

When Your Kids Talk Dirty

For Christians, the worst consequence of vulgarity's ubiquity may be the influence upon children.

"All children, whether they swear or not, learn what the words are that they're not supposed to use," says author Timothy Jay, who also is a psychology professor at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

Sometimes teens must learn that words matter by going too far, such as being kicked out of a restaurant or fired from a job for using vulgarity, Jay says. Yet enforcing rules is more difficult when many of the rich and powerful—movie stars, athletes and politicians—use vulgar words with impunity.

While parents are not going to be able to control what their children say outside their presence, if they are trained properly they will be less likely to use vulgarity on their own. Here are some suggestions that may help:

1. LIMIT YOUR CHILD'S TV-VIEWING TIME.

"The average child spends three hours a day watching TV, but only 15 minutes with parents," says L. Brent Bozell III. "Who has a bigger influence?"

Bozell, chairman of the Parents Television Council in Los Angeles, cites studies that show 96 percent of parents believe there is too much garbage on television, yet 48 percent allow their children to have sets in their bedrooms. Parents who

leave children to their own devices are only inviting bad behavior.

2. MODEL GODLY CONVERSATION.

“The biggest thing parents can do is to control their own speech,” says John Nieder, host of the Art of Family Living radio program in Dallas. “Parents shouldn’t be calling each other vulgar names in the home.”

3. DON’T OVERREACT.

Parental reaction is key to behavior, according to Timothy Jay, who also wrote *What to Do When Your Kids Talk Dirty*. Parents should calmly explain that certain words should not be said, rather than becoming irate when one is uttered.

“Children can see on the faces of adults the powers that these words have,” Jay says. “They know they can use these words to get us to react, to shock us, to make us upset—or to make us laugh.”

4. ENFORCE RULES THAT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN DEALING WITH REPEAT VIOLATIONS.

Jay suggests revoking privileges immediately. But, he adds: “Parents must do more than just punish children who say bad words. They must teach them to be reasonable, respectful and responsible for what they say.”

Source: Multnomah Publishers