



From:

TALKING BACK

Be careful not to win the battle at the expense of losing the war.

Children talk back in order to place themselves in positions of recognition and authority. Remember that a child who can get a parent to argue with him/her feels a sense of power. If the parent does not argue back, the child is in a powerless position. Not arguing tells the child that the comment that was made did not even warrant a response. This puts children in their place better than any words the parent could say.

IGNORE

Generally, it is best to ignore children when they talk back. This is very difficult, because most parents feel their authority is being challenged and react in some way to what the child has said. This merely encourages the child to talk back even more. Children have even more power over their parents when they are in a public place. A parent's embarrassment gives the child more power, because the parent is likely to give in to bring the situation to an end. Children learn quickly when their attempts to gain power receive recognition.

A good behavioral principle to follow is: If something can be ignored, ignore it. If ignoring the child's behavior could cause harm to the child or someone else, action must be taken. Many times, however, parents feel something must be done, when, in fact, the best approach is to take no action at all. Parents feel that they must intervene in order to teach the child something when what they actually teach is the very thing they wanted to prevent in the first place. Remember, children will learn to argue if they practice arguing or if arguing gets them what they want.

THE HARD STAND

Parents frequently think taking a hard stand will prevent their child from arguing in the future. In fact, this is the approach most parents take first. If it works, then the parents should hardly ever have to worry about the child talking back again. If the child continues to talk back and argue, the parent must realize that this approach is not working.

TAKING ACTION

If a situation cannot be ignored, take some action which does not include talking or discussion. An angry child does not want to *talk*. An angry child wants to *win*. Generally speaking, most parents talk too much when disciplining instead of focusing on trying to change behaviors. Taking action, in this type of situation, means depriving the child of some privilege. For example, "If you say one more word about this, you will have chosen to be restricted to your room."

REMEMBER...

- ✓ If you try something and it works for a while and then the behavior returns, it is not working.
- ✓ Ignore talking back whenever you can.
- ✓ Tell the child what the consequences of further talking back will be, and follow through if necessary.