

Excerpts from:

CHILD-PARENT RELATIONSHIP THERAPY (CPRT) — AGES 3-10

THERAPIST PROTOCOL

Treatment Outlines and
Handouts for Sessions 1-10



Sue C. Bratton and Garry L. Landreth

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

What Is It and How Can It Help?

What Is It?

Child-Parent-Relationship (C-P-R) Training is a special 10-session parent training program to help strengthen the relationship between a parent and a child by using 30-minute playtimes once a week. Play is the most natural way children communicate. Toys are like words for children and play is their language. Adults talk about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Children use toys to explore their experiences and express what they think and how they feel. Therefore, parents are taught to have special structured 30-minute playtimes with their child using a kit of carefully selected toys in their own home. Parents learn how to respond empathically to their child's feelings, build their child's self-esteem, help their child learn self-control and self-responsibility, and set therapeutic limits during these special playtimes.

For 30 minutes each week, the child is the center of the parent's universe. In this special playtime, the parent creates an accepting relationship in which a child feels completely safe to express himself through his play—fears, likes, dislikes, wishes, anger, loneliness, joy, or feelings of failure. This is not a typical playtime. It is a special playtime in which the child leads and the parent follows. In this special relationship, there are no:

- reprimands
- put-downs
- evaluations
- requirements (to draw pictures a certain way, etc.)
- judgments (about the child or his play as being good or bad, right or wrong)

How Can It Help My Child?

In the special playtimes, you will build a different kind of relationship with your child, and your child will discover that she is capable, important, understood, and accepted as she is. When children experience a play relationship in which they feel accepted, understood, and cared for, they play out many of their problems and, in the process, release tensions, feelings, and burdens. Your child will then feel better about herself and will be able to discover her own strengths and assume greater self-responsibility as she takes charge of play situations.

How your child feels about herself will make a significant difference in her behavior. In the special playtimes where you learn to focus on your child rather than your child's problem, your child will begin to react differently, because how your child behaves, how she thinks, and how she performs in school are directly related to how she feels about herself. When your child feels better about herself, she will behave in more self-enhancing ways rather than self-defeating ways.

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Toy Checklist for Play Sessions—Session 2

Note: Obtain sturdy cardboard box with lid or plastic container with lid to store toys (copy paper box is ideal—the deep lid becomes a dollhouse). Use an old blanket to spread toys out on and to serve as a boundary for the play area.

Real-Life Toys (also promote imaginative play)

- Small baby doll: *should not be anything "special"; can be extra one that child does not play with anymore*
- Baby bottle: *real one so it can be used by the child to put a drink in during the session*
- Doctor kit (with stethoscope): *add three Band-Aids for each session (add disposable gloves/Ace bandage, if you have)*
- Toy phones: *recommend getting two in order to communicate: one cell, one regular*
- Doll family: *bendable mother, father, brother, sister, baby, and so forth (representative of your family)*
- Play money: *bills and coins; credit card is optional*
- Couple of domestic and wild animals: *if you don't have doll family, you can substitute an animal family (e.g., horse, cow family)*
- Car/truck: *one to two small ones (could make specific to child's needs, e.g., an ambulance)*
- Kitchen dishes: *couple of plastic dishes, cups, and eating utensils*



Optional

- Small dollhouse: *use lid of box the toys are stored in—draw room divisions, windows, doors, and so forth inside of lid*
- Puppets: *one aggressive, one gentle; can be homemade or purchased (animal-shaped cooking mittens, etc.)*
- Doll furniture: *for a bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen*
- Dress up: *hand mirror, bandana, scarf; small items you already have around the house*

Acting-Out Aggressive Toys (also promote imaginative play)

- Dart guns with a couple of darts and a target: *parent needs to know how to operate*
- Rubber knife: *small, bendable, army type*
- Rope: *prefer soft rope (can cut the ends off jump rope)*
- Aggressive animal: *(e.g., snake, shark, lion, dinosaurs—strongly suggest hollow shark!)*
- Small toy soldiers (12-15): *two different colors to specify two teams or good guys/bad guys*
- Inflatable bop bag (Bobo clown style preferable)
- Mask: *Lone Ranger type*
- Toy handcuffs with a key



