

DON'T GET NO RESPECT

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As we grow older it seems that there is less and less respect in the world. I find myself saying, "I would never have spoken to my father like that when I was a kid." Along with lack of respect there seems to be a general lack of healthy fear. I do not think we should be frightened of our parents or of those in authority, but respect for others and fear of the consequences should stop us from making negative choices.

To instill respect in our children we need to understand the meaning of respect. It is to give high admiration or esteem to someone. It is demonstrated by holding high regard for authority, position, possessions and living things, and also by being courteous. We can train our kids to be respectful from the time they are toddlers and we need to continue to train them right up until they leave home. It is an ongoing process. The simplest way to develop respect in your kids is to decide what 'respect' will look like in your home. Here are some suggestions:

Respect in this home means that we will be obedient to our parents and those in authority over us; we will not interrupt others; we will not fight with one another or take others' stuff without asking. When we borrow others' stuff we will look after it as if it were our own and give it back when we said we would. Respect in our home means we will speak kindly to one another and will not raise our voices in anger.

We will care about one another enough to not make negative comments, listen to, or gossip about others. We will respect our grandparents by visiting them or calling them regularly. We will respect older people by helping them when they need it, by opening doors for them, and by giving them our seat on crowded public transportation. We will thank people for their kind deeds to us. We will respect the environment by not dropping litter ourselves and by 'going the second mile' by picking up others' trash. We will respect animals by being gentle and kind to them.

We expect our kids to respect, but respect is a fragile thing. It is lost when we disappoint our kids by being poor examples. If we shout at them, speak disparaging words to them, break our word, and ignore them, they have nothing to respect in us as parents.

Respect, once lost, is a hard thing to regain. We have to learn to say, "Sorry" for critical words said in haste or if we administered inappropriate discipline. We need to admit we make mistakes sometimes and ask for forgiveness from our spouse and our kids. If we can identify what being respected feels like to us, then we will know what our kids need. If they respect us, we can be fairly confident that they will also respect others.

We also need to teach our kids how to handle a situation where they do not feel they are being respected. Many times kids 'diss' others. You can hear it in the school playgrounds all the time. The reason for this is often because parents and kids are disrespected in their own homes, so they have no problem with being rude to others.

When another child makes a derogatory remark to your child like, "Your mother is fat and ugly", you can make several suggestions on how to respond. They can completely ignore the remark, they can say, "I would appreciate it if you didn't say that about my mother", or they could refrain from shouting or getting angry. They could surprise the other child by saying something complimentary like, "I have seen your mother and she seems very nice." If you explain to your kids why others are disrespectful, they are less likely to be hurt and retaliate in a disrespectful manner.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.