

Pick your Battles: Peer and Parent Pressure

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It is hard to be calm when your child embarks on a thing you find unacceptable. Be it dress, hair style, or bedroom conditions, constantly fighting with your child about these things will be extremely counterproductive. If the fighting is predictable and nonproductive, real communication is doomed. You have heard and, hopefully at least partly believe, communication **truly** is key. If you criticize everything your child and his peers are doing, you'll risk shutting down good communication with your child permanently.

As you have heard, **pick your battles**.

Save your strength, then figure out what is worth the battle between you and your child. Recognize that peer pressure is real and that finding ways to help your child as one on his side is important. If you are past the point of your child accepting your help with peers, pick the more important issues of your child's peer life to battle over. Things like stealing, alcohol or drug use.

Sometimes kids need to win a minor battle or two to feel that they have a life outside of your life. This is important to them and to their growing up. Let them win a skirmish or two over hair style or something you feel you can live with in comparison to the bigger things. If immodesty is a no no for you (and I hope it is), don't give on that one. But maybe a purple streak over the week-end dye job is something you might tolerate...or not.

Letting your child win, a little bit here and there, even for a short time, gains you some weight on the more heavy duty issues. It is easier to say with some proven history on your part: "I have given on some things, but I simply cannot and will not give on (fill in the blank)." They will know that you have drawn a line in the sand that has value and non-negotiable boundaries.

If your child has nothing to lose by disobeying, such as a belief of "what the heck, I can't do anything anyway, and I will be punished no matter what" they may be able to disobey more easily. If they have won a few skirmishes, the belief is along the lines of "wow, this must be important if he/she is taking such a hard stand on this one."

Regardless of what the kids are thinking, stay strong, give in a time or two, and once again; pick your battles.

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