

REGULATE

Help me get back in control

Two Good Choices

Give back some control without giving up the boundary.

WHAT IT IS

When students feel powerless or cornered, another adult command can become one more thing to resist. Instead of fighting for control, offer two simple choices that are both safe, appropriate, and genuinely acceptable. The boundary can stay firm while the student gets some say in how they move forward.

The goal:

Create a small, safe place where the student can exercise real choice.

MAKE BOTH CHOICES REAL

Only offer options you can actually honor. If one answer will be rejected, it is not really a choice. Keep nonnegotiable limits clear, then identify where flexibility is possible inside those limits.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

A highly activated student does not need a long menu of possibilities. Two manageable options reduce decision load and make it easier to respond. Use a calm tone and give the student a moment to choose.

TRY SAYING

“Would you rather sit here or take a short walk?”

“We do need to figure this out. Talk now, or take five minutes first?”

TRY THIS

NAME

the boundary that is not changing.

OFFER

two options you can genuinely accept.

PAUSE

and give the student a moment to choose.

HONOR

the choice without adding a lecture or penalty.

KEY MOVE

Do not fight for control. Create safe opportunities for agency.

KEEP IN MIND

Choice is not the same as giving up expectations. Some limits are nonnegotiable because of safety, school policy, or the needs of others. Be clear about those limits, then look for meaningful choices within them. Avoid using false choices, threats disguised as options, or too many choices at once.