

GET RESULTS WITH BETTER CONVERSATIONS

Tips for Parenting Kids who have been Mistreated



EVERY RESPONSE should start with, “*I care about you, and I want the best for you.*” Take a deep breath and calm down before responding. If necessary, tell the child you’ll talk about it later, and put some time between the action and the response so that you can respond rationally without anger.

Here are some suggestions for healthy responses:

- Make safety your first priority.** Kids feel safer when they are in a safe and stable environment, and live within a consistent schedule for meals, quiet time, playtime, arise and bed times.
- Find something you like about the young person, and tell him or her about it.** Caveat: avoid complimenting physical appearance. Rather, you can teach the young person the importance of positive character and personality traits like tenacity, courage, determination, indomitable spirit, resilience, resourcefulness, and so on. Kids receive advice and correction best when they believed you care about them.

Avoid “why questions: Never ask “why did you do that?” Do not answer a “why” question, such as, “why do bad things always happen to me?” Or “why am I the one who always gets blamed for everything?” Rather than respond directly to a “why” question, respond with something like, “I’m sorry about the bad things that happened to you. But they’re over now. You’re safe now.” Or “I’m sorry you feel like you’re always to blame.”

- ☑ When kids gets loud, **lower your voice and get softer.**
- ☑ **Respond at eye level with the child,** never towering over him or her.

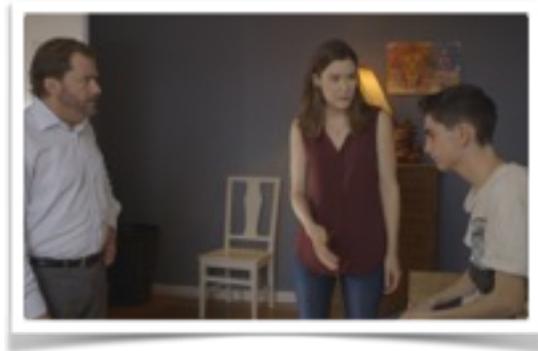
Here are some suggestions for consequences:

- ☑ **Make consequences relevant and directly proportionate to the misbehavior.** For example, if the child steals or intentionally breaks something, he or she has to give it back or replace it. If he or she hurts someone, an apology should be suggested along with a question asking how he or she can make it up to the one who was hurt.

- ☑ **Instead of taking things away, try a reward system for good behaviors.** Ex: have a jar of

quarters that add up to \$10 (so it looks like a lot). Tell the child(ren),

“this is your money that you can spend on [a toy, music, etc.]. The only condition is that if something gets broken or taken, it gets replaced by the money in this jar. Any leftover money is yours to spend.” This empowers kids to do the right thing. The more money that’s in the jar, the more incentive they have



to not do whatever it is you don’t want them to do.

“Use active listening skills by making eye contact, nodding your head, and using appropriate facial expressions.”

—RHONDA SCIORTINO

- ☑ **Establish regular, non-controversial, routine happenings at which family members can connect.** For example, consider planting a garden, letting each child choose which vegetable he or she wants to plant. Tending to the garden can be a place where conversation can be

had around something other than points of contention. There are lots of life lessons in the garden, like reaping what you sow, that give you an opportunity to share wisdom that can take root in the life of the children within your influence.

These routine events happen whether things go well or badly so that there is stability and consistency AND so that there is an established routine that brings you back together after a “blow out.” For example, “Tuesday Taco Night,” “Friday Night Movie Marathon,” etc. These are events that are NOT TO BE EARNED. They communicate to the child that he or she is included, belongs, and is part of the family. No one is to be excluded from these opportunities to nurture relationships through normalized activities.

Use “I” statements, like, “*when you yell at me and slam doors, it makes me feel badly.*” Although the child may not care about your feelings, when you make these kinds of statements, you’re modeling for the child a more constructive way that he or she can express feelings in the future.



Consider establishing traditions that can be fun ways to reconnect

Ask “how” questions, like, “how do you think you could get your friend to give you your turn in the future?” Or, “how do you think you could ask your teacher to explain it better?” Asking “how” questions teaches the child to think about various ways to approach problems in the future.

after a sad event or a “blow out,” like having a small helium tank, from which you fill up a balloon, write with a felt tip marker the behavior or event that you both want to put behind you, and then together release the balloon and the past with it. This could be a weekly or monthly event where every family member writes something on the balloon that is to be let go. It could be one of those routines that brings everyone together.



Consider having a weekly or monthly family meeting where everyone comes together and has an opportunity to speak. You might have an object that gets passed around. The person with the object gets to talk while everyone else has to quietly listen. Each person gets up to 5 minutes. When the timer goes off, the object gets passed to the next person. To wrap up, the object is passed and everyone says one thing they are grateful for, or one good thing about one other person, or some other positive statement.

It will take time, patience, and a commitment to love and listening to heal the youth in your care. **They are worth it.**

**Thank you for helping to create
successful survivors!**

Video series available on [YouTube](#)

Provided by [Successful Survivors Foundation](#)

Sponsored by [Markel Specialty Commercial](#), a business division of [Markel Service Incorporated](#)