

Preschool Theme Newsletter – May 2013

Hello everyone,

The leaves are turning, the mornings and evenings are cooler and it's getting darker earlier... I don't know about you but I don't particularly like winter and it's clearly on its way. So make use of the lovely autumn leaves to do some special art activities with the children. Check out the Pinterest board for some super autumn ideas <http://pinterest.com/kstedall/autumn/> where you will find more than 80 ideas.

In this newsletter I have included an article on dealing with strong-willed children at the end of the newsletter. You may find the strategies to deal with these children useful. This is quite a long newsletter but I hope you will find the time to read it all.



Mother's and Father's Day Ideas

Happy Mother's day to all the amazing and wonderful moms! I hope you have a special day. You all deserve one. Don't forget to look at the Pinterest board for mother's day ideas and activities.

Please use this link to access them. <http://pinterest.com/kstedall/mothers-day-ideas/>.

Father's day is in June so have a look at the Father's day pinterest board

<http://pinterest.com/kstedall/fathers-day/>

Strong-willed children



I am always amazed at the different personalities in a group of children and how clear the personality traits are from a very young age. I often ponder about how much of a child's personality they are born with, how much comes from experiences and how much comes from the parenting style. I also ponder how such young children have worked out how to be so manipulative from such a young age.

We all have strong-willed children in our group at school. Some people may think they are stubborn. Whatever your thoughts, these children are challenging to say the least! They manage to create 'drama' out of the simplest of requests or routines, can throw a tantrum of note and are pretty persistent. It becomes a battle of the wills between the child and the teacher (or parent) and depending on the situation or the adult the child either 'wins' or the adult 'wins'. Either way one or both of you end up being upset by the end of it.

I believe persistence and being strong-willed and determined are positive personality traits to have in the adult world if they are used correctly and in a socially acceptable way. The issue is that our little people need help to learn to use these traits in socially acceptable ways.

So do you break the will of the child so you 'have control' or do we find ways to nurture these strong willed children so it's more acceptable to everyone. I have included a very interesting article on how to handle these children at the end of the newsletter.

At the moment we have several strong willed children in the groups at school and it can be exhausting and disruptive managing these children. I so often think they could make their own life (and of course the adults too) so much easier if they just complied without so much resistance.

But I do think as teachers we need to stop and look more closely at why and when the outbursts occur and to try and find ways to minimise them.

Here are a few thoughts to consider:

Some children have low frustration levels. All children are born with low tolerance levels but as they develop some children don't learn the skills to cope with the challenges and frustrations life throws at you. If you watch these children it is quite obvious that this is their problem. It is better to acknowledge their frustration and offer solutions or help. E.g they can't get the puzzle piece into the hole so they throw the puzzle at the nearest child or hit them. Slow them down and give them a strategy and break the task down into smaller tasks e.g. – Let's see if you turn the puzzle piece around it may fit in.

If you get annoyed with the child throwing the puzzle and scold them and remove the puzzle or the child, a much bigger level of frustration arises and you will get a screaming tantrum of note!! I can hear you saying but they need to be disciplined for throwing the puzzle. I agree it is unacceptable behaviour and some children do need to be disciplined as they are just being destructive, but a child with low frustration levels needs to be handled in a different way. I would fetch the puzzle, sit next to the child and tell them throwing puzzles is unacceptable behaviour and if you are struggling to fit the piece into the shape you need to use your words and ask for help. While telling them this you help them to achieve the task and praise them.

<http://rebtinstitute.org/blog/2010/11/17/the-importance-of-high-frustration-tolerance-in-children/>

- **Lack of communication through lack of speech.**

Some children get upset as they don't have the language to communicate what the issue is so they throw a tantrum. Be supportive and acknowledge that you can see they are cross/upset., angry or sad. Ask is it because You wanted the toy, you were having such a good time and you didn't want to stop playing etc. Even just acknowledging their feelings and helping even the very young child to understand and name the emotion they feel is helpful, and with young children a cuddle can help a lot to calm them down.

