

How to Parent a Defiant Child



Look for underlying issues

- **Defiance can stem from a number of circumstances. For some children, being defiant is a way to get attention or take control over their lives. Other children become defiant because of hormonal changes and other developmental struggles. In some instances though, the defiance is the result of an underlying issue, such as a learning disability, childhood depression, trauma, grief, or other conditions.**
- **Try to look for the root cause of the defiance. When did this behavior start, and what sparked it?**



Take a break before assigning a punishment

- When responding to defiant behavior, do not punish in the moment. Instead, tell your child that you are disappointed and will discuss the consequences later. This gives you time to calm down and your child time to think over his actions. If you respond in the moment, you may react in a combative manner. That will only fuel the defiant behavior.



Be consistent with disciplinary strategies

- Be Consistent with Disciplinary Strategies
- If you say no, mean it. Consistency is crucial for all parenting strategies. If your child knows you will eventually say yes, he will continue to pester you or act out. Grounded for two weeks? Then two weeks it is. No video games after 6 PM? Stick to it. You'll be setting a precedent that will make parenting easier in the future.



Celebrate your child's accomplishments—even the small ones

- If your child continually defies you, you may become focused on the negative. Every response or reaction you have is to defiant behavior. Try to offset that by celebrating your child's accomplishments. "Thank you for taking out the trash." Sure, you may have asked six times before he took it out, but that doesn't negate the accomplishment. Find ways to lift your child's spirits so he feels recognized. Otherwise, he may think the only way to get attention is through defiant behavior.



Prioritize Family Time

- Family activities create a natural platform for communication. You're spending time together, laughing together, talking together, and making memories along the way. This open flow of communication may deter some defiant behaviors. Your child feels more comfortable talking to you. Thus he may express his emotions, rather than acting out.
- Make family time a priority. Keep cellphones out of reach, and plan activities that everyone enjoys. From family board games to movie nights, the possibilities are endless.

