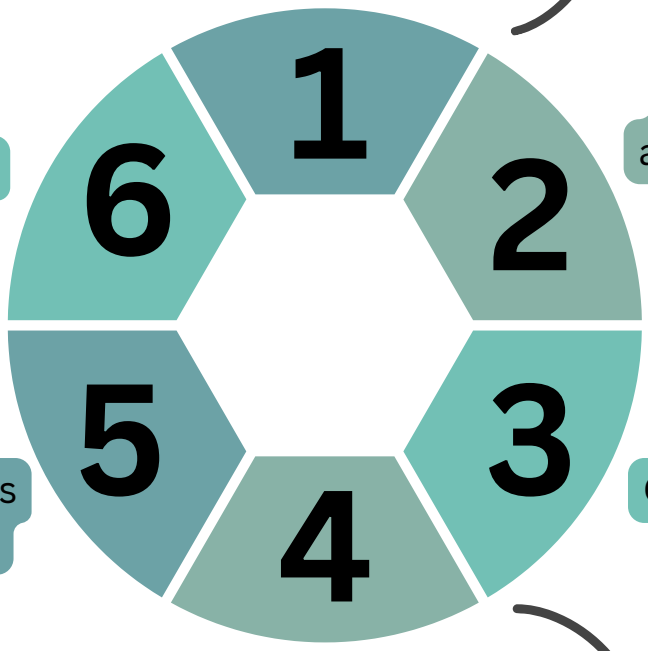
The Power Struggle Cycle

What is a power struggle?

A battle of wills between two people who do not feel heard or understood

What doesn't work?

Forcing, yelling, begging, negotiating, convincing, bribing.



1. Inciting stressor
2. Child's feelings about the stressor
3. Child's response
4. Parent response
5. Child's feelings about parent response
6. Child's response to parent response

What does work?

Being clear on your values, preferences, rules, and boundaries, de-escalation, staying curious.

A power struggle is your chance to teach how to resolve conflict, not further engage in it.

Written and designed by Emry Kettle © 2025