

+Respect: Parent Edition

The January Character Trait of the Month

How do your children demonstrate this month's character trait of **respect**? Do they do what you ask them to without arguing? Most children will argue with their parents as long as they think there's a chance it will work. If you feel like there's been too much arguing going on in your home, choose a neutral time to talk about the problem. (Trying to talk to your kids about a problem when they're already upset usually doesn't work). Start by letting your child know that you don't want to continue spending your time arguing, and that you are going to put some new rules in place to help everyone in your family get along better. The first rule is that while it's okay to disagree, the conversation must occur in a respectful fashion. Raised voices and other forms of disrespect should not be permitted. If the conversation starts to get out of control, tell your child that you will continue the discussion when s/he can speak to you in a calm, respectful manner.

The second rule is that while some decisions are negotiable, others are not. An example of a negotiable issue would be letting your child choose what time of day homework will be completed. A non-negotiable issue, in contrast, would be choosing whether or not homework gets done at all. As a parent, you have the right to tell your child that certain topics are non-negotiable. Once you have determined that an issue is non-negotiable, explain that you will not tolerate any attempts to engage in arguing. Let your child know that you will give him or her a warning (i.e. "If you continue to argue, you will lose one dollar of this week's allowance") and that this will be followed by the removal of whatever privilege you said you would take. It is critical that if you tell your child s/he will lose a privilege (such as the dollar), that you follow through with taking it away. Not following through with a promised consequence will teach your child not to take you seriously. It may take a few times for your child to realize just how serious you are, but consistency is essential. If you stick with this plan, your child will learn that when you say it's time to stop arguing, it's time to stop. Both of you have better things to do with your time together.