- **Tired, hungry and thirsty children are unco-operative**

We serve the children lunch and morning and afternoon snacks at our school and so often the children either refuse to eat the food or they eat very little. By mid-morning or late afternoon these children have low blood sugar and are very irritable and short tempered and add being tired to scenario, it's is a sure recipe for tantrums. Think of how you feel when you have not eaten! Some children do not drink enough at school and you need to offer them water or have a water fountain readily available. Often when children wake up from their sleep they cry and offering them a drink of water settles them quickly. If children bring their own lunch to school take note of how much the children actually eat. Some children play and talk more than they eat when it is lunch time, or they are such slow eaters that they run out of time to eat their lunch. If certain children seldom eat their lunch it's worth having a chat the caregiver in a sensitive way.

- **Oppositional Defiant disorder –lesser known and less common**

I could not explain it better so I pasted the article from the Mayo Clinic web site and the link. We have had a child with this problem and it's very disruptive to the day. For these children it's all about winning. If you give in to their demands in any way they have won and the cycle begins again. It is worth researching this on the internet if you suspect you have a child with ODD. There are several strategies you can use to handle these children so your day and theirs is much nicer. **But it needs to be diagnosed by a professional person.**

By Mayo Clinic staff(<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/oppositional-defiant-disorder/DS00630>)

Even the best-behaved children can be difficult and challenging at times. But if your child or teen has a persistent pattern of tantrums, arguing, and angry or disruptive behaviour toward you and other authority figures, he or she may have oppositional defiant disorder (ODD).

It may be difficult at times to recognize the difference between a strong-willed or emotional child and one with oppositional defiant disorder. It's normal to exhibit oppositional behaviour at certain stages of a child's development. But there is a range between the usual independence-seeking behaviour of children

and that of oppositional defiant disorder. Signs of ODD generally begin **before a child is 8 years old.**

Sometimes ODD may develop later, but almost always before the early teen

years. When ODD behaviour develops, the signs tend to begin gradually and then worsen over months or years.

Your child may be displaying signs of ODD instead of normal moodiness if the behaviours:

- Are persistent
- Have lasted at least six months
- Are clearly disruptive to the family and home or school environment

The following are behaviours associated with ODD:

- Negativity
- Defiance
- Disobedience
- Hostility directed toward authority figures
- These behaviours might cause your child to regularly and consistently:
- Have temper tantrums
- Be argumentative with adults
- Refuse to comply with adult requests or rules



- Annoy other people deliberately
- Blames others for mistakes or misbehaviour
- Acts touchy and is easily annoyed
- Feel anger and resentment
- Be spiteful or vindictive
- Act aggressively toward peers
- Have difficulty maintaining friendships
- Have academic problems
- Feel a lack of self-esteem
- In addition, your child isn't likely to see his or her behaviour as defiant. Instead, your child will probably believe that unreasonable demands are being placed on him or her.

Creative activities

Autumn leaves using wax paper and milk lids

I saw this idea on Pinterest and gave it a try with the pre-schoolers (3 1/2 to 5 years)

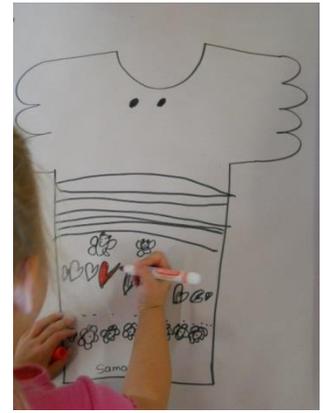
It was mostly successful. Give each child a piece of wax paper which you need to tape to the table as the paper moves when they try and swirl the paint with the lid. Show them to paint big blobs or circles of paint onto the wax paper and to 'paint' and mix the colours using circular motions and a milk lid. The colours then mix together and create swirls patterns. I used yellow, brown and orange for autumn leaves. We dried the paintings on a window using the masking tape you secured them to the table with. Once dry, I cut them into leaf shapes and displayed them on the window so the light shone through them.

Some of the children chose to add glitter to their paintings (In New Zealand they have an open art area policy so all art materials are freely available to the children to use as they please). I thought the glitter added a nice effect. Be aware of children who use too much paint and swirling the colours too much as the paper got holes in it and the very wet and heavy paper was difficult to pick up.



