

## 5 Sure Fire Ways to Stop The After School Attitude

It's a rainy August afternoon and I'm in my kitchen cutting up vegetables while my boys build forts in the living room. My phone vibrates in my back pocket and I'm happy to see it's my best friend calling.

"Hey! How is the first week of kindergarten going? Does he love it? Are you hanging in?"

She sighs.

"I think it's is going well, but I'm not sure. His teacher says he's been great, yet he's driving me crazy at home! He argues with me and cries about everything. I just don't get it."

As I listen to my friend's words, I am taken back to last year when my oldest son started kindergarten.

He loved school and he did so great, but I remember the after school tears, frustration, and boundary pushing. He rocked at school but fell apart at home.

I felt frustrated and angry because he was so emotional and defiant. I tried being more strict and setting up more rules, more boundaries, more consequences. But it just got worse.

Then, one day I was venting to my Mom about this, and she told me I did the same thing. I'd be so good at school, then crater into a puddle of tears as soon as I got home.

Then it all came clear.

I knew exactly why my son was losing his cool.

When things get hard, we fall apart on the people we feel safest with.

Think about it. After hearing terrible news or during a hard day at work you're able to keep it all together and not cry. But as soon as you see your safe person (husband, mom, best friend) you end up a blubbering mess.

Kids do the same thing.

It takes a great deal of emotional and mental work to follow the rules throughout the day, especially for little kids.

Each time your child refrains from hitting that boy who took his toy, holds up her hand and covers her mouth so she doesn't speak out of turn, or stops himself from running down the hall to recess, they have to restrain themselves. This restraint builds and builds, almost like a bubble.

Then they walk into their safe place, and POP! They can finally let loose and stop having to restrain themselves.

They get to let it all go.

Honestly, it's a good thing that your child feels safe enough to fall apart at home.

But, as a parent, that's hard to deal with. It's frustrating when you have a child who hasn't had a tantrum in months come home from school and cry and whine about every single thing.

How can you help your child with the transition from home to school so they don't have to struggle, and you don't get so frustrated?

## **Greet Without the Questions**

When you see your child after a long day of school, you want to know about their day. So you ask questions like "How was your day?", "Do you have homework?", "Did you get into trouble?", "What did you do?", "Did you make friends?"

No one likes to be bombarded with questions or grilled about their day as soon as they walk in the door.

By asking a ton of questions, you could stress out your child, especially if they had a hard day.

Instead of asking them a bazillion and a half questions as soon as you see them, greet them with statements like: "Hey, it's good to see you again." and "Welcome home". Then ask, "Do you want to tell me about your day now or at dinner?" This gives him the power to decide when to talk.

When you ask about their day, keep the questions open-ended:

- "What was your favorite part of the day?"
- "What kinds of things did you do at school today?"
- "Who did you play with today?"
- "What new thing did you learn today?"

Ask questions that can't be answered with yes or no.

These prevent one worded answers like "fine" and open up a conversation about school.

Please connect and ask, but do it at a time when your child is ready to talk.

## Feed Them

Hangry (angry because you're hungry) is a real thing.

When our blood sugar gets low and our tummies grumble it's understandable that we get snippy and short tempered.

Just assume that your child is hungry when they get home and have healthy snacks that will give them energy and fill them up. We do a lot of fruits, veggies and ranch, yogurts, nuts, and of course a big glass of water.

When your child's stomach is full, they are less likely to be frustrated and angry.

## Allow for Downtime

Give kids time to be kids. Allow them to have time to play and let loose.

Children need to play, it's how they process their world and handle their stress. So, on particularly stressful days, it's important that they get time to play.

What is it that your child needs? Is he an introvert and needs time alone to decompress? Is your child a mover and she needs to run, hop, and play? Whatever their play needs are, give them time and space.

## Be Consistent with Rules and Consequences

I know it's been a hard day, but that doesn't mean that rules have to go out the window.

Be consistent with your family rules and consequences.

Children thrive in situations when they know what's expected of them, so keep as much of the home life as normal as possible, including your discipline techniques.

Make sure your consequences are related to the crime and that your child knows what happens when a rule is broken.

## Connect and Reflect

Your child has been away from you all day long and they aren't used to the new routine. Things feel different; they might feel insecure about things, so they push boundaries or become overly emotional.

The best way to combat this is to connect.

Find a way to spend one-on-one time with your child. This doesn't mean hours of your time, 10-15 minutes will do.

Put down your phone, step away from your to do list, and focus on your child.

This is not the time to grill your child about their day. This is the time to be present, to play, to connect. Let your child decide how to spend this time and enjoy it with them.

Filling your child's attachment tank is the best way to handle negative behaviors. It tells your child that you're here, you're safe, and you think they're important.

From the blog: Dirt & Boogers: Nurturing the Seasons of Motherhood

<http://dirtandboogers.com/5-sure-fire-ways-to-stop-the-after-school-attitude/>