

Q. How can I get my children to be more obedient and respectful to us parents and others?

A. Three things come to mind: Choice training, too much verbal freedom and examples at home.

Do review choice training in the Apr 06 issue. Children may have been making more choices than appropriate. While we would like our children to be creative, independent and make their own decisions, making choices before learning obedience can possibly make our children think the world of themselves.

Freedom in choices may also lead to verbal freedom. When they realized they are able to decide many things, they will be verbally more lax. While it can be good, it can also lead to verbal disrespect or disrespectful attitude.

Having freedom in the area of choice making and speech while too young is an environment favourable to disrespectful attitude. When children are used to them and on occasions where parents disagree with their children's poor decisions, the children will be irritated and confused when they are opposed as they are unable to handle being opposed (as they have never experienced much opposition). Disrespectful attitudes will develop easily.

Not attending immediately to such rudeness or disrespect (can be just a look or tone of voice) will make it easy for our children to perpetuate this habit. They would not know when they are being disrespectful. Reprimand them sternly for a start. Repeated offences could result in privilege suspension. Absence of discipline would mean that such disrespectful behaviours are accepted!

Other considerations: How are our parental examples? How do we treat our parents or elders? Do we scold our spouse or quarrel in front of our children? That is a display of disrespect and a bad example. It is thus good to go behind closed doors when husband and wife have any disagreement to avoid bad behaviour in 'public'.

What can we do to enable our children to be more respectful? Perhaps we can sit the family down and tell them what we have not done right in the

past and what might be coming (like more decisions will be made by parents). As parents, we will need to be prepared for sulky faces and complaints but we must maintain our stand.

Vulgar words, rude attitudes and inappropriate voice tones are forbidden in our family. Our children will be reprimanded or they would be asked to reflect on how they were disrespectful and how they can correct it (maybe an apology, ask for forgiveness or how to speak respectfully).

Even when our children pick up disrespectful habits from schools or friends, we believe with patience, parents can influence our children to be more respectful, especially with our examples.

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Q. What do you think about outburst of anger?

A. Parental examples, friends, television programs, irregular schedules and computers are possible sources of learning inappropriate outbursts of anger. Explain that it is not an acceptable behaviour as it is inconsiderate and disrespectful. Discipline includes removing privileges like computer time. If parental examples are bad, apologies are needed and even engaging our children (with the right attitude) to remind us when we behave inappropriately.

Too much of irregular schedules, computer games and television programs over stimulate our brains, creating anxiety and irritability which may lead to outbursts of anger. We therefore never bought hand held games in our home because we think that we are unable to control our children (or ourselves - may end up playing ourselves!). Without them, we are more creative when thinking of what to do with our free time.

The idea is to distract the children and not let the television programs or computers baby sit them as much as we can. For example, learning a sport will be a better use of our free time. As parents, we may need to make adjustments to our lifestyle.

Anger is to be controlled, not released. We may talk to someone or do sports to 'let it out' but outburst of anger is an incorrect way of letting things out.