How to Get Your Child to Cooperate Without Fighting (Even During Meltdowns) Transcript

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Why Kids Resist Cooperation

Every simple request turns into a negotiation, a meltdown, power struggle. You're not alone and you're doing anything wrong. But here's the part nobody tells parents.

Kids don't resist because they want to fight. They resist, because their nervous system can't handle the demand. And when you understand that, getting cooperation becomes 10 times easier.

So stay with me. to break the fight reactivity cycle. Here's the truth about cooperation. We think kids fight us because they're stubborn, they don't care, their testing boundaries, They want control.

They're being disrespectful. But here's that neurological truth. A dysregulated brain will always choose avoidance, defensiveness, and a meltdown over cooperation.

Why are simple directions so hard? Before your child can do what you ask, they must have emotional regulation, plain and simple. Otherwise, there's no cognitive bandwidth.

They can't have impulse control. It can start tasks or working memory. goes offline. All their systems are overloaded. Even simple requests like put on your socks feels like too much.

So the brain reacts with no pushing back, ignoring you, melting down, negotiating, whining, crying, hiding, arguing. This isn't disobedience. overwhelmed.

Many moms and dads have told me this and I had a mom named Vanessa and she told Me getting her kid to brush her teeth was like the worst thing in the whole world.

And I tried to explain to her that his nervous system was just fried and every little quest really was Just too much pressure.

Regulate, Connect, Then Direct

So I got her to regulate, connect, and then direct. And the battles started dropping pretty dramatically. He didn't learn new skills. She'd been teaching him how to brush his teeth.

he was finally able to access the skills he already had. Kids are trying to be hard. Their brain is saying, I can't do that yet and help me get into a state where I.

Cooperation is a State, not a skill. You can create that state, but here's three steps. to get your kids to do without a fight. Number one, regulate first.

Before you give direction, your child's nervous system needs to be in a just right zone. Try deep pressure, a hug, walking together to another room, 30 second reset, slowing down your voice or your body, just being calm presence because a regulated brain equals a cooperative child.

You're not going to get a regularly compliant kid without it. Number two, connect before you direct. Connection opens the brain. Disconnection shuts it down.

Use proximity, get close, not loud. Gentle touch on the arm, soft eye contact, matching their tone. Validating that moment because connection flips the brain from threat to safety.

Just being next to them in a regulated state is often enough to shake up the system and get a kid back on track. And that's incredibly important. We forget the power of just our presence being quiet and calm.

It's really powerful. Step three, give a brain friendly direction. Make the direction short, concrete, in a calm way, one step, two taps, just keep it real simple, be supportive.

And here are some examples. So instead of saying, get ready, we're late, and we've all been there, let's be honest. You can say, shoes on, I'll help you start.

They haven't feel so different. There's not a threat to it. I always like when I'm regulated enough to give the right responses. We don't say clean your room right now.

in the baskets first. This is incredibly important for executive dysfunction kids who don't know where to start. So kids will say no to things and avoid things just because they don' know, where start and we always think, well, they're so intelligent and they do good in math or they are so great at Lagos or You know, they're in the honors club.

Just because you have those things doesn't mean you've have strong skills across the board. These are all skills. Good news is we can develop them. Stop arguing.

So we could say, hey, let's take a breath and try again.

Preventing Power Struggles and Transitions

And again, it's just a shifting in what you're doing. You're not giving in. We can't demand cooperation. It's like the 1950s people. Every once in a while I do meet some 1950's parents.

They don't laugh so long with me. Kids don't resist doing the thing. They resist the internal overwhelm caused by the saying. How about that? That should be an aha mind-blowing moment because we don t determine what a nervous system is overwhelmed by.

The nervous systems does. But what we can do, of course, is regulate. how do we avoid fights before that we start? Because you know, certain kids are just very much like, I have a kid that's always going to say no first.

and then think about it. We certainly have turned that around, but he's just a no kind of kid. Number one, we're going to lower the demand during high stress times.

So everybody's high-stress times are a little different, after school, before bed mornings. Think about that. How can we lower the demands during that time?

Maybe the mornings are just like your absolute poop show. Can you have things out? And we're going to continue so we can think about what are some of the steps.

So create a predictable rhythm and routine. There's something to be said about predictability and really making sure that we have consistency in our routines.

It's not always easy, but predictability equals cooperation for a lot of kids because they will avoid things that are different, almost like a startle to their nervous system.

And I find this particularly true of neurodivergent kids. as a mom of neurodivergent kids. Number three, reduce your language by 70%. It's easy for dads, harder for moms.

Women use 50% more language than men. It is one of the reasons why kids are more responsive to dads. Not because they're fearful of dads dads are clearer.

So shorter directions land better. If they don't have to think between all the extra words, especially the feeling words and it's just much more consistent and calm, they're going to be able to really be more likely to say yes.

Because as soon as things are overwhelming their nervous system, remember their cup is full. They're gonna say no. Number four, prepare them for transitions.

Two minutes left. Hey, don' forget. We have midterms. This is my true story. We're doing mid terms for the first time. So I'm like, what do you think you should be doing?

Would you like me to give you advice on how to prepare for midterm? Because my parents from Italy never did. And then my Giancarlo will go, yes, I know this.

This is how you study. Transitions are throughout, that is a transition. That is something different. So it's not just like we're going to the mall or we have to go to grocery store, we've to school, but just think about your kid's nervous system is overreactive.

How can we lessen those demands on the transitions? It is one of the, please watch and listen to those episodes that I have on transitions. They are literally my most popular episodes.

because we all face challenges there. Number five, let them choose the first micro step. Choice increases buy-in. Buy-In reduces battles. choice is powerful when kids of all ages have a say in something, they are much more likely to do it.

I mean, think about yourself. Like your boss is like, you will do this versus like hey, would you like to this or would like you that? Feels very differently.

Kids are the same. And guess what? When we teach our kids these things, we set them up for success as adults. We teach them how to these these as well.

If you're home feels like a battlefield. It's not because your child is defiant on purpose, it's because their nervous system can't meet the demands being placed on it.

That is why you're getting a big fat no to everything. Think of the no as a clue. When you regulate first, connect next, then direct, this is how you get cooperation without power struggles.

every single time, right? Now, kids of all ages are going to have power struggles depending on their developmental levels. This is normal, but living in a world where you're constantly in power struggle sucks.

How about that? You can get out of that, I promise you. You have to do these things. And remember, what do I always say? The 80% rate consistent. I want you to know that even if they struggle with transitions and directions and follow through, there is a way for you get outta that.

If you haven't already taken my solution matcher, you can go to drrosanne.com forward slash help. I know many of you have, we've actually updated it, which is really cool.

I try to make it even more focused on nervous system patterns so you really can get the right path for you. So if you've taken it before, I would take it again.

What it's going to do is it is going match you to the solution for your child's nervous systems. and give you that right path on how to help your child today and in the future.

Again, I know what it's like to be a parent of a kid who always says no, and you can feel pretty rough. Like, wow, i didn't sign up for this. But guess what?

You can do it. You, when you regulate first and you follow these strategies 80% or more. And if you're really

struggling and can't do it, then I want you to go back to basics and I just want to focus on regulating yourself because you are probably the person who's stuck and there could be a lot of reasons.

I say that with love. We've all been there. but you can't stay there. You owe it to yourself and you owe to your kid and owe the people that are around you that love you.

Get started, get rid of this, no lack of cooperation, you got this and start regulating. Want more insights and solutions? Well, subscribe to our dysregulation insider and it will show up in your inbox every week.