Toys for Creative/Emotional Expression

- Play-Doh: *suggest a cookie sheet or plastic placemat to put Play-Doh on to contain mess—also serves as a flat surface for drawing*
- Crayons: *eight colors, break some and peel paper off (markers are optional for older children but messier)*
- Plain paper: *provide a few pieces of new paper for each session*
- Scissors: *not pointed, but that cut well (e.g., child Fiskars)*
- Transparent tape: *remember, child can use up all of this, so buy several of smaller size*
- Egg carton, styrofoam cup/bowl: *for destroying, breaking, or coloring*
- Ring toss game
- Soft foam ball
- Small musical instrument (preferably two)



Optional

- Selection of arts/crafts materials in a ziplock bag *(e.g., colored construction paper, glue, yarn, buttons, beads, scraps of fabrics, raw noodles, etc.—much of this depends on age of child)*
- Tinkertoys/small assortment of building blocks
- Binoculars
- Magic wand
- Two balloons (per play session)

Reminder: *Toys need not be new or expensive. Avoid selecting more toys than will fit in a box—toys should be small. In some cases, additional toys can be added based on child's need and with therapist approval. If unable to get every toy before first play session, obtain several from each category—ask therapist for help in prioritizing.*

Note: *Unwrap any new toys or take out of box before play session. Toys should look inviting.*

Good Toy Hunting Places: garage sales, friends/relatives, "dollar" stores

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

Basic Principles of Play Sessions—Session 2

Basic Principles for Play Sessions:

1. The parent sets the stage by structuring an atmosphere in which the **child feels free** to determine how he will use the time during the 30-minute play session. The **child leads** the play and the **parent follows**. The parent follows the child's lead by showing keen interest and carefully observing the child's play, **without making suggestions or asking questions**, and by actively joining in the play when invited by the child. For 30 minutes, you (parent) are "dumb" and don't have the answers; it is up to your child to make his own decisions and find his own solutions. Your child is the expert.
2. The parent's major task is to empathize with the child: to understand the child's thoughts, feelings, and intent expressed in play by working hard to **see and experience the child's play through the child's eyes**. This task is operationalized by conveying the "Be-With" Attitudes below.
3. The parent is then to **communicate this understanding to the child** by (a) verbally describing what the child is doing/playing, (b) verbally reflecting what the child is saying, and (c) most importantly, by verbally reflecting the feelings that the child is actively experiencing through his play.
4. The parent is to be clear and firm about the few "limits" that are placed on the child's behavior. Limits are stated in a way that give the child responsibility for his actions and behaviors—helping to foster self-control. Limits to be set are time limits, not breaking toys or damaging items in the play area, and not physically hurting self or parent. **Limits are to be stated only when needed**, but applied consistently across sessions. (Specific examples of when and how to set limits will be taught over the next several weeks; you will also have lots of opportunities to practice this very important skill.)

"Be-With" Attitudes:

Your intent in your actions, presence, and responses is what is most important and should convey to your child:

"I am here—I hear you—I understand—I care—I delight in you!"

Goals of the Play Sessions:

1. To allow the child—through the medium of play—to communicate thoughts, needs, and feelings to his parent, and for the parent to communicate that understanding back to the child.
2. To help the child experience more positive feelings of self-respect, self-worth, confidence, and competence—through feeling accepted, understood, and valued—and ultimately develop self-control, responsibility for actions, and learn to get needs met in appropriate ways.
3. To strengthen the parent-child relationship and foster a sense of trust, security, and closeness for both parent and child.
4. To increase the level of playfulness and enjoyment between parent and child. Enjoy 30 minutes of time together!

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

Play Session Procedures Checklist—Session 3

Depending on age of child, may need to remind him or her: "Today is the day for our special playtime!"

A. Prior to Session (Remember to "Set the Stage")

- Make arrangements for other family members (so that there will be no interruptions).
- Prepare a snack or activity for after the play session (see item D. below)
- Set up toys on old quilt—keep toy placement predictable.
- Have a clock visible in the room (or wear a watch).
- Put pets outside or in another room.
- Let the child use the bathroom prior to the play session.
- Switch on video recorder.

B. Beginning the Session

- Child and Parent: Hang "Do Not Disturb" sign (can also "unplug" phone if there is one in play session area). *Message to child: "This is so important that No One is allowed to interrupt this time together."*
- Tell Child: "We will have 30 minutes of special playtime, and you can play with the toys in lots of the ways you want to."
(Voice needs to convey that parent is looking forward to this time with child.)
- From this point let the child lead.

