Tools for Your Child's Success.org

Disrespect Age 11 Summary

Why Transform Disrespect?

11-year-olds seek independence and will naturally test limits and break rules. When they feel powerless and angry, they can lash out in ways that show disrespect for others. Though this is a normal part of their development and necessary for their learning, it can anger or worry a caring parent or someone in a parenting role. You can transform these moments into vital opportunities to teach children/teens alternatives that are healthy and respectful.



- Ask yourself, “Does my child/teen have an unmet need?” Perhaps they are hungry or tired, need attention, or need downtime.
- Check on how you are feeling. If you are angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed, you may need to take a few minutes to collect yourself before engaging your child/teen.
- Ask your child/teen how they are feeling. *“I notice your face is red. Are you feeling frustrated?”* Or *“I saw your friend leave you after school to hang out with someone else. I wonder if you are feeling sad?”*
- Use your best listening skills.

Trap: Be sure you talk about disrespect at a calm time when you are not stressed or upset!



- Learn together! Transforming disrespect requires dealing with challenging feelings in healthy ways and learning constructive ways to use and share power.
- Model respectful words and actions; your children/teens will notice and learn!
- Work on your family feelings vocabulary.
- Create a calm-down plan.
- Practice deep breathing to calm down.
- Teach assertive communication through I-messages such as “*I feel _____(insert feeling word) when you_____ (name the words or actions that upset you) because_____.*”
- Teach your child/teen positive ways to seek control or power.
- Teach your child/teen to repair harm.

- End the day with love. Often, when a child/teen acts disrespectfully, they feel bad about themselves; spend one-on-one time with your child/teen to remind them they are loved no matter their choices.

Tip: Create a signal you can use when you, your child/teen, or both are overwhelmed by challenging feelings. You might say, "*I need a minute!*" or "*Code red!*" Practice using it so that it becomes a habit to pause when angry or upset before responding.



- Accept feelings (even ones you don't like!): *"I hear you're upset. What can you do to help yourself feel better?"*
- Use "Show me…" statements like *"Show me how you can make a good choice when approaching your sister."*
- Offer limited and authentic choices. *"Do you want to do homework at the kitchen counter or the dining room table?"*
- Share power through turn-taking or cooperative decision making as a family.
- Recognize effort using "I notice…" statements like, *"I notice how you used our 'code red' signal. It worked! That's excellent!"*
- Practice deep breathing. This is a simple practice your child/teen can use to assist themselves anytime, anywhere.
- Follow through on repairing harm.
- Proactively remind: "*Remember what helps you feel better? What can you do?"*

Tip: After a tough day, your child/teen may internally beat themselves up for what they did and said earlier. So, end the day with love. They need to hear that you love them NO MATTER WHAT on those days.

Trap: Don't constantly repeat yourself when children/teens are angry or upset. Children/Teens often need more time to calm down, regain perspective, and move on. Be sure to wait long enough for your child/teen to show you they can take steps to self-manage. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they can do what you need.



- Ask key questions to support their skills: "*You have a lot of work left to do today on your project. Do you remember what you can do if you start feeling frustrated?"*
- Promote an "I can" belief. Children/teens need to know you believe in them.

- Foster friendships. They offer your child/teen opportunities to practice power sharing, negotiating roles, and working through conflict.
- Stay engaged. Try out new and different coping strategies to see what works best.
- Engage in further practice. Role-play or rehearse when needed.
- Reflect on the real world and the natural consequences of disrespectful behaviors.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair harm when needed.
- Learn new behaviors to replace inappropriate behaviors by understanding feelings, teaching healthy coping strategies, and practicing sharing power and taking responsibility.



Recognize Efforts

- Notice even small successes: *"I noticed when you got frustrated with your homework, you moved away and took some deep breaths. Excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine.

Tip: Be specific. "Good job" does not carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior—*"You took some deep breaths when you got frustrated. I love seeing that!"*—can promote more of the same.

Trap: If you focus only on outcomes—"*You didn't get mad today,"* for example —you miss the chance to influence the process. It's better to say, "*You were able to calm down, refocus, and get back to homework."*

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