

POWER PLAY: *My 7-year-old and I seem to get into power struggles over so many things lately. How can I let him know that I am the boss?*

—Sarah P., Hoboken, NJ

When you notice a shift like this in your child, it's worth reflecting on what might have changed. Has he entered a new phase of development, where he feels he has "grown up" and is looking for new privileges? Giving him control over certain decisions can make him less likely to argue about *everything*. Maybe you can give him complete control over one dinner a week or let him have more say over the clothing you buy him. Then make it clear that you are in charge on all other decisions. *You're* the parent, you make the rules.

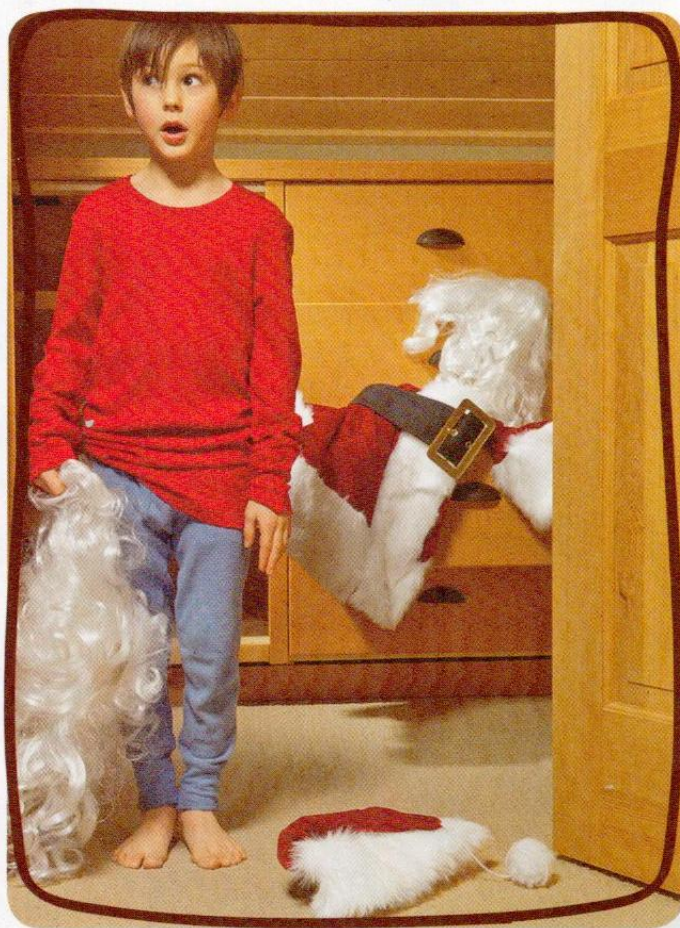
Another reason for a shift in behavior might be changes in his environment such as divorce or moving. If this is the case, talk with him about what's changing and how he feels. Let him know that you understand. Connecting in this way will allow the two of you to be on the same team, facing these changes together.

ARE YOU SANTA?: *Christmas is a special time in our family: making a wish list for Santa, leaving him notes and cookies. But recently my 6-year-old asked me if I was Santa. I had no idea what to say, so I changed the subject. Did I make a mistake?*

—Patty K., Greenwood, IN

ASK P&C

Developmental psychology expert Michelle Anthony answers your questions about your child's social, emotional, and behavioral development at home and in school. **THIS MONTH:** power struggles, questions about Santa, and pouting when a new sibling is born.



Each family handles childhood myths like Santa or the Tooth Fairy differently. But it sounds like the magic of the man in red is important in your home.

While every child eventually sheds those fantasies, ask yourself if now is that time for your child. Usually, when a child asks his par-

ent, "Are you Santa Claus?" he really means, "You aren't Santa Claus, are you?" The day will come when he asks the former question in earnest, but for now you can feel confident about

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answering his real question according to your family belief system.

BABY BLUES: *We just had our second baby. Our 3-year-old daughter is very upset that I need to spend so much time taking care of her new brother. I'm exhausted already. What should I do?*

—Trina L., Wenatchee, WA

Most 3-year-olds have a tough time adjusting to being "demoted" by a new sibling. While you need to make sure you take care of the immediate and necessary needs of your newborn, there are many ways to help your older one feel equally important.

Give your daughter a special role: "I need my diaper-getter!"

Emphasize your choice to be with her (over the baby) at moments: "I'm going to give the baby to Daddy because I want to snuggle with you!"

Put her needs first when you can, and make a point to let her hear you tell that to the baby. You might say to your newborn, "I see you crying, but you need to wait because I need to get your sister a band-aid." **P&C**



Have a question you'd like P&C to answer? E-mail it to AskPC@scholastic.com.