

Strategies to Eliminate Children's "Back Talk"

Tips for parents of middle schoolers

As the parent of middle school children, you may have days where it seems as if everything you say is the wrong thing. Even an innocent comment may be met with a rude, arrogant or scornful reply from your children. You may be angry and frustrated. But the best thing is to avoid a big show of emotion.

Try these strategies:

○ **Use "I-messages."** Anything that begins with "you always" or "you never" or even just "you" may sound like an accusation to your children. And nothing will gear them up for a fight faster than that. Instead, put the emphasis on your own feelings. For example: "I get very frustrated when the trash piles up," instead of, "You never take out the trash!"

○ **Become a broken record.** Avoid getting into a debate about why they can not go to a concert without you, "just this once." Instead, repeat yourself: "The rule in our house is no unchaperoned concerts." When they complain, respond again, "The rule in our house is no unchaperoned concerts."

○ **Say something nice, then walk away.** There are times when you just will not be able to get any further with your children until they gather themselves. Try, "I know you are very upset, and that makes me sad for you. But, you are being so rude to me that I can not talk to you right now. I will be happy to discuss things more in a little while."

Source: Ann Svensen, "Did That Come Out of My Child's Mouth?," at www.familyeducation.com. Mildly adapted and reprinted, with permission, from "Use Strategies to Eliminate Your Child's Rude Back Talk" in *Parents Still Make the difference! © Middle School Edition* by the Parent Institute, a division of NIS, Inc. (December, 2003)