

TIP SHEET: Rudeness and Disrespect

Ages Affected: 2 ½–5 years old

As your child grows up and develops their own personality, they also start to ask for freedom. This is a normal way for your child to explore boundaries, though he may express it by being rude or disrespectful toward mommy, daddy and other adults.

Why is my child doing this?

Children are often influenced by other kids and other people around them, so they begin picking up the habits and personality traits of others. This means that they learn from others how to be disrespectful and rude to you, other siblings and other people. All parents want their kids to be well behaved, but this might not be the reality at all times. Many kids choose to misbehave especially in public places and away from parents. It is important to keep cool and speak fairly and nicely to your child. Remember, you are his most important role model.

Here are a few tips to help you teach your child to be respectful:

- Stay very calm while dealing with a rude or disrespectful child. Anger will only give her the reaction she is trying to trigger.
- Listen to your child carefully. If he is upset and angry about something, let him tell you what happened and ask him why he is feeling this way.
- Ignore minor disrespectful behavior such as talking back or sulking. Say, “I will not tolerate being talked to like that” and do not respond until your child is communicating appropriately.
- For behavior that is more offensive or rude, make sure you give one warning clearly stating why the behavior is disrespectful and not acceptable.
- When your child is rude, don’t laugh as this will



give your child positive attention and encourage him to continue being rude.

- Let your child know exactly what behavior is not acceptable by including statements about respectful behavior in your house rules. For example, “no swearing,” “at dinner time, we sit nicely at the table.”
- Remind your child to be polite to others. For example, “When you leave a friend’s house, it’s good to say ‘thank you for having me’. People like it when you do that.” Or, “When I’m talking to someone I expect you to wait until I’ve finished before asking me a question, or if you’re finding it hard to wait you could say ‘excuse me.’”
- Be a good example. If your child hears you using put-downs, making snide comments, using sarcasm, swearing or shouting or sees you rolling your eyes or making faces at people, you are not modeling a respectful attitude. Be polite, courteous, considerate and well-mannered, and you will soon see such an attitude from your child.