

No More Back Talk!

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“We’re going to Annie’s play to night,” Mom announces with excitement.
“Your point?” her son shoots back daggers from his tone and eyes.

“Back talk” can leave you anywhere from irritated to infuriated. Below are steps you can take that will keep you from becoming a casualty of disrespectful communication:

1. Determine if the child is using “back talk” or if he is communicating something else.

Children use “back talk” when they are tired, hungry, getting sick, or their medication is running out. If this is the case, handle their physical needs as quickly as possible. Discuss their “back talk” at a calmer time.

Children use back talk as a way of showing their frustration at not getting enough quality time with parents. If this is true, do something to re-establish the relationship - read a book together, go for a walk or bike ride, give them snuggle time. Teach your child how to ask for your time in an appropriate way when things are calmer.

Another culprit is the child has not been allowed or taught how to express his negative feelings in an appropriate way. Teach respectful ways to get their point across. For example, teach your youngster that he may not call you names but he could say, “I am angry at you, Mommy.” In our household, we use the signal “re-do” which means; “*I want to hear what you have to say. Please say it in a more respectful way.*” Be prepared for your child to say it to you!

If the “back talk” is unrelated to the circumstances above and it feels like your child is testing you or being spiteful, continue with the following steps.

2. Create a plan of action. One of the best forms of action is to not be in the presence of someone who is disrespecting you. Use words like, “*I am not willing to be disrespected. I will be in my room (or anywhere you choose) if you want to try again.*” If you are on the phone with them and they are disrespectful, repeat the above phrase, tell them you are hanging up and that you will call back in ten minutes. In a car, pull over to a safe place, get out of the car and tell him you will not continue to drive while be treated disrespectfully.

Use a non-revengeful, calm tone. Use a tone that is assertive, not one that sounds like you are a victim. For example, “I buy you clothes and video games and this is the way you treat me! You are such a brat.” vs. “*I am unwilling to be spoken to like that. If you continue, I will take you home.*” Reinforce your words by immediately taking him home if he continues.

3. Take action. Remove yourself immediately. It takes two people to get into an argument. Don’t hang around and be one of them.

4. Be prepared for things to get worse. Often when we make a decision to do things differently, things get worse. If this happens, do not get discouraged or change your stance. Things will get better. Take a parenting class to get moral support.

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The most important point here is that you CANNOT make your child stop using “back talk.” However, you CAN and SHOULD model self-respect by not being in the presence of someone who is disrespectful.

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