

Help Your Child Adjust Bad Attitudes With These 6 Practical Tips

A friend of mine decided to coach his son's basketball team for the first time this past year. He made the effort of planning practice drills that were both fun and helped the players develop fundamentals. During the first practice while doing some of those drills, his son started to whine and complain, eventually asking if they could do something else instead. As you can imagine, my friend was frustrated by his son's attitude, especially since his son's attitude affected the attitude of the entire team.

A child with a negative, complaining attitude can wear down even the best dads. Authors Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller offer some hope for parents trying to stop the complaining in their book, *Good and Angry*. Here are six practical ways to help give your kids an attitude adjustment without losing your mind:

1. Identify Emotions.

Help your child self-express via identifying feelings and choosing words carefully when frustrated or making demands: "It's OK to tell me how you feel, but you need to speak respectfully. Even if you're tired or upset, try to stay calm."

2. Identify Influences.

Try to identify where some of your child's bad attitudes come from. One dad noticed his son's frustration worsened after playing video games. Perhaps your child is mimicking the behavior of someone else—a parent, sibling, friend or even TV character—who complains or criticizes.

3. Point Out Attitudes.

Turansky and Miller recommend that you “identify a thinking error that needs to change. You can offer the insight of an objective outsider.” For example, if your child had a bad day and takes it out on his brother, he may need help in how to properly handle his emotions. Target more than the behavior; look deeper to see what’s causing the trouble.

4. Challenge Attitudes.

If your child is complaining about doing his chores or homework, offer motivation to change his attitude.

Dad: Son, how’s your homework coming?

Son: It stinks. Why do I have to do it anyway?

Dad: You can do it! Try working hard for the next hour, then take a break. We’ll get ice cream together.

The real reward of accomplishing something will be what motivates a change in attitude.

5. Teach Responses.

Rather than wait for your child to stop whining or complaining, actually role-play appropriate responses. Then, immediately, reinforce the correct response with some kind of encouragement.

6. Affirm Progress.

When you notice your child making improvements, praise him and let him know you’re proud. Even if you’re tempted, skip comments such as “It’s about time!” Instead, encourage him in his progress and keep the focus positive.

Turansky and Miller summarize dealing with a complaining child with this: “Attitudes are windows into a child’s heart. If you help your children learn to adjust attitudes, they will have

the skills necessary to develop healthy perspectives about life's challenges and struggles as they get older."

How do you adjust your kids' bad attitude? {eoa}

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