

“Feel free to come back when you find your manners.”

When your child's behavior draws attention in public

“Well... that was embarrassing.”

Leadership doesn't require big reactions.
It requires clarity.

You don't need to say everything—
just the right thing.



Jaci Finneman

Founder, No Problem Parenting



noproblemparents.com

jaci@noproblemparents.com