Drawing clothes

One of the teachers in the group recently got married so there were lots of wedding photos and wedding talk. This created an interest from some of the children to 'design' their own clothes. They did a pre design drawing (Technology) and then we rolled a long sheet of newsprint onto the floor. I drew an outline of the shorts and top they wanted to decorate. They drew patterns on the outlines using koki pens, cut them out and checked if they fitted. Some of the children decided to lie on the clothes to be the body in the clothes. Later one child drew her own dress, cut it out, lay on the ground and got another child to draw around her body so she could paste the cut out dress to the outline.



Chickens using hand and foot prints and shapes (2 - 3/12 years)

We had a chicken sitting on 6 eggs in a cage in the playground and eventually much excitement two of the eggs hatched into chicks. The children created these pictures with teachers help. At our school the teachers have free access to printing photos of the children which they have taken using digital cameras so each child's face was printed out and a beak attached to the face. Although this is a cute idea it did entail a lot of teacher help.



These pictures of chickens with feathers were made with feathers they collected from the chicken coop and the eggs were made using oval shaped paper. The children needed quite a bit of help from the teacher to complete the activity



Free painting of autumn trees by the 3 1/2 to 5 year olds

Note the wide range of abilities and the opportunity to express themselves as they see the trees.



I leave you with this thought...

Please read the article on the next page. Food for thought!

Happy teaching

Regards Karin

Parenting Your Strong-Willed

Child <http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/positive-discipline/Parenting-Strong-Willed-Child>



Have a strong-willed child? You're lucky! Strong willed children can be a challenge to parent when they're young, but if sensitively parented, they become terrific teens and young adults. Self-motivated and inner-directed, they go after what they want and are almost impervious to peer pressure. As long as parents resist the impulse to "break their will," strong-willed kids often become leaders.

What exactly is a strong-willed, or spirited, child? Some parents call them "difficult" or "stubborn," but we could also see them as people of integrity who aren't easily swayed from their own viewpoints. They want desperately to be right, and sometimes will put that desire above everything else. When their heart is set on something, their brains seem to have a hard time switching gears. They have big, passionate feelings and live at full throttle.

Often, these kids are prone to power-struggles with their parents. However, it takes two to have a power struggle. **You don't have to attend every argument to which you're invited!** If you can take a deep breath when your buttons get pushed, and remind yourself that you can let your child save face and still get what you want, you can learn to sidestep those power struggles.

Research shows that parents who pay attention can avoid power struggles, even with strong-willed kids, by empathizing as they set limits, giving choices, and clearly offering respect. Adopting a policy of looking for win/win solutions rather than just laying down the law keeps strong-willed children from becoming explosive and teaches them essential skills of negotiation and compromise.

Strong-willed kids feel their integrity is compromised if they're forced to submit to a parent's will. And, really, you don't WANT to raise an obedient child. **Morality is doing what's right, no matter what you're told. Obedience is doing what you're told, no matter what's right.**

Of course you want your child to do what you say. But not because he is obedient, meaning he always does what someone bigger tells him. No, you want him to do what you say because he trusts YOU, because you are the parent and have his best interests at heart. You want to raise a child who has self-discipline, takes responsibility, and is considerate -- and most important, has the discernment to figure out when to trust and be influenced by someone else.

Breaking a child's will leave him open to the influence of others that often will not serve him. What's more, it's a betrayal of the spiritual contract we make as parents to nurture our child's unique gifts.

That said, strong-willed kids can be a handful -- high energy, challenging, persistent. How do we protect those fabulous qualities and encourage their cooperation?

Ten Tips for Positive Parenting Your Strong-Willed, Spirited Child

1. Avoid power struggles by using routines and rules. That way, you aren't bossing them around, it's just that *"The rule is we use the potty after every meal and snack,"* or *"The schedule is that lights-out is at 8pm. If you hurry, we'll have time for two books,"* or *"In our house, we finish homework before computer, TV, or telephone time."* The parent stops being the bad guy.

2. Your strong-willed child wants mastery more than anything. Let her take charge of as many of her own activities as possible. Don't nag at her to brush her teeth, ask *"What else do you need to do before we*

leave?" If she looks blank, tick off the short list: *"Every morning we eat, brush teeth, use the toilet, and pack the backpack. I saw you pack your backpack, great job! Now, what do you still need to do before we leave?"* Kids who feel more independent and in charge of themselves will have less need to rebel and be oppositional. Not to mention they take responsibility early.

