

PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

for the adventure of family life



30_Why conflict is important

Children have many wishes, that's quite normal. The difficulty many parents have is how to deal with a wish that cannot be fulfilled. A violent screaming attack on the street or the umpteenth argument a day gets on the parents' nerves.

How does a conflict actually unfold and what do the children learn from it?

1. The child has a wish.
2. As parents or grandparents, you can now say yes - if this is what you want. You can also say no if you are convinced this is the correct approach. If you only say a half-hearted no, children will sense it and start begging or yelling until you say yes again. In such a case, you may as well agree to the child's wish right from the start!
3. Or you can also say you have to think about it first. You take the child and yourself seriously and prevent everyone from making ill-considered decisions.
4. **If you say a clear no, a conflict usually ensues!** Depending on the child's character and temperament, this can vary in intensity: It may cry, throw itself on the floor, or scream. It is precisely this nerve-racking conflict that most parents fear! But this fight is important. The child learns to stand up for its own interests.
5. **You can stick to your no in peace and without a guilty conscience.** It is important that the raging child is not criticized, humiliated, ridiculed or degraded for his or her wishes and reactions.

6. **If you stick with the no, the child will feel great frustration or sadness after the fight!** It now wants to be left alone, no one should attack it, it might crawl under the table or slam doors. Retreat is now called for. The child must now mentally say goodbye to the wish. It is good if the child is allowed this retreat. You don't need to cheer up the child, calm it down, explain everything in detail. The child now needs time for itself. It is processing its frustration. This experience leads children to learn that other people are different from themselves. During this process, the body releases hormones that promote brain maturation. This strengthens empathy. Saying goodbye to desires while managing frustration is an important learning experience the child will need throughout its life.
7. **After a while, calm returns.** Most of the time, the child comes out of its hiding place on its own and is surprisingly relatively calm. It is important that parents are no longer in the "fighting stance" but simply let it be.

"Tears are part of the nourishment children need if they want to build authentic relationships with other people," says Jesper Juul. It is not love that makes parents spare their children every frustration. It's either sentimentality or the desire to be seen as a good father or mother, according to Juul. In such conflicts, where its dignity is respected but not every wish has been fulfilled, the child learns tolerance for frustration and the ability to deal with conflict. Love means saying "no" sometimes – for the good of all.

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