



Disrespect Summary

Why Transform Disrespect?

Children ages 5-10 are seeking 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. You can transform these moments into vital opportunities to teach children alternatives that are healthy and respectful.

Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Ask yourself: "Does my child have an unmet need?" Perhaps they are hungry, tired, need some attention, 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 child.
- Ask your child how they are feeling. *"I notice your face is red. Are you feeling frustrated?"* Or *"I saw your friend leave to go play with someone else. 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 children 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 positive ways to seek control or power.
- Teach your child to repair harm.

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

Tip Create a signal you each can use when you or your child 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 when you go talk to your sister.”*
- Offer limited and authentic choices. *“Do you want to do your homework at the kitchen counter or at the dining room table?”*
- Share power through turn taking or cooperative decision making as a family.
- Practice deep breathing. This is a simple practice your child 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 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 children are angry or upset. Children often need more time to calm down, regain perspective, and move on. Be sure to wait long enough for your child 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 Child’s Development and Success

- Ask key questions to support their skills: *“You and your brother need to work together to clean your bedroom today. Do you remember what you can do if you start feeling frustrated?”*
- Promote an “I can” belief. Children need to know you believe in them.
- Foster friendships. They offer opportunities for your child 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.

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

- Notice even small successes: *“I noticed how you took some deep breaths when you got frustrated. 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 If you focus only on outcomes -- *“You didn’t get mad today”* -- you miss the chance to influence the process. Better to say -- *“You were able to calm down, refocus, and get back to homework.”*

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 in the store 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 child’s success today and in their future!

Recommended Citation: Center for Health and Safety Culture. (2021). *Disrespect Summary. Ages 5-10*. Retrieved from <https://www.ParentingMontana.org>.



Brought to you by the Offices of Child Care, SAMHSA, and DPHHS. The views and opinions contained in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and should not be construed as such.