

I'm Not Going to Do It!

(And other tantrums.)

“I hate this!”

“Why do I have to do it?”

“I am not going to do this!”

“I'll never need to use this again in my whole life!”

“You are so mean to me!”

“Waaah! It's too hard!”

And of course the classic nontantrum tantrum: the “ignore Mom completely and see how long it will be before she notices you are not doing what she asked you to.”

How to deal with kids when they fight against you about doing their school work, and of course other things, is something I can always use help figuring out. Hmm... This could be a very short article. However, I choose to make an attempt anyway because I need some reminders. I need some new ideas. I need to learn.

The problem is that I tend to be a wimp. I don't start out planning to be a wimp, but it happens. Maybe it is because I can't stand it when people are mad at me. Perhaps it is a lot of second guessing myself (ie. “Maybe I am too hard on them.” Or “He's right, he'll probably never use it again. How do I out-logic that?”) Whatever the case may be, I need to get better at dealing with these things.

In my quest for becoming better with the topic of children fighting against you in school and other matters, I have found these helpful hints that I need to be reminded of on a regular basis:

- ✓ Remember which one of you is the adult! Respect for the adult is very important. If the child won't be respectful, don't participate in the discussion with him/her.
- ✓ Distraction techniques are a wonderful thing. You have to be on your toes sometimes for this one because it is hard to think of something if you are emotionally involved in the heat of the moment. Something as simple as telling a joke or making a bizarre noise that your child has never heard you do will work as a distraction. A distraction will usually break up the tension, which in turn makes it easier to resolve the problem. Usually when the child and yourself have been distracted from the problem, you can return to solving

the problem with greater success because the emotions have been tamed.
(See below for some specific distraction ideas.)

- ✓ Don't be emotionally involved in the child's temper fit. If you can remember to disconnect yourself emotionally from the situation, it is generally easier to find a logical solution to the problem presenting itself to you.
- ✓ Give yourself a time-out until you can figure out how to properly deal with the situation rather than jumping in to "battle" without a firm game plan.
- ✓ Remember that you ultimately want what is best for the child. Not getting their education is not what is best for the child. (Yes, that was a double negative.)
- ✓ Try to determine if the real problem is something other than what the child initially appears to be upset about—for instance, lack of sleep, not speaking with best friend, inability to understand the material, etc.

Anyone else have some good pointers? Send 'em my way! Maybe we can find a way to hear more comments like: ☺

"I can't wait to get started!"

"Can I please do some more?"

"I hope you don't mind, Mom, but I did a little extra assignment on this topic."

"This is my new favorite subject!"

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Distraction ideas:

1. Engage in a 5 minute tickle war.
2. Decide to brainstorm together for ideas on what would make the assignment enjoyable.
3. Start making random monkey sounds
4. Stop and wonder aloud as if to yourself if today would be a good day to go to the park if school is finished by 2:00.
5. Stand up suddenly and gasp! Then hurry from the room and return with a globe, sit down, spin the globe in a frantic fashion. Then exclaim, “Whew! I thought Nigeria had disappeared!” It doesn’t matter that this has nothing to do with the math lesson you were just involved in, the point is that you can get the child interested in where Nigeria is for a moment and even take a minute to talk about Nigeria. You can try getting that discussion back on to math by discussing how many people live there, what people do for a living or something. Or you can just go back to the task at hand since the situation did get diffused somewhat. The discussion usually will go better simply because you took a few minutes completely away from the initial problem.
6. Pretend to see a purple spotted blue belly standing on one leg near the fence.
7. Take a 60 second jumping jack break—see who can do the most!
8. Suddenly melt into a limp pile. The child will wonder what is going on. At that point, stay completely still and wordless for about 30 seconds. Then pop back up and say, “Oh, now what were we talking about?”
9. Burst into song. A good choice would be something like “Climb Every Mountain” or “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.”
10. Randomly ask your child a question—“Would you like a haircut today or tomorrow?” or “How do you tell the difference between a toad and a frog?” or “Do you know how many days it is until Grandma’s birthday?” or “What would we do if there was no such thing as scotch tape?”

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