



Family Matters

Making Family Life Easier

Respect in the Home

Many parents sometimes feel like their day is filled with an endless stream of back chat, attitude and disrespectful behaviours. Requests to do chores, switch off the laptop or to put the mobile phone away and study, often fall on deaf ears or end up in an argument. Parents can find themselves nagging or shouting at their teenagers in an attempt to get them to comply and when that does not work often give up and do the chores themselves.

As children approach the pre-teen and teenage years, they can become rude, disrespectful and full of attitude. These behaviours are often seen as typical teenage behaviours; challenging and testing adult authority and limits as they move towards independence.

However disrespectful and rude behaviours are not just a phase they are going through or something that will fix itself. If your teenager has developed a bad attitude and is being rude and disrespectful toward you it is important to take action and hold them accountable for their behaviour.

Creating an atmosphere of respect in the home

Respect is the golden rule in any relationship or family. However respect is not something that can be demanded. When this happens and you try to coerce or force your teenager into having a more respectful attitude towards you it can end up bringing more trouble into the relationship. What can be more helpful is to see respect as a behaviour. Rather than trying to change their attitude, it can be more effective to focus on your teenager's behaviours.

To do this it is important for you to figure out what your bottom line is in relation to their behaviour and stick to it. If for example you feel that your teenager's behaviour is mildly disrespectful; muttering for god's sake as they load the dishwasher like you asked, then you might let it go. However if your teenager responds disrespectfully when you ask her to load the dishwasher; *'yeah in a minute, I'm texting Jane'*, then she has crossed the line and it is important that she knows this. It is important to state your rules clearly with a neutral tone and a serious look on your face, not frustrated or angry, as well as what will happen if she does not comply; *'Jane, I want you to load the dishwasher now, if you don't I will take your mobile phone for half an hour.'* Then you allow your teenager to make a choice, whether to respect or reject the rule and to experience the consequences if they decide not to follow the rules. This helps teenagers to focus and think about their behaviour and allows you to create a culture of accountability and respect in your home.

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