C. During the Session

- Sit on the same level as child, close enough to show interest but allowing enough space for child to move freely.
- Focus your eyes, ears, and body fully on child. (**Toes Follow Nose!**) Conveys full attention!
- Your voice should mostly be gentle and caring, but vary with the intensity and affect of child's play.
- Allow the child to identify the toys. (To promote make-believe play [e.g., what looks like a car to you might be a spaceship to your child], try to use nonspecific words ["this," "that," "it"] if child hasn't named toy.)
- Play actively with the child, if the child requests your participation.
- Verbally reflect what you see and hear (child's play/activity, thoughts, feelings).
- Set limits on behaviors that make you feel uncomfortable.
- Give 5-minute advance notice for session's end and then a 1-minute notice.
(**"Anika, we have 5 minutes left in our special playtime."**)

D. Ending the Session

- At 30 minutes, stand and announce, "Our playtime is over for today." Do not exceed time limit by more than 2 to 3 minutes.
- Parent does the cleaning up. If child chooses, child may help. (If child continues to play while "cleaning," set limit below.)
- If child has difficulty leaving:
 - Open the door or begin to put away toys.
 - Reflect child's feelings about not wanting to leave, but calmly and firmly restate that the playtime is over. (Restate limit as many times as needed—the goal is for child to be able to stop herself.)
"I know you would like to stay and play with the toys, but our special playtime is over for today."
 - Adding a statement that gives child something to look forward to helps child see that, although she cannot continue to play with the special toys, there is something else she can do that is also enjoyable. For example:
 1. **"You can play with the toys (or specific toy) next week during our special playtime."**
 2. **"It's time for snack; would you like grapes or cherries today?"**
 3. **"We can go outside and play on the trampoline."**

Note: Patience is the order of the day when helping child to leave—OK to repeat limit calmly several times to allow child to struggle with leaving on her own. (Key is showing empathy and understanding in your voice tone and facial expressions as you state the limit.) Younger children may need more time to "hear" limit and respond.

Never use Special Playtime as a reward or consequence—no matter the child's behavior that day!

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

Play Session Dos & Don'ts—Session 3

Parents: Your major task is to show genuine and intentional interest in your child's play. You communicate your interest in, and understanding of, your child's thoughts, feelings, and behavior through your words, actions, and undivided focus on your child.

Do:

1. Do set the stage. (Structure for Success!)

- Prepare play area ahead of time (old blanket can be used to establish a visual boundary of the play area, as well as provide protection for flooring: a cookie sheet under the arts/crafts materials provides a hard surface for Play-Doh, drawing, and gluing and provides ease of clean up).
- Display the toys in a consistent manner around the perimeter of the play area.
- Convey freedom as you introduce your special playtime to your child: **"During our special playtime, you can play with the toys in lots of the ways you'd like to."**
- Allow your child to lead by returning responsibility to your child using responses, such as "That's up to you," "You can decide," or "That can be whatever you want it to be."

2. Do let your child lead.

- Allowing your child to lead during the playtime helps you to better understand your child's world and what your child needs from you.
- Communicate your willingness to follow your child's lead through your responses: "Show me what you want me to do," "You want me to put that on," "Hmmm . . ." or "I wonder . . ."
- Use whisper technique (co-conspirators) when child wants you to play a role: "What should I say?" or "What happens next?" (Modify responses for older kids: use conspiratorial tone, "What happens now?" "What kind of teacher am I?" etc.)

3. Do join in your child's play actively and playfully, as a follower.

- Convey your willingness to follow your child's lead through your responses and your actions, by actively joining in the play (child is the director, parent is the actor) using responses such as "So I'm supposed to be the teacher," "You want me to be the robber, and I'm supposed to wear the black mask," "Now I'm supposed to pretend I'm locked up in jail, until you say I can get out," or "You want me to stack these just as high as yours."
- You can also use the whisper technique described above.

4. Do verbally track the child's play (describe what you see).

- Verbally tracking your child's play is a way of letting your child know that you are paying close attention and that you are interested and involved.
- Use observational responses, such as "You're filling that all the way to the top," "You've decided you want to paint next," or "You've got 'em all lined up just how you want them."

