

Parenting Through the Pushback

Sometimes, parenting can feel like pushing a boulder uphill—especially when it comes to getting kids to do the things we *know* are good for them: going outside, joining family time, getting off screens, trying something new.

You invite them to the beach, they resist. You suggest a walk, they complain. You plan a family dinner, they moan about being tired or busy. You tell them it's time to visit relatives. They collapse in a heap and sob.

But here's the truth: **kids don't always know what's good for them**—and it's our job, as parents, to gently guide them anyway.

Why Resistance Is Normal (But Worth Pushing Through)

Whether it's a teenager refusing to leave their room or a child groaning about a camping trip, the resistance is often strong. But time and again, after they've pushed through their initial reluctance, kids come out the other side glowing.

Like me, you've likely seen it with:

- A daughter who didn't want to swim, but later said, "I'm so glad I came."
- Teenage girls on camp who dreaded going "off grid," then bonded, laughed, and grew in confidence.
- Children who complain about outdoor time, then don't want to leave once they're there.

In every case, the discomfort up front is the price of something meaningful on the other side—connection, resilience, and joy.

But Sometimes, Resistance Is Telling Us Something

Still, it's important to pause and recognise that sometimes, when kids say "no," there may be a deeper reason. They might not have the words—or feel safe enough—to explain. A daughter might be on her period and feeling vulnerable. There could be a person, even a relative, who makes them feel uncomfortable—or worse. As parents, we won't always get it right. But at the very least, we need to listen. Ask gentle questions. Be open to what might be going on beneath the surface. Our job is to guide, yes—but also to protect, to hear, and to respond with compassion when something's not right.

So What Can Parents Do?

Here are five practical, real-world strategies to help parents lead their children into those growth opportunities—without yelling, forcing, or giving up.

1. Lead by Example

Kids learn more from what we *do* than what we say. If we want them off screens and into the sunshine, we need to show them we value that too. Go outside. Prioritise time together. Be present. They're watching—and following—more than we realise.

2. Create Opportunities

Make it easy for your kids to say “yes” by creating inviting, low-pressure chances to connect. A movie night on the couch. A beach trip. A milkshake at the café. Keep it simple, and consistent.

3. Extend the Invitation... Repeatedly

Don't be discouraged by a “no.” Keep inviting them. Again and again. These bids for connection tell your child: “You matter. I want you with me.” Sooner or later, they'll accept.

4. Be Firm, Not Forceful

Sometimes kids need a little nudge. Not a shout. Not a bribe. Just firm, kind clarity:

“I know you don't feel like it. But this is important. Let's do it together.”

Parenting isn't about giving in to resistance. It's about helping kids through it—with empathy and strength.

5. Celebrate the Good Moments

When they do come along, savour it. Say, “Wasn't that fun?” or “I'm so glad you came.” These affirmations reinforce the value of shared time—and help them remember it next time they feel reluctant. But DO NOT rub into them the fact that they complained. This often builds resistance and reminds them to dig their heels in harder next time.

BONUS TIP - have them invite friends along (where appropriate) to make it easier for them to get to “yes”.

Model the Life You Want Them to Live

If we want our kids to be active, resilient, connected and emotionally aware, we have to model it. That means stepping away from our own screens. Saying yes when they invite *us*. Making the time.

Because the way we live—how we spend our time, how we talk, how we show up—teaches them more than anything else.

It's not always easy. But the payoff is worth it: stronger relationships, healthier habits, and kids who trust that we're in their corner—even when we push them outside their comfort zone.

So this week, make the invite. Get outside. Be the example. And don't be afraid to lead—even when they grumble.

You just might see them glow when they come back inside.



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