

Swearing

Remember:

Children sometimes use inappropriate language without knowing what they mean.

Children learn these words from other children, family, and the media.

Children sense that these words are not a part of pleasant conversation. Many children especially four year olds enjoy this out-of-bounds talk.

Adults react to the words with either laughter or shock and children may enjoy being able to elicit either response.

Techniques to Help Curb Swearing:

Is this Child Imitating Others Who Swear?

Children imitate others and try out inappropriate words they have heard because it makes them feel grown-up or powerful because it gets a reaction.

Deal with swearing when you first hear it.

If you ignore it, you may unintentionally give the message that using that language is okay.

Respond in a matter-of-fact manner.

Make it clear that swearing is not acceptable by saying, "That's a word we do not use here."

Children repeat what you say, so model the kind of language you want to hear.

The child who swears immediately after someone else needs to learn better ways to get attention. Whisper to him/her, "You don't need to copy Josh's words."

Is This Child Part of a Group in which Swearing is Acceptable?

If swearing is acceptable in the child's home it may be difficult to eliminate all swearing. Decrease swearing in your setting by teaching the child more acceptable words.

Talk to the child confidentially. Say, "That sounds like something a grown-up might say. It's not okay to say that here." Do not talk negatively about the setting in which the words are said.

Are Other Children Provoking Him/Her? Is an Activity Causing Upset or Frustration?

Observe the child and if you see he/her becoming frustrated or argumentative, intervene before he/she gets so frustrated that he/she swears.

Is This Child Swearing To Express Anger or Other Negative Emotions?

Teach the child to deal with frustration in other ways. He/She could walk away or use problem-solving techniques.

Give him/her words to use when he/she is angry. Say, "I know you are angry. You can tell me "I'm so mad."

Replace swear words with those that are more acceptable like "shoot" or "oh my goodness."

What Happens After This Child Swears? Does This Child Look At You, Say The Offensive Word, And Then Wait For A Response?

Often children receive attention for swearing, whether it be lecture or laughter. The attention keeps the behavior going. Increase the amount of positive attention this child receives at other times. Talk to the child and pay attention when he/she is being appropriate.

Point out the positive things about this child in front of other children.

If he/she swears, keep a straight face as you implement the practices suggested.

If another child reports swearing, tell that child to let the swearing child know that they do not like this. Let the child reporting the swearing move away from the child who is swearing.

Condensed from [So This Is Normal Too?](#)

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