

3 Ways to Respond When Your Child Wants to Pick a Fight

Learn How to Start

The way you present an issue often determines the response. Sometimes it's best to address a problem immediately, while other times waiting a few hours is more appropriate. Wisely choose a time, place and approach with the goal of not just rebuking, but correcting and finding resolution. "Lisa, I'd like to talk about the way you treated me earlier. Is now a good time or should we talk after dinner?"

Learn When to Stop

Once a dialogue has developed, have discernment to know when to stop. Some parents feel like they must win an argument or come to resolution by the end of the conversation so they end up pushing too hard. Other times emotions get too involved. Still other parents end a simple correction with preaching, bringing up the past or making exaggerated statements about the offense.

In any case, it's important for parents to know when to take a break or simply stop the conversation. "I think we better stop here. Things are getting pretty tense. We need to continue this conversation, but let's take a break for now. Maybe we'll think of some other ideas in the meantime to help resolve this problem." Learning when to stop during conflict is a very important skill.

Learn How to Listen

Conflict represents opportunity. Children watch parents handle conflict and observe how they resolve differences. Listening and affirming a young person's thinking is an honoring step in conflict management.

"I understand you'd discipline your sister differently. Your

ideas make sense. At this point, I have to make the decision, and I'm going to emphasize something different, but I appreciate your ideas." Affirming or validating a child's thinking or reasoning is helpful for their development.

As you dialogue with your kids, you must learn to tolerate criticism. Many discussions you have will open the door for your teen to criticize you. Don't feel threatened or take these jabs personally. Use them to discuss issues and explain your decisions. If you can be transparent enough to use yourself as an example, your children will learn much more about life.

This parenting tip is taken from the book, Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining and Bad Attitudes, In You and Your Kids by Dr. Scott Turansky and JoAnne Miller.