

## When Children React With Anger

The child who doesn't like an instruction or limitation may reveal frustration outwardly, sometimes in a small way and other times with downright revenge. One mom said, "I can tell when my thirteen-year-old son is having a bad attitude. He becomes more abrupt in his actions and words. His roughness sends a message that says, 'I'm not happy with you.'"

It's important to remember two rules of engagement when confronted by a child's anger. First, don't be afraid of your child's emotions. Sometimes children use outbursts as a form of self-protection to prevent parents from challenging them. View the display of emotion as a smoke screen and look past it to the heart of the issue. You may not confront in the heat of emotion but don't let your child's anger prevent you from correcting your child. Parents too often see the emotion as a personal attack and react to it, losing any real benefit that could come from the interaction. That brings us to.

Rule of engagement #2: Don't use your own anger to overpower your child's anger. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away anger." When you begin to lose it, take a break. Come back later and work on it some more: "I've been thinking about the way you responded to me earlier when I asked you to do your homework. I'd like to share an observation that might be helpful for you. It seems that you believe you ought to be able to wait and do your homework just before bed or in the morning before you go to school. Is that what you're saying? One of the values I'm trying to teach you is that self-discipline often means we work first and play later. That's one of the reasons I require you to do your homework early every day. I'm trying to teach you an important value. I know that you may not agree with me, but I want you to know why I'm asking you to do homework before dinner."

Allowing emotions to settle first can bring opportunities for dialogue later, instead of turning the present issue into a battleground. Realize that kids will go away thinking about what you've said, even if their initial response looks as if they haven't heard you. This is especially true for teenagers. Prepare what you're going to say and choose your timing carefully without getting caught up in the emotion of the moment.