

Opportunity Mindset Tips

Transforming Challenges into Possibilities

“My child talks back all the time. It’s exhausting and frustrating.”



CHALLENGE

How can I get my child to stop the endless backtalk?



CHOICE

You can decide how to think about this moment and how to respond. You can choose to see this challenge as a chance for your child to learn and grow.



OPPORTUNITY

During the early school years, children start to have more control over their lives. They are able to do more for themselves. One way of showing that control is to talk back, saying what they want to do and when. You can help them learn how to express themselves in more respectful ways. This will help them learn the important life skill of **Communicating**.

SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGIES

1 TAKE YOUR CHILD’S VIEW

TRY TO FIGURE OUT when and why your child is talking back. Is it when they want even more control over what they do and when? Is it when they are tired? Or are you or other adults getting frustrated and reacting in ways that ramp up the conflict? For example, if they say, “You’re not the boss of me!” do you snap back, “Yes, I am!”? It’s important to model the behavior we want to see in our children.

2 SHARE REASONS

EXPLAIN your point of view and let your child know that you want to understand their feelings, challenges, and needs. You can say, “I want to figure out a way to communicate that works for both of us. You can tell me in kind ways when you are upset. It’s hard for me to listen to you when you talk back.”

3 PROVIDE CHOICES

SET LIMITS and give your child options within those limits. You can let your child know there are ways to share their feelings without talking back. Ask them if they want a minute to think about what they want to say, OR if they want a code word they can use instead—when they feel like talking back.

4 PROBLEM-SOLVE TOGETHER

INVITE your child to think of ideas for how to manage their urge to talk back to you. Practice asking the question: “What kind of question is this?” Is this an “I want to learn more” question or an “I don’t feel like doing that” question? Discuss ideas for what they can do when they feel like talking back. Listen to their ideas. Make it clear that you are willing to try new behaviors, too, like not making too many requests at once. Decide together on one of their ideas to try first. Share how you plan to try to manage your frustration, too.

5 SCAFFOLD

BUILD on progress your child makes. Notice when your child uses one of the ideas you discussed together. Celebrate! Appreciate when they communicate respectfully. It’s also a good idea to talk about a time that didn’t go as well and new ways you can work on how you speak to each other. Learning to communicate how we feel is a process that takes practice.

An Opportunity Mindset means choosing to see a challenge as a chance to learn and grow.

COMMUNICATING

Communicating means thinking about what we want to share, considering how our words or actions affect others, and then choosing how and when to express ourselves. Communicating requires focus, perspective-taking, and self-control. Children develop this skill best when they learn to express their own thoughts and feelings, rather than being told what to say or do. **For more information visit: www.mindinthemaking.org**

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