A more proactive style was demonstrated by my friend's Jojo's daughter, Tess, who was unhappy with her mother for reprimanding her on one occasion. When her mother warned her that she would not take her back to a colleague's house, because she had not played sufficiently nicely with that colleague's daughter, Tess made it clear that she had other plans anyway!

In this instance, Tess was feeling particularly aggrieved because the other child had teased her and made her cry. So she clearly felt that being expected to be nice under those conditions was asking for too much. At any rate, she came home and packed her sweater and her two favourite teddy bears, before informing her mother that she planned to move to New York with her father! As Jojo later told me, she had just about been prepared for such behaviour when her daughter was 14 and threatening (like other recalcitrant teenagers) to leave home, but to encounter it almost 10 years ahead of schedule was a little unexpected...

Then there are some children, who are natural sceptics. To be fair, they may well have something to be sceptical about! Adults are often neither consistent, nor honest, in what they tell children - although it is true that there are cases when such "flexibility" with the truth may be in the child's own interests (e.g. myths such as Santa Claus and tooth fairy have given harmless pleasure to many a child).

It is interesting to note how some children are also less susceptible to adult "spin" than others. Another friend's daughter has become tired of attending day-care, and has made it clear that she's now ready to join kindergarten. Her mother has tried in vain to persuade her that day-care is basically a necessary step towards kindergarten (as kindergarten is towards first-grade), and that she will learn things at day-care that she needs to know before she can manage kindergarten successfully. However, her daughter is suspicious about this logic, and has taken pains to point out that all they ever do at day-care is singing, and counting. Hence, she argues, she can't be learning that much anyway, and she should be allowed to begin learning more important things in kindergarten straightaway...!

Another important characteristic of world leaders, as any fool knows, is an utter conviction of their own rightness. Indeed, as several have recently made clear, the only higher authority that they acknowledge is God - who is the only power to whom they consider themselves answerable (which presumably means that they are not answerable to the electorate...)

You might feel that most children seek to influence relevant adults - through pleading, persuasion, coercion, and if all else fails, throwing a fit, preferably in a public place! But the fact is, some are undoubtedly more subtle, and indisputably more successful, than others.

Such convictions can emerge at a very early age, often manifesting itself in strongly expressed preferences for particular kinds of clothing - as a friend of mine found out to his discomfiture recently. His five-year-old daughter is very fond of wearing jeans - and only jeans! She scorns the many pretty dresses and skirts their various relatives have generously bestowed upon her. As a result, any attempt to dress her up becomes a struggle for her parents.

In desperation, her father recently threatened to give all her other clothes away, if she did not change her ways, and diversify beyond denim. Alas, the strategy backfired completely - with his daughter appearing least bothered at the prospect of having what she clearly considers her excess clothes given away to others. Last heard from, the exhausted parents were contemplating their alternative strategies, but I have to say in this case I'm putting my money on the daughter!

And finally, there are those children who leave you in no about the scale of their ambitions. Tess, who I mentioned earlier, has as a primary role model none other than Superman (though she has been known to give the time of day to Spiderman, as well...!) One of her favourite pastimes is to knot a tablecloth around her neck to serve as a cape, and venture forth to save the world...Well, at least no-one can say they didn't recognise this one as a future leader in the making!