5. Do reflect your child's feelings.

- Verbally reflecting children's feelings helps them feel understood and communicates your acceptance of their feelings and needs.
- Use reflective responses, such as "You're proud of your picture," "That kinda surprised you," "You really like how that feels on your hands," "You really wish that we could play longer," "You don't like the way that turned out," or "You sound disappointed." (*Hint: Look closely at your child's face to better identify how your child is feeling.*)

6. Do set firm and consistent limits.

- Consistent limits create a structure for a safe and predictable environment for children.
- Children should never be permitted to hurt themselves or you.
- Limit setting provides an opportunity for your child to develop self-control and self-responsibility.
- Using a calm, patient, yet firm voice, say, "I know you're having fun, but *the carpet's not for putting Play-Doh on; you can play with it on the tray*" or "I know you'd like to shoot the gun at me, but *I'm not for shooting. You can choose to shoot at that*" (point to something acceptable).

7. Do salute the child's power and encourage effort.

- Verbally recognizing and encouraging your child's effort builds self-esteem and confidence and promotes self-motivation.
- Use self-esteem-building responses, such as "You worked hard on that!" "You did it!" "You figured it out!" "You've got a plan for how you're gonna set those up," "You know just how you want that to be," or "Sounds like you know lots about how to take care of babies."

8. Do be verbally active.

- Being verbally active communicates to your child that you are interested and involved in her play. If you are silent, your child will feel watched.
- *Note: Empathic grunts—"Hmm . . ." and so forth—also convey interest and involvement, when you are unsure of how to respond.*

Don't:

1. Don't criticize any behavior.
2. Don't praise the child.
3. Don't ask leading questions.
4. Don't allow external interruptions of the session.
5. Don't give information or teach.
6. Don't preach.
7. Don't initiate new activities.
8. Don't be passive or quiet.

(Don'ts 1-7 are taken from Guernsey, 1972.)

Remember the "Be-With" Attitudes: Your intent in your responses is what is most important. Convey to your child:

"I am here—I hear you—I understand—I care—I delight in you!"

Reminder: These play session skills (the new skills you are applying) are relatively meaningless if applied mechanically and not as an attempt to be genuinely empathic and truly understand your child. **Your Intent and Attitude Are More Important Than Your Words!**

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING Photograph of Toys Set Up for Play Session—Session 3



CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

Cliff Notes for Parents—Session 4

Remember:

1. Essential "Be-With" Attitudes: **I'm here—I hear you—I understand—I care—I delight in you!**
2. Importance of nonverbals (face and voice congruent with words; toes follow nose; lean towards child)
3. Avoid asking questions; instead make reflections/statements (trust your experience/instinct; sometimes you aren't sure, but child will correct you if you are wrong)
4. Often helpful to start reflection with: "**You/You're . . .**" to give child credit for actions/intent
5. Other reflections that can be useful in conveying (a) acceptance of the child, (b) freedom of the playtime, (c) belief that the child will take her play in the direction she needs, (d) belief that the child is inherently worthy of being valued and prized, and (e) capable of self-direction and problem solving:

"You're wondering . . ."

"In here, you can decide."

"It can be whatever you want it to be."

"That's up to you."

"Hmm - I wonder. . . ."

"Show me what you want me to do."

"What should I say/do; What happens next?"

(stage whisper—child is director and you are the actor, with no script)

"You know just what you want to do."

"You decided to. . ."

"You did it" (important that your affect matches child)

"You got that just the way you wanted it to go."

"You figured that out."

"You're working hard to get that off."

"You're determined to figure that out."

"You look happy, proud, sad, etc . . . about that."

