

WHEN CHILDREN ACT ABUSIVELY IN YOUR HOME



for
Women

When your child is abusive toward you or other children in your home – using insults, threats, or physical violence – this is a problem that must be responded to immediately.

You may be tempted to excuse the behaviour because of what the child has been through with your ex-partner. But abuse is always unacceptable.

As soon as you see abusive behaviour, start to help your child because:

- this behaviour is hurtful and disrespectful and you do not deserve to be abused
- this behaviour will be harmful to your other children
- your child will get into serious trouble, such as school expulsion or criminal charges, if the behaviour is used at school or in dating relationships

You need to deal with this now

When you see or experience your child being abusive...

- do not give in to a threat or demand
- do not use abusive behaviour (i.e., yelling insults, hitting) in response
- do not ignore the behaviour: your child needs to learn not to be abusive
- tell the child you both need some time apart to calm down
- tell the child you will speak with him or her later

Sometime later...

- find an opportunity to talk calmly with the child
- validate his or her feelings by saying something like "You were angry at me because I would not let you watch that movie"
- make a link between his or her behaviour and the abusive behaviour he or she saw in the past
- clearly state why the behaviour was wrong (e.g., it is NOT okay to call people mean names, even when you are angry)
- make it clear that there will be consequences for abusive behaviour in the future (and mean it)

If the child repeats the abusive behaviour...

- repeat the steps above and enforce the consequence
- be sure to stay calm and make it clear that the consequence is because abusive behaviour is not acceptable
- be consistent: respond to each and every time the child is abusive
- find a place in your community to get counselling



- if the child is 12 years of age or older,
- if the child is hitting or making threats to harm you,
- if all these other techniques have been tried and did not work, and
- if you worry for your safety or that of other children,
you need to call the police

Dealing with anger

Anger is an emotion. It is not good or bad. Everyone feels angry sometimes.

Some people, including some children, think anger causes abuse. So they may be afraid to let the anger out. For other people, the anger comes out in hurtful ways such as yelling, insults and violence. Either way, it is important to help by:

- telling children it is okay to have angry feelings
- helping them put a name to their feelings such as anger
- expressing your anger in ways that do not hurt others (e.g., by talking about why you are angry)
- showing them ways to be angry that do not hurt others

Here are some words that can help...

"It's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to hit."

"You seem angry. Take a big breath and then blow out all the air. Let's do it again. Okay, now use your words to help me understand what's wrong."

"I was angry when the vacuum broke. I called Nana and told her I was upset. She's going to bring her vacuum over for us to borrow."