Tools for Your Child's Success.org

Disrespect Age 17 Summary

Why Transform Disrespect?

17-year-olds are actively finding ways to assert independence with confidence but may also feel fragile and vulnerable about their future adult lives. They will naturally test limits and break rules. Commonly, disrespect can happen when there is a power struggle. They may lash out with words when they feel powerless in an attempt to gain power. 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. Your reaction to your teen can help teach them constructive, healthy ways to seek and gain power and respond to others respectfully when angry or upset.



- Ask yourself, “Does my teen have an unmet need?” Perhaps they are hungry or tired and need some attention, help, or downtime.
- Check on how you are feeling. If you are angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed, you should take a few minutes to collect yourself before engaging your teen.
- Ask your teen how they are feeling. *“I noticed your face got red when your sister walked in. Were you feeling frustrated?”* Or *“I’ve noticed you haven’t been hearing from your friends. 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, and your teen 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 teen positive ways to seek control or power.
- Talk through ethical dilemmas from friends' or neighbors' lives or in local or national news. Make sure you talk about choices and outcomes, tying cause to effect.
- Teach your teen to repair harm.
- End the day with love. When teens act disrespectfully, they often feel bad about themselves; spend one-on-one time with your teen to remind them they are loved no matter their choices.

Tip: Create a signal you can use when you, your teen, or both are taken over with challenging feelings. You might say, "*I need a minute!*" or "*Code red!*" Practice using it so that it becomes a habit that you take a 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 regarding your sister."*
- Offer limited and authentic choices. *"Do you want to do your homework after school or after practice?"*
- 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 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?"*
- Include reflection on the day in your end-of-day routine. You might ask, *"What happened today that made you happy?"* or *"What were the best moments in your day?"*

Tip: After a tough day, your teen may be internally beating 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 teens are angry or upset. Teens often need more time to calm down, regain perspective, and move on. Be sure to wait long enough for your 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.



Support Your Teen's Development and Success

- Ask key questions to support their skills: *"You were up late working on your project. What can you do if you start feeling overwhelmed?"*
- Promote an "I can" belief. Teens need to know you believe in them.
- Foster friendships. They offer opportunities for your teen 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 research paper, you moved away and took some deep breaths. That's excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine.

Tip: Be specific. "Good job" does not seem to 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.

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