



Don't Back Talk Back – Handout

When dealing with back talk, defiance, and power struggles, parents often model the very behaviors and attitudes they are hoping to eliminate. When you hear attitude or back talk from your children, resist the urge to back talk back!

Positive Discipline Responses to Defiance and Back Talk

1. Sometimes I don't feel like doing my jobs, either. Would it help if we worked together or would you rather do it on your own? **(Validate Feelings / Limited Choice)**
2. Hmm, I don't feel good about how we're speaking to each other. Can we try a Do-Over? **(Do Over)**
3. I can tell you're upset right now. Me too. Let's take a break and talk later when we're feeling better. **(Modeling emotional regulation)**
4. What would help us right now—some time out or putting this on the family meeting agenda? **(Curiosity Question)**
5. I can hear that you are really angry right now. Do you feel like telling me more about it? **(Validate Feelings / Ask vs. Tell)**
6. I can't make you do it, but it sure helps everyone when you do. **(Acknowledging limits of power. Not taking the bait. Giving space.)**
7. I love you and trust you to get it done. **(Connect Before Correct / Show Faith)**
8. I hear that you really don't want to do this. What can we do to make it easier for you? **(Validate Feelings / Curiosity Question)**



Unhelpful Responses to Defiance and Back Talk

1. Don't talk to me that way young lady! **(Lecture/Demand)**
2. Go to your room and don't come out until you can be respectful!
(Demand / Punishment)
3. You are grounded for a week! **(Punishment)**
4. How can you talk to me that way after all I have done for you? **(Guilt)**
5. You just lost all your privileges. **(Punishment)**
6. Maybe Military School will teach you to be more respectful of authority. **(Threat / put-downs)**
7. How far do you think that smart mouth is going to take you? **(Sarcasm / put-downs)**
8. You will be respectful if I have to ground you for a year. **(Threats / Control)**

From *Teaching Parenting the Positive Discipline Way* by Jane Nelsen and Lynn Lott

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