3. Give your strong-willed child choices. If you give orders, he will almost certainly bristle. If you offer a choice, he feels like the master of his own destiny. Of course, only offer choices you can live with and don't let yourself get resentful by handing away your power. If going to the store is non-negotiable and he wants to keep playing, an appropriate choice is: *"Do you want to leave now or in ten minutes?"*

4. Give her authority over her own body. *"I hear that you don't want to wear your jacket today. I think it is cold and I am definitely wearing a jacket. Of course, you are in charge of your own body, as long as you stay safe and healthy, so you get to decide whether to wear a jacket. But I'm afraid that you will be cold once we are outside, and I won't want to come back to the house. How about I put your jacket in the backpack, and then we'll have it if you change your mind?"* She's not going to get pneumonia, unless you push her into it by acting like you've won if she asks for the jacket. And once she won't lose face by wearing her jacket, she'll be begging for it once she gets cold. It's just hard for her to imagine feeling cold when she's so warm right now in the house, and a jacket seems like such a hassle. She's sure she's right -- her own body is telling her so -- so naturally she resists you. You don't want to undermine that self-confidence, just teach her that there's no shame in letting new information change your mind.

5. Don't push him into opposing you. Force always creates "push-back" -- with humans of all ages. If you take a hard and fast position, you can easily push your child into defying you, just to prove a point. You'll know when it's a power struggle and you're invested in winning. Just stop, take a breath, and remind yourself that winning a battle with your child always sets you up to lose what's most important: the relationship. When in doubt say *"Ok, you can decide this for yourself."* If he can't, then say what part of it he can decide, or find another way for him to meet his need for autonomy without compromising his health or safety.

6. Side step power struggles by letting your child save face. You don't have to prove you're right. You can, and should, set reasonable expectations and enforce them. But under no circumstances should you try to break your child's will or force him to acquiesce to your views. He has to do what you want, but he's allowed to have his own opinions and feelings about it.

7. Listen to her. You, as the adult, might reasonably presume you know best. But your strong-willed child has a strong will partly as a result of her integrity. She has a viewpoint that is making her hold fast to her

position, and she is trying to protect something that seems important to her. Only by listening calmly to her and reflecting her words will you come to understand what's making her oppose you. A non-judgmental *"I hear that you don't want to take a bath. Can you tell me more about why?"* might just elicit the information that she's afraid she'll go down the drain, like Alice in the song. It may not seem like a good reason to you, but she has a reason. And you won't find it out if you get into a clash and order her into the tub.

8. See it from his point of view. For instance, he may be angry because you promised to wash his superman cape and then forgot. To you, he is being stubborn. To him, he is justifiably upset, and you are being hypocritical, because he is not allowed to break his promises to you. How do you clear this up and move on? You apologize profusely for breaking your promise, you reassure him that you try very hard to keep your promises, and you go, together, to wash the cape. You might even teach him how to wash his own clothes! Just consider how would you want to be treated, and treat him accordingly.

9. Discipline through the relationship, never through punishment. Kids don't learn when they're in the middle of a fight. Like all of us, that's when adrenaline is pumping and learning shuts off. Kids behave because they want to please us. The more you fight with and punish your child, the more you undermine her desire to please you. If she's upset, help her express her hurt, fear or disappointment, so they evaporate. Then she'll be ready to listen to you when you remind her that in your house, everyone speaks kindly to each other.

10. Offer him respect and empathy. Most strong-willed children are fighting for respect. If you offer it to them, they don't need to fight to protect their position. And, like the rest of us, it helps a lot if they feel understood. If you see his point of view and think he's wrong -- for instance, he wants to wear the superman cape to synagogue and you think that's inappropriate -- you can still offer him empathy and meet him part way while you set the limit. *"You love this cape and wish you could wear it, don't you? But when we go to Temple we dress up, and we can't wear the cape. I know you'll miss wearing it. How about we take it with us so you can wear it on our way home?"*

Does this sound like Permissive Parenting? It isn't. You set limits. There's just never any reason to be mean about it! [Here's why Permissive Parenting sabotages your child.](#)

Need more ideas about [How to put Positive Parenting to work with your Strong-Willed Child?](#)