

How to give choices to someone who may violently resist guidance and suggestions.

by
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Avoid: “Do you want to do XXX?” This may make the person feel boxed in and it gives them something to react against. “No.”

It may also be necessary to avoid asking, “Do you want to do XXX or YYY?” This could create a potential conflict and could give a sense of being controlled to the person that they might react against.

Better: “What do you want to do?” This may be ok if person is in a good mood and has an idea, and you have the time. They may also say, “Nothing,” which leaves you with nowhere to go.

Even better: “Do you want to do something, or do you want to do nothing?” This gives them control, but you are still not being opposed by them if they say, “Nothing.” If the person says, “I’m not sure,” this leaves the door open and you can say, “Let me know when you decide.”

If person is having difficulty with this type of open-ended choice, you could offer, “Do you want to do XXX specifically, or do you want to do nothing?” This gives her a “way out” of the situation but you have still offered her a choice to think about.

Take home message: Most importantly, be unconcerned if the person accepts an option or chooses to do nothing. Be neither satisfied, nor disappointed. Do not appear to be a source of approval or expectation for the person to react against.

When something comes up that must be done, get on with it. When there is no opportunity for the person to do “nothing,” offer the forced choice of, “You can do this or that.” Do not offer the option of “nothing.” Be clear, explicit and emphatic. But, be prepared for the reactive explosion. Choose your battles and only offer this type of choice if absolutely necessary.