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FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

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BY AMY WRUBLE

Any parent who's ever begged a toddler to change out of his pj's knows that sometimes you have to pick your battles. But which are truly worth fighting, and what's OK to let go? We talked to the experts to find out:

THE PROB

She clamps her mouth shut whenever she sees a toothbrush.

It's time for bed and he's stalling with stories.

She insists on wearing a princess costume to preschool.

Playtime is fun, but toy cleanup is war.

He's begging for juice but won't say the magic word.

THE CALL

Because good oral health is so important for the entire body, this is one battle worth picking, says Mark H. Goldenberg, D.D.S., a pediatric dentist in Beverly Hills.

Hold your ground on a consistent bedtime, advises Jill Spivack, psychotherapist and coauthor of *The Sleepy Solution*. "Sleep is the foundation for everything."

Little kids are trying to figure out where they can have a big-kid voice, says Spivack. "Picking their clothes is an excellent area to give them."

"If you go nuts about it, you're going to have way more trouble," says Betsy Brown Braun, author of *Just Tell Me What to Say*. Tidy up with your kids so they learn the habit.

Lack of manners now doesn't portend a future filled with rudeness. Keep saying "please" and "thank you" yourself and eventually your kid will catch on, says Braun.

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