

# PARENTING ON CUE

with **Queenie Tan**



**Audio Transcript: Parenting on Cue Podcast with Queenie Tan Episode 20**

## **POC 120 : Dealing with a strong-willed child who likes to argue with us**

Hi, Queenie Tan here. And thank you for joining me in another episode of the Parenting On Cue Podcast. Now today, I'm going to answer a question from a parent who is talking about her strong-willed, unreasonable four and a half year old. And the question goes like this, "I have a very strong-willed four and a half year old who questions everything I tell him to do. He tends to disagree with what I need him to do. And when he makes a mistake, he refuses to admit it and gets upset and unreasonable." Now this is something that a lot of parents struggle with, even with like the two year olds because before that, when we had babies, it's just so easy. We just move them anywhere, put them anywhere. And they're not mobile, they will still be there. And then suddenly you have this little bundle of joy start to talk and start to ask questions, and start to think for himself, and start to realize that he is an individual of his own. And so he's entitled to opinions, to whatever he wants to say, to having options and making choices of his own.

I think what we need to understand is that, as our children get a little bit older, they are more and more like an individual. I'm not saying that they were any less when they were babies, but I'm saying that they're learning to understand that they are individuals as well, just like you and I. They are also discovering that they're capable of having an opinion, coming up with ideas and standing up for what they want and what they believe in. And it depends on what we want to embrace, whether we want to embrace adultism or childism. And I've spoken about this two episodes earlier that will influence the way we see them and how we treat them.

So let me just summarize, adultism is where we feel that children do not deserve the same rights as we do because they are lesser than us, and we own them. So they're sort of like our property. So they have no right to an opinion. They have no right to speak up. They have no right to ask us questions. They should do we tell them to do because we own them. And they should just quietly comply because we are like the master, and they're the servant. So there's a huge power struggle, very very uneven distribution of power there. But if that is the view that you hold, then yeah, it's... you can say that they are disobedient, get strong-willed, they're non compliant, they're not obedient. I mean, that was the way I was raised.

But what I'm trying to do with a lot of parents these days is to move them away from that. Because in Asia, we are still predominantly adultism. I'm trying to move them towards childism where we understand that children have their own rights because they should be respected like adults. They should be given at least basic respect. They should be given options, so freedom to choose, freedom to speak up. And they should also be given freedom of movement. And that we

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should respect them like any other person that we meet on the street. We should give them some basic respect. So if you are leaning more towards childism, then you would see your child, your four and a half year old, the same way you will see your boss. Would you call your boss strong-willed? No, not to his face, at least. Would you question him for questioning you? No. Would you be upset if he disagrees with you? No. Because everybody has the right to disagree with anybody. And would you call him out when he makes a mistake? No. If you call him out and he refuses to admit it and he gets upset, is that a big deal? No. Because we respect him as a human being. But the problem is, if we are leaning towards adultism, we don't, we will not respect children the way that we will respect an adult. That's where the issue is. It depends on which end of the adultism, childism spectrum you're at.

So there's really no right way or wrong way to do it, but if you are like me, raised in an environment where people embrace adultism and you want to move towards childism because you want your children to be raised differently, so that they will raise their children differently, then I've got a few suggestions for you. Here's what you can do instead. I think that it is important not to brand a child. It's important not to brand a child as strong-willed, as naughty, as stubborn because at the end of the day, they're just children. They're just like adult. And adults can be stubborn about something. They can be really really understanding about something else.

And there's no real need to brand a child any more than is to brand an adult. So if your child makes certain decisions, and he stands by those decision, I will consider a virtue actually because a lot of times, adults are fickle-minded. They don't even have principles. I've worked with so many adults who don't even have principles that they stand by. And a lot of people are so unscrupulous. They would even sacrifice their own integrity for a little bit of personal gain. So if your child is able to stand by something that they believe in, then I would say that that is a really really good trait. So if they want to stand by something that they believe in, that's great. If they want to disagree, that's great as well. We can teach them how to disagree politely. That's fine because there's always ways that we can disagree politely, and disagree in a way that's not polite. Do you know I mean? So I mean like if you're in a car or if you're attending a court case, you would object politely. You won't be throwing a fit. We can teach them how to object or question things politely or disagree politely. That's absolutely fine. And I think that when children make a mistake, it's the same as when we make a mistake, nobody likes to be called out on it. And I think that instead putting them on the spot. And nobody likes that. I don't like it either. When I make a mistake, I don't want people to me on the spot. I get defensive, and I get really really upset. So when children or adults make mistakes, I think it's very important for us to use the power of suggestion. If they didn't realize that they made a mistake, we can use the power of suggestion to get them to problem-solve so that they can see the situation from a third party. We can help them do that, and look at, and help them see the situation.

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Also another thing that I practice at home and in my classroom is that we do not punish mistakes, rather we learn from them. And every time we learn from mistake that is like a success. But if we don't learn from a mistake, and we make the same mistake twice, that is failure. I always tell my boys that you can make as many mistakes as you want but don't make the same mistakes twice. So we celebrate mistakes so they don't feel like when they make a mistake that they're gonna be punished for it. They will immediately look out for opportunities for them to make it better, things, lessons that they can learn from it, and how they can fix it. So that's very important. And if we can have that culture at home, then I think they're less likely to get upset when they make a mistake, and more likely to learn from it, which is what we want. Now, at the end of the day, we need to facilitate their learning process. And I think that if we can create a calm environment, where we can discuss and talk things through with our children then it's a lot easier to facilitate their learning than if we were always seen as arguing with them, and calling them out, and making them feel small. It's really hard to facilitate learning under those very harsh, extreme circumstances. It would be easier if we could come across as "Oh you made a mistake, oh my god you won't believe this, last week I made the exact same mistake. And this is what I learned."

So there are a lot of things that you need to work on is not... I'm so sorry that there's no easy fix for this. But I'm hoping that this podcast will help you see that there's a lot of things at play. Namely, it's a cycle that we are trying to break, the cycle of adultism that we are trying to break, so that we can move more towards childism. And every time we try to break up a cycle, it's very very hard. It's gonna require a lot of intentional effort on our part. And it's gonna require us to really re-examine the things that we do so that we can do it differently. I hope that this podcast can give you a little bit more perspective into the complexities of parenting. It's not just about raising children. But it's also about dealing with the way we were raised. And how we want to raise our children differently. So thank you so much for listening. Until next week. Remember, happy and confident parents have happy and confident children.