

Dealing With Anger and Disrespect



At some point you may hear your child say: “No!” “I don’t want to!” “You can’t make me!” Most children get angry or disrespectful once in a while. But some children spend much of their time fighting and arguing with their parents, their teachers and the rest of the world.

What causes this angry and disrespectful behavior in children? What can parents do to help children develop the skills they need to manage their emotions and behavior?

Here are some basic facts you need to know about dealing with anger and disrespect.

QuickTips

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What Causes Disrespectful, Angry Behavior?

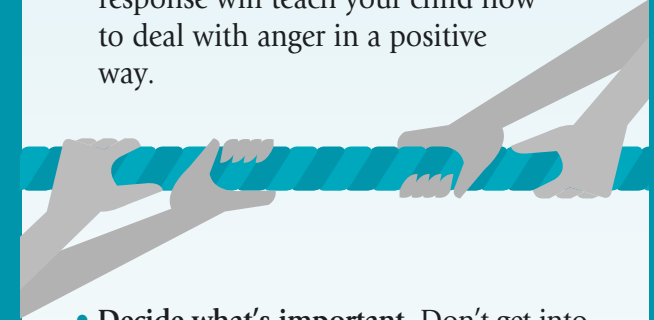
The first step toward handling challenging behavior is to understand the root cause. Why is your child so angry? What’s behind that disrespectful attitude? For example:

- **Is your child being bullied?** Children who are the target of bullying may take out their anger on their parents. Bullying can be physical (pushing, hitting), verbal (teasing, threatening) or social (being rejected or ignored by peers).
- **Is your child struggling with schoolwork?** Students can become frustrated when they don’t understand the work or get low grades. They may express their frustration by being disrespectful to teachers and parents.
- **Are there changes at home?** Children might react with anger if they are overwhelmed by the stress of a family situation that they have no control over, such as a divorce or a move.

If you answered yes to any of the above questions and your child is angry or disrespectful, contact the teacher or school counselor. You can work together to help your child.

What Can You Do?

- **Be a good role model.** Your attitudes and the way you treat others will have a strong impact on your child.
- **Talk about why others deserve respect.** Everyone has different skills and talents. And people see things a little differently. Those differences make society better. Even when we disagree with others, it’s still important to respect them and their rights to different views.
- **D=Remain calm.** If your child is angry with you, it’s hard not to react with anger. Learning to manage your own response will teach your child how to deal with anger in a positive way.
- **Decide what’s important.** Don’t get into power struggles over minor issues. If your child is often angry, it may be wise to pick your battles.
- **Give your child some control.** When life feels out of control, your child will take comfort in being allowed to make some choices.
- **Communicate your love.** Children need to know that parents still love them, even when they don’t love their behavior.



Teach Your Child to Cope With Anger

Feeling angry is normal. But children need to learn that they have choices about how they will handle their anger and behavior. Sit down with your child and brainstorm appropriate ways to respond to anger.

- **Learn what situations are likely to lead to anger.** Some children tend to lose their tempers in certain situations. What are they? If your child knows, for instance, that being teased leads to anger, brainstorm ways to respond. Your child could choose to walk away or tell an adult.
- **Learn how to cool off.** Sometimes you can't predict when a situation will make you angry. But if your child notices physical symptoms of anger (increased breathing and heart rates, for example), suggest these coping strategies:
 - **Take deep breaths.**
 - **Think for a minute** before saying anything.
 - **Get away.** Later, when feelings are under control, your child can respond to the situation.

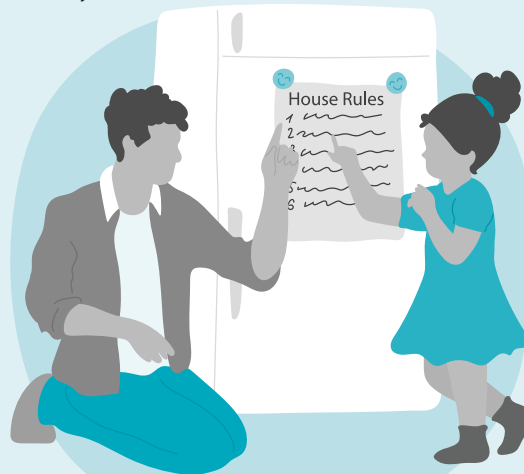


Set Up a Behavior Plan

You cannot always change your child's *feelings*, but you can change your child's *behavior*. If your child acts out when angry, or acts in a way that is disrespectful, you need to set some limits on what you will—and won't—allow. That means setting clear consequences.

For example, you might say, "You may not hit. The first time you hit someone, you will have to go to your room. The second time you hit, you will lose screen time for one day."

Don't worry that your consequences don't seem strict enough. Consistency is more important. Sending children to their room for five minutes is usually as effective as sending them there for an hour. Make your consequences reasonable, and then apply them—every time.



GET HELP If You Need It

If your child's anger is disruptive in school and has a negative impact on family life, you may need to consider professional help. Talk to your child's teacher, school counselor and pediatrician. You can also check with a local mental health center for resources in your community.



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