6. Therapeutic Limit Setting: conveys your empathic understanding of the child's intent/desire and provides the child with the opportunity to bring self under control. **Remember: A-C-T**

"Isabella, (A) I know you'd like to shoot the picture, (C) but, the picture isn't for shooting. (T) You can shoot the dart at the wall (pointing to wall)"

"Isabella, (A) You'd like to play with the playdoh on the carpet, (C) but the playdoh is for staying on the tray" (sometimes you don't need a "T")

"Isabella, (A) You'd really like to play longer, but (C) our time is up for today. (T) We can go outside and play on the trampoline OR We can go to the kitchen and get a snack" (have options prepared ahead of time that you know your child would look forward to)

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

Choice Giving 101: Teaching Responsibility & Decision Making—Session 6

- **Providing children with age-appropriate choices empowers children** by allowing them a measure of control over their circumstances.
 - Children who feel more empowered and “in control” are more capable of regulating their own behavior, a prerequisite for self-control.
 - Choices require that children tap into their inner resources, rather than relying on parents (external resources) to stop their behavior or solve the problem for them.
 - If parents always intervene, the child learns that “Mom or Dad will stop me if I get out of hand” or “Mom or Dad will figure out a solution if I get in a jam.”
- **Presenting children with choices provides opportunities for decision making and problem solving.**
 - Through practice with choice making, children learn to accept responsibility for their choices and actions and learn they are competent and capable.
 - Choice giving facilitates the development of the child’s conscience; as children are allowed to learn from their mistakes, they learn to weigh decisions based on possible consequences.
- **Providing children with choices reduces power struggles** between parent and child and, importantly, preserves the child-parent relationship.
 - Both parent and child are empowered. Parent is responsible for, or in control of, providing parameters for choices. Children are responsible for, or in control of, their decision (within parent-determined parameters).

Choice-Giving Strategies

- **Provide age-appropriate choices** that are equally acceptable to the child and to you (parent). Remember that you must be willing to live with the choice the child makes.
- Don’t use choices to try and manipulate the child to do what you want by presenting one choice that you want the child to choose and a second choice that you know the child won’t like.
- **Provide little choices to little kids; big choices to big kids.** *Example: A 3-year-old can only handle choosing between two shirts or two food items. “Sasha, do you want to wear your red dress or your pink dress to school?” “Sasha, do you want an apple or orange with your lunch?”*

Choice Giving to Avoid Potential Problem Behavior and Power Struggles

- Choices can be used to *avoid a potential problem*. Similar to the example above, choices given are equally acceptable to parent and child. In this case, choices are planned in advance by the parent to avoid problems that the child has a history of struggling with. In the example above, if Sasha has trouble getting dressed in the morning, provide a choice of what to wear the evening before (to avoid a struggle the next morning); after she has made the choice, take the dress out of the closet, ready for morning.
- Children who are given the responsibility for making a decision are more likely to abide by the decision.
- In selecting choices to prevent problems, it is very important that parents understand the real problem that their child is struggling with and plan ahead to prevent the problem.
 - If your child always comes home hungry and wants something sweet, but you want him to have a healthy snack, plan ahead by having on hand at least two choices of healthy snacks that your child likes. Before he heads for the ice cream, say:

“Antonia, I bought grapes and cherries for snack; which would you like?”
 - If you know your 9-year-old child tends to head straight for the couch to watch TV after school, plan ahead to brainstorm alternative options for your child to do after school.

“Ana, I thought of some things we can do this afternoon before dinner. Do you want to go outside and play catch or help bake a cake for dessert tonight?”

Hint: This is another place where “structuring for success” can be applied by eliminating the majority of unacceptable snack items, instead stocking up on healthy snack items, and having acceptable activities planned when children arrive home. Structuring your home environment to minimize conflict allows both you and your child to feel more “in control.” Remember: **Be a thermostat!**

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

Advanced Choice Giving: Providing Choices as Consequences—Sessions 6-7

Children need parental guidance and discipline. In many instances, parents must make decisions for children—decisions that children are not mature enough to take responsibility for—such as bedtime, other matters of health and safety, and compliance with household policies and rules. However, parents can provide their children with some measure of control in the situation by providing choices. Parents are reminded of the importance of connecting with their child and being sensitive to their emotional state when giving choices or limiting behavior. Remember the Rule of Thumb: “When a child is drowning, don't try to teach her to swim.” When children are feeling upset or out of control, they have difficulty hearing choices and consequences. First connect and help calm your child (co-regulate through reflecting child's feelings in soothing voice), then provide choice or wait until a later time.

