



Is it worth the battle?

I read an article recently which told the story of one mum's journey through this past year. It described how at the start of the first spell of home schooling, she'd battled with her child on a daily basis to get him to partake in any of the school work that had been set for him. Understandably, she reached the conclusion, after a few weeks that the emotional stress and turmoil this daily battle was putting them both through simply wasn't worth it and wasn't doing either of them any good. So, she decided that the best thing for them both



was to put the school work completely to one side and together, with her son, come up with their own plans of how they would spend their days. Now I'm certainly not setting out to criticise this mum's actions. I have seen for myself how tough this last year has been for those trying to home school and I have witnessed and experienced the turmoil and upset that this time of uncertainty has created. I myself have encouraged numerous families to take breaks as a family and to take time away from the pressures of school work. Each family has had to map their way through these past 12 months and work out what works best for them and their own individual circumstances, and so the heart of this article isn't based on whether or not children should be sat at home doing school work on a daily basis, this is about the simple principle of whether or not there should be any need for such a battle in the first place.

These past 12 months have highlighted a deep-rooted issue that has, up until now, largely been buried just beneath the surface and that is, who is in control. More and more in my line of work I hear phrases such as 'but they simply don't want to' or 'if they say no what can I do about it?'. I appreciate that every child has their moments of not wanting to follow their parent's instructions, some more than others, but if there are underpinning boundaries in place then there should always only ever be one outcome to the situation.

Children naturally test the boundaries, time and time again. This is all part of them growing up. If they spot a weakness or an area of vulnerability, even from a young age, then they will latch on to this and use it to their advantage next time they are asked to do something. It is so important that children learn from the youngest of ages that 'no' means 'no' and that if they go against this, there will be a consequence. We live in a society where people are so quick to judge, to point fingers, and to blame. I do believe that this has led to parents becoming far more cautious when it comes to being tough with their children. All too often they look for their child's friendship or approval and have the attitude that if their child's happy, then that's the most important thing. Unfortunately, this path only leads in one direction. Although they might not appear to appreciate it at the time, children gain security and value in being told 'no' and knowing that it is meant. Children want to know that there are solid boundaries and limits to what they will and won't be allowed to get away with. For example, imagine that two separate children had gone out for the evening having both been given times that they had to be home by. Child A is on her way home but running a few minutes late and has her parents on the phone checking where she is and reminding her that she had a time to be home by. Child B stays out well beyond her given time and doesn't hear anything from her parents. Who is going to feel the most loved and valued? Clearly it is Child A. Child B has been given the same direction, but this hasn't been followed through and her whereabouts haven't even been questioned. The lack of value and love placed on Child B will have a huge detrimental impact on the child and will impact on all areas of her life as she grows up, whereas Child A will have a real sense of security from the boundaries that her parents have put in place and expect her to adhere to.



As difficult as it can be, standing by what you have said and not giving in to your child's pleas, means that next time, the child is less likely to take up that same battle because they know that you mean what you say. Even if they do choose to pick the same fight again, over time it will become shorter as they will know the outcome. It is the unconditional love that a parent has for a child that leads them to discipline their child and put boundaries in place in the first place. Every parent wants what is best for their child and wants them to grow and develop into the best that they can be. This, at times, can mean having to be tough and having to stand strong in the face of the battle. If a child has been able to control the battles from a young age, then those battles only become harder for the parents to win as the child grows up, but I do believe that it's never too late to step up and take control of the battle. Once those foundational boundaries have been established, the chances of having to face continual battles in all areas of life, diminishes. Once a child knows where they stand, in love, then they will know deep down that 'yes' means 'yes' and 'no' means 'no', even if they don't always like it.

So, is it worth the battle? For the sake of both you and your child, yes it absolutely is!