

I Want to Do It My Way

As part of growing up, I want to make more decisions in my own life. Sometimes my desire for independence makes you crazy. But experiencing new things and making choices is part of growing up.

When you always tell me what to do and don't let me make choices, I get frustrated. For example, let me choose what shirt I wear.

What I Want You to Know

Between 1 ½ and 3 years of age, I will get serious about growing up. I may suddenly refuse to take a bath, get dressed, eat my food, put on a coat, or go to bed. It may seem like I say "NO!" all the time.



I probably seem like a brat to you.

Being contrary or independent doesn't mean I am bad. I am doing exactly what I should be doing at this point in life - learning to make decisions.

Here's How You Can Help Me

Don't get mad and punish me for saying "no." That won't help. There are several things you can do that will help.

You can *get rid of the rules that don't matter so much*. Sometimes I may want to wear clothes that don't match. Also, it's okay if I get dirty every now and then.

You can *give me many chances to make choices*. You might let me pick which vegetable I eat at dinner.

Tell me about the things I can do, rather than all the things I can't do. Instead of telling me to leave my brother alone, you can ask me to help you in some way.

You could *use distraction or humor* to prevent a battle. If I am fighting with my sister, you could invite me to help you make dinner rather than yelling at me to stop. Or, if the dog needs to be fed, you could jokingly say, "Fido told me he's starving."

Allow me time to move from one activity to the next. You might give me a five-minute warning before I need to come in from playing.

Show an interest in my needs and preferences. For example, you could let me pick the book we read at bedtime, or the fruit we buy from the grocery store.

Thanks for helping me grow up to be an understanding and capable adult.

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

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