



# Disrespect Summary

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## Why Transform Disrespect?

Teens ages 15-19 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 as 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. Your reaction to your teen can help teach them constructive, healthy ways to seek and gain power and respond to others respectfully when they are feeling angry or upset.

## Step 1. Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Ask yourself: “Does my teen have an unmet need?” Perhaps they are hungry, tired, need some attention, need some help, or need some down time.
- 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 teen.
- Ask your teen how they are feeling. *“I noticed your face got really 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.

Discuss challenges. In Step 2, plan to teach what they can do instead.

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

## Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- 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 either 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. Often when a teen acts disrespectfully they feel bad about themselves; spend one-on-one time with your teen to remind them they are loved no matter what choices they make.

**Tip** Create a signal you each can use when you or 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.

### Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills, Confidence, and Develop Habits

- 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 by 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 in particular.

**Trap** Don't move on or nag 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 are able to do what you need them to do.

### Step 4. **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 real world, 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.

## Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- 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” seems not to carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior -- *“You took some deep breaths when you got frustrated. Love seeing that!”* -- can promote more of the same.

**Trap** Avoid bribes. A bribe is a promise for a behavior, while praise is special attention after the behavior. While bribes may work in the short term, praise grows lasting motivation for good behavior and effort. For example, instead of saying *“If you don’t argue with your sister, you’ll get extra game time”* (which is a bribe), try recognizing the behavior after. *“You were helpful around the house today. I really appreciate that!”*

**Celebrate yourself** for making it your parenting priority to work on cultivating the social and emotional skills that are most critical for your teen’s success today and in their future!

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