

# Getting Back Talk? Let's Talk

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**What IS back talk?** *disrespectful replies to parents' requests, flippant or smart-alecky comments*

**When and/or why** do kids back talk?

*When they don't get what they want, are angry, as a joke, because friends/media talk that way*

Why is back talk such a **trigger** button for parents? *they didn't/couldn't talk to their parents that way*

**How** do parents **typically** react to back talk? *Demand respect, yell/argue, get angry, punish for revenge or to show authority (power/control)*

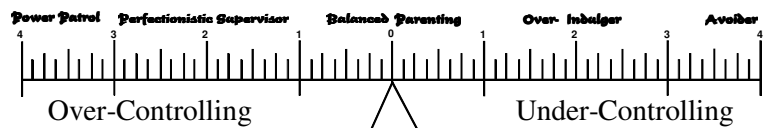
Is this **helpful**? *No. It escalates the problem and models disrespectful treatment of others, which contradicts what the parent has taught the child about treating others with respect. We often tell our children that when someone is disrespectful to them, they are still to treat others with respect...yet when children are disrespectful to us, we often don't follow this same standard and digress into disrespectful communication/treatment of the child.*

## SKILLS FOR PREVENTING BACK TALK

**Preventing Back Talk --- Model Respect:**

**Maintain a Balanced Parenting Style:**

- Over-Controlling:
  - Power Patrols
  - Perfectionistic Supervisors
- Under-Controlling:
  - Avoiders
  - Over-Indulgers
- Balanced



**Use Descriptive Encouragement to Boost Self-Esteem and Model Respect**

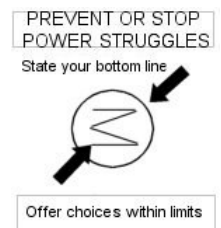
- **Show Unconditional love:** acceptance differs from agreeing.
- **Avoid comparisons and unhealthy competition.**
- **Give a "D.I.P. a Day"**
  - **Describe** any effort, improvement, steps taken, qualities shown. What made it a "good job"?
  - Focus on **Internal** qualities and the *child's* judgment of the situation/deed. Reduces susceptibility to peer pressure.
  - Focus on the **Positive** aspects of what they did. Decide how important it is to point out negative. Avoid, "good job, BUT..." Teach skills later.

**Foster Cooperation Instead of Demanding Obedience**

- **Avoid bribes, rewards, and incentives** that create dependency on external motivation.
- Offer **choices** within bottom-line limits.
- **Tell children what they can do**, avoid "don't," "stop," "quit" and "no."

**Teach Skills**

- Teach **respectful, assertive communication skills**. What can they say when \_\_\_\_?
- Teach **discretion**. When is it appropriate and inappropriate to speak this way?



**Acknowledge the child's feelings when making the request**

## SKILLS FOR RESPONDING TO BACK TALK

**Manage YOUR anger:** (See Anger Log on pg 254 of *The Parents Toolshop* book. Also get Keep Your Cool Teleseminar Recording/Handout at: <http://www.parentstoolshop.com/HTML/telearhive.htm>)

- If back talk is a trigger button for you, **it is YOUR button. You CAN reprogram it.**
  - When back talk happens, **what do you say to yourself?**
  - **Rewrite** unhelpful beliefs that get you upset
  - **Plan** a more helpful response.
  - Take a **deep breath** and respond *calmly, respectfully* and *matter-of-factly*.

**Always acknowledge the child's feelings first --- use "F-A-X Listening"**

- **Focus on feelings**, not facts. See their viewpoint and restate it in your *own* words.
- **Ask helpful questions**, not "why." Use questions to help children see parent's points on their own.
- **X-amine possible solutions**. No advice. Ask, "What can you do?" "What would happen?"

**Express Your Concerns Assertively AND Respectfully:** ★ **Teach this to kids and give them the words**

- **Describe** what you see, feel, or what could happen.
- State the limits or your values.
- Use **fewer, firmer words with each reminder**. No more than two, then act.

**Follow Through Consistently And Respectfully:**

- **Seek win/win solutions** through:
  - Choices within limits
  - Problem-solving --- get agreements with F-A-X process
- **Disengage** from the conversation:
  - It takes TWO people to argue. Instead of saying "Do it because I said so," say "I'm not willing to argue about this." Refocus on choices within the bottom line.
  - Back off, cool off and deal with back talk or the disagreement later
- **Later**, use prevention skills and F-A-X listening to discuss concerns about back talk and **teach skills**.

## APPLYING THESE SKILLS TO BACK TALK

**When they say:** *When they don't get what they want, (PO for Power)*

**Helpful response:** *Acknowledge what they want, that they need to ask in a respectful way (teach them what that sounds like, if you haven't already) and, that the answer is definitely "no" if they ask disrespectfully. If they talk respectfully, you are at least willing to consider or negotiate (depending on what it is. If SHARP RV issue, it's non-negotiable, see if you can offer any choice or alternative that would be acceptable to them within your bottom-line limits)*

**When they say:** *are angry, (PO for Revenge)*

**Helpful response:** *Acknowledge that you understand they are angry and why. Say that you are willing to listen to their concerns if they voice them respectfully, but won't be spoken to disrespectfully. Tell them how you want them TO express their anger or opinions appropriately. Tell them you are willing to listen when they are willing to talk respectfully...then disengage and walk away.*

**When they say:** *as a joke (PO for attention)*

**Helpful response:** *Acknowledge that they may think it's funny, but since it's disrespectful, it could hurt someone's feelings. Jokes make people feel good. They don't hurt people. Suggest (but don't enforce) it would be nice if they apologize or make amends. Drop the subject. Any further attention will make it PO*

**When they say:** *because friends/media talk that way (PO for Attention/approval)*

**Helpful response:** *Acknowledge that they might talk to their friends that way or hear other people talk that way but in this family we treat others with respect....ALL people. While you'd prefer they talk to ALL people respectfully, you realize you can prevent them from talking this way to their friends. You do expect, however, that they talk to their family members and other people in the family and general public with respect. They need to learn "discretion," or who they can talk to like that. If they show you that they can't control whether they talk like this, because they've been spending too much time with people who talk like this, then that shows you they need to be spending less time with people who talk like that and their social time will be cut down. It's their choice whether this happens, based on whether they can talk respectfully to people other than their friends.*