



TCI – Module Ten Power Struggle

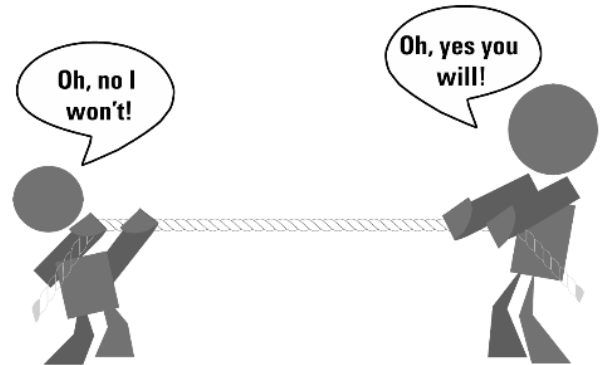


The Power Struggle

A typical power struggle occurs when the adult makes a request and the young person is unwilling or unable to comply. The longer the child/ young person doesn't comply and the adult doesn't back down the more the tension builds. The fight is on for control between the child/young person and adult and it becomes a "tug of war". Neither side wants to back down, so things will escalate to the point that nobody "wins" and the losses can usually be heavy.

The dynamics of the Power Struggle

- Something happens to trigger a stress response in the child/young person and their behaviour escalates
- The stressful event will evoke strong feelings and anxieties for the child/young person and they may start to exhibit pain based behaviours in order to cope with these feelings
- The adult becomes frustrated/ angry and is not using positive self-talk to regulate their own emotions during the situation and it becomes a tug of war.
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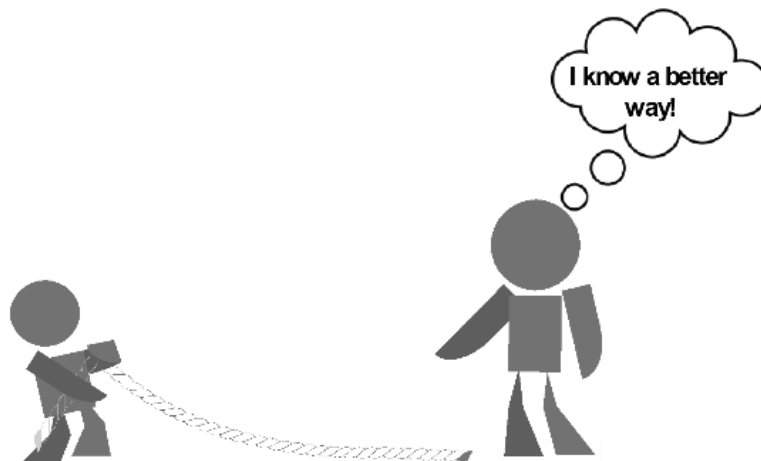


In this moment it is best for the adult to drop the rope and use positive self-talk to identify their own feelings and stay focused on what the child/young person needs. They can do this while also using one of the below strategies:

- **Listen and validate the young person's feelings:** Use active listening to understand the young person's feelings and what the young person is trying to express.
- **Manage the environment:** Remove additional stimulation that can be fuelling the situation.
- **Offer choices and time to decide:** Remind the child/young person of positive choices he/she has made in the past.
- **Drop or change the expectation:** If there is no immediate danger and the child/young person is unable to meet the expectation at the present time.



It is useful for adults to think about and come up with some positive self-talk statements that they can draw on during a crisis. Anger during a power struggle can get in the way of the adult's ability to be able to drop the rope and make good rational decisions. This is where utilising self-awareness and self-regulation skills is important. It is important to ask "What am I feeling now" Asking ourselves this question can help to determine the emotions behind our behaviour. It could also help us to tap into any negative self-talk we may have in that moment, using positive self-talk can help to bring us back into our thinking brain and work out the best way to respond.



Details of this topic are covered in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) Student Workbook 7th Edition. Refer to Module Three pages S45– S48