



Parent Strategy When Defiance Happens

1. Still treat it like a stress reaction first.

Even if the words are rude ("You're not the boss of me!" "I hate you!"), start by calming, not punishing.

✓ Parent thinks: *"They're not trying to be evil. They're overloaded and protecting themselves."*

2. Don't match the defiance with power struggles.

If the parent escalates ("Don't you dare speak to me that way!") — it makes the nervous system MORE defensive.

Instead, lower your volume. Soften your face. Slow down.

✓ Parent says:
"I hear that you're upset. We can talk when you're ready to be respectful."

3. Maintain boundaries, but gently.

You *don't* have to accept aggression, threats, or property destruction — but you *do* have to enforce rules ~~without shaming~~.

✓ Parent says:
"It's okay to be mad. It's not okay to throw things. Let's take a break now. We'll come back when you're calmer."

4. Offer tiny doses of control.

Defiant teens need to feel *some* sense of control or they escalate further.

✓ Offer a choice like:
"You can cool down in your room or outside — which do you want?"
"You can talk to me now or text me later."

5. Repair later when they're calm.

When the teen is regulated again, *briefly* repair without shame or lectures.

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What NOT to Say During Defiance (and Why)

✗ "You are being ridiculous!"

- **Why not:** Shames the teen → increases fight/flight activation.
- **Better:** *"This feels big for you right now."*

✗ "Because I said so!"

- **Why not:** Triggers more control battles (especially in ADHD/autistic brains).
- **Better:** *"We can talk about why later. Right now we need a break."*

✗ "If you don't stop, there will be consequences!" (*while they're escalated*)

- **Why not:** Threats during overload add fuel to the fire.
- **Better:** *"We'll figure this out when you're calmer."* (*Consequences should come after regulation, not during a meltdown.*)

✗ "Calm down right now!"

- **Why not:** They would if they could. It feels invalidating.
- **Better:** *"I'm here while you get through this."* (*Focus on presence, not control.*)

✗ "You're being so disrespectful!"

- **Why not:** Labels the teen's *identity* rather than the *behavior*. (Leads to shame.)
- **Better:** *"I need respectful words. Let's pause until we can restart."*

✓ Parent Focus Instead:

- Name the feeling, not the behavior.
- Offer space and calm choices.
- Repair and teach later, not during crisis.

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CALM CRISIS SCRIPT FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



Memory Tip:

SAFE → PAUSE → CHOICE → VALIDATE → WAIT → INVITE

Step 1: Regulate Yourself (Parent/Caregiver)

- Take 2 deep breaths.
- Keep your voice soft and slow.
- Relax your body.

Step 2: Say:

"You're safe. I'm here."

Step 3: Pause the Demand

"We can pause this for now."

Step 4: Offer a Simple Choice

"Do you want to [choice 1] or [choice 2]?"

(Example: "Take a break in your room or sit on the couch?")

Step 5: Validate Their Feeling

"It's okay to feel [emotion]. It's a lot right now."

Step 6: Give Space and Wait

- Stay nearby but don't force talking.
- No arguments or lectures.
- Calm presence only.

Step 7: Invite After Calming

"Would you like help figuring out what to do next?"



Key Reminder:

- Calm first, then connect.
- No problem-solving until after they are calm.