Oreo® Cookie Method of Choice Giving (from *Choices, Cookies, & Kids* video by Dr. Garry Landreth)

Example 1: Three-year-old Isabella is clutching a handful of Oreo® cookies, ready to eat them all (it is right before bedtime, and the parent knows it would not be healthy for Isabella to have all the cookies. But Isabella does not know that—she just knows that she wants cookies!): **“Isabella, you can choose to keep one of the cookies to eat and put the rest back, or you can put all of the cookies back—which do you choose?”** Or, if it is permissible to the parent for Isabella to have two cookies: **“Isabella, you can have one cookie or two—which do you choose?”**

Example 2: Six-year-old Oliver does not want to take his medicine and adamantly tells you so! Taking the medicine is not a choice—that is a given. But the parent can provide the child with some choice in the situation by saying, **“Oliver, you can choose to have apple juice or orange juice with your medicine—which do you choose?”**

Example 3: Eight-year-old Omar is tired and cranky and refuses to get in the car to go home from Grandma and Grandpa's house. **“Omar, you can choose to sit in the middle row by Daddy, or you can choose to sit in the back seat with Selin—which do you choose?”**

Choice Giving to Enforce Household Policies and Rules

Choice giving can be used to enforce household policies/rules. Begin by working on one at a time. In general, provide two choices—one is phrased positively (consequence for complying with policy), and the other choice (consequence for not complying with policy) is stated as a consequence that you believe your child would not prefer (such as giving up favorite TV show). Consequence for noncompliance should be relevant and logical rather than punitive, and it must be **enforceable**.

Example: A household rule has been established that toys in the family room must be picked up off the floor before dinner (children cannot seem to remember without being told repeatedly, and parent is feeling frustrated with constant reminders and power struggles).

“We are about to institute a new and significant policy within the confines of this domicile” (big words get children's attention!). **“When you choose to pick up your toys before dinner, you choose to watch 30 minutes of television after dinner. When you choose not to pick up your toys before dinner, you choose not to watch television after dinner.”** *Note: Be sure to let children know when there are 10-15 minutes before dinner, so they have time to pick up their toys.*

Children may be unable to comply the first time you announce this new policy, because you have just informed them. But what is important is that you begin to allow your children to use their internal resources and self-control to remember the new policy without constant reminders. (Remember that the new policy was implemented because you were frustrated and tired of nagging!) So, the second night, parent says, "**Joaquin and Jamal, dinner will be ready in 10 minutes; it is time to pick up your toys.**" Parent walks out. When it is time for dinner, parent goes back into room to announce dinner:

- a. The toys have not been picked up—say nothing at that moment. After dinner, go back into family room and announce to children, "**Looks like you decided to not watch television tonight.**" Even if children get busy picking up the toys, they have already chosen not to watch TV for this night. "**Oh, you're thinking that if you pick your toys up now that you can watch TV, but the policy is that toys have to be put away before dinner.**" After children plead for another chance, *follow through on the consequence*, calmly and empathically stating: "**I know that you wish you would have chosen to put your toys away before dinner, so you could choose to watch TV now. Tomorrow night, you can choose to put your toys away before dinner and choose to watch TV.**" *Some children will choose not to watch TV for several nights in a row!*
- b. The children are busy picking up toys and have put most of them away. Parent says (as she helps with the few remaining toys to demonstrate spirit of cooperation and prevent delay of dinner), "**It's time for dinner—looks like you've chosen to watch TV after dinner tonight.**"

Guidelines for Choice Giving in Relation to Limit Setting and Consequences

- Enforce consequence **without fail** and **without anger**.
- Consequence is for "today" only—*each day (or play session) should be a chance for a fresh start; a chance to have learned from the previous decision and resulting consequence; a chance to use internal resources to control "self" and make a different decision.*
- **Reflect** child's choice with empathy, but remain firm. Consistency and follow-through are critical!
- **Communicate** choices in a matter-of-fact voice—power struggles are likely to result if child hears frustration or anger in parent's voice and believes parent is invested in one choice over another. Child must be free to choose consequence for noncompliance.

Caution: *Once your child has reached the stage of "out of control," your child may not be able to hear and process a choice. Take a step back and focus on your child's feelings, reflecting their feelings empathically while limiting unacceptable behavior.*

Remember the oxygen mask analogy: You (parent) must remain calm and relational during choice giving/limit setting in order for child to perceive that they do have a genuine choice in the situation and avoid power struggle. Parent remains calm, neutral, and relational. You want your child to be successful in choosing!