

How to deal with disrespectful tones?

September 30, 2019 | 6 upvotes | by [Rifleshoot](#)

My wife and I were out running errands Saturday. She made several comments over the course of the afternoon that just carried a disrespectful tone to them. On the surface, they would be considered “helpful suggestions” but with the way she said them, it was clearly meant to be degrading/disrespectful. I let the first couple of comments like that slide, not thinking anything of them, but the last one was overt enough that I turned to her and told her she needs to watch her disrespectful tone. She tried to backpedal and say she “didn’t mean it like that”, but I reminded her that she’s made several disrespectful comments over the last couple of hours in that way and that I wasn’t going to be talked to that way. Was this the appropriate way to handle that, or was there a more tactful way to approach it?

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Comments

OsmiumZulu • 5 points • 30 September, 2019 07:43 PM

So there are really two major elements in play here: macro and micro.

On the micro level (how) one can examine how one can approach this most effectively. While it can be of some help, I've found this to be less than a complete approach. The focus should be on the macro level (why).

Would the queen of Sparta disrespect King Leonidas? Would your wife speak disrespectfully (or simply carelessly) to her boss, a judge or senator, professor, or her lawyer or doctor? Probably not.

The issue is perceived status / authority and whether or not it commands respect. If she perceives you as high status or an authority in her life in some way, odds are good she will not act disrespectfully or carelessly towards you.

Another question is: would a king, lawyer, judge, boss, etc allow her to interact disrespectfully towards them? Probably not, and she knows it and thus would be careful with her behavior to demonstrate respect. First you have to have be respectable, then you have to enforce respectful behavior.

How to enforce it? You can simply withdraw your attention and make it clear that you are a man who does not spend his time in places or with people that do not respect him. You have to do this in a calm, OI, not butthurt way or it will come off weak and whiny.

Years ago before I had fully encountered the red pill my wife began to habitually interact with me disrespectfully. One day after getting home from a 13 hour day at work she started to nag me about something (I don't recall what). I simply grabbed my work stuff and turned to head out the door. She asked where I was going. I calmly explained to her that like water flow downhill, men flow to places they are respected. I explained that I was always respected at work and that I was headed back there. When she asked me if I was serious I told her I was and that I hoped she could learn how to demonstrate respect because I wanted to want to spend time with her. Things changed very quickly after that and she became much more intentional with how she spoke to me.

Here's the thing: most women, my wife included, grew up in a society where few men demand and expect respect. While there was some instances of blatant disrespect, there were several things she would say or do that she honestly did not know were disrespectful. I had to teach her some etiquette, and she learned and changed. Why? Because she wanted to demonstrate respect because she saw me as someone who deserved and expected it.

Nowadays I feel abundantly respected by her. In the rare instances now if her respect wanes it's because I wasn't being respectable (more slothful than usual, less impressive drive, etc.) In small measure this can be a good barometer to indicate that I may straying from my course. After all, unless she is just a harpy she wants to be married to a king. She wants you to be the kind of man who earns, deserves, and gets respect.

Rifleshoot[S] • 1 point • 30 September, 2019 09:07 PM

My wife's mother is crazy in a very literal way. That whole family walks on eggshells around her and her father is basically a doormat when it comes to the mother. My wife was also raised as the spoiled youngest child, as her only brother is over a decade older than her. So I suspect that there's a little bit of her that has some entitlement issues, but I do see what you are saying.

Long term, I have to be the kind of man that is respectable and this kind of behavior will go away.

Short term, though, would you say a light rebuke like this is appropriate in the moment, or just to let it go?

OsmiumZulu • 5 points • 30 September, 2019 09:34 PM

"That's not how I meant it."

"You're intentionally reading the wrong things into what I said."

"Well I don't feel like the way you brought that up is very respectful."

"You're the only one who has a problem with what I say. Maybe you're the one with a problem."

"Ooh, okay, I'll be careful to treat Mr. Sensitive better from now on."

"Okay, I was sort of rude one time. Is that really worth blowing up over?"

Etc. etc.

Are you ready to respond to a chorus of those and other baited deflections? The issue remains that she, even when caught, will likely try to justify her tone and poor behavior, or at the very least minimize the severity of it.

"...Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord..." - 1 Peter 3:6.

The goal is to be respectable and competent enough that the idea of our wife calling us "lord" or "master" (not in an idolatrous or BDSM sort of way) wouldn't seem out of place.

So should you confront the behavior? Depends. Will it seem like pleading, whining, being over sensitive, or otherwise from a weak position or is will you be coming from a strong frame?

The difference is that of a brother telling his sister not to talk down to him in front of his friends verses a slightly amused father patiently teaching his teenager daughter how to better interact with others with grace and courtesy.

Remember: your wife is the oldest teenager in the house.

Deep_Strength • 5 points • 1 October, 2019 12:50 AM*

You handled it fine, if she doesn't do it again.

If it's a repeated mistake, it's usually a macro issue like the other guys are saying. Could be you, or her background, or many things combined. Sounds like her mom modeled many of those disrespectful behaviors too, so that needs to be addressed.

She tried to backpedal and say she "didn't mean it like that"

My somewhat canned response to this is:

"It doesn't matter if you didn't mean it. That's how it came off. We all sin and make mistakes at times whether we mean to or not. We still have to repent to God and make amends, even if we didn't mean it."

Basically, it does not let her get away it whether it was meant or not. "Didn't mean it" is usually the weasel way out (both men and women do this, but usually women a bit more), and you have to make sure your response is airtight because it's easy to wiggle out of responsibility for actions with that one.

Rifleshoot[S] • 2 points • 1 October, 2019 02:10 AM

That was similar to my response. I think she realized she went too far and tried to to play it off as an unintentional thing. I made sure that she knew I held her responsible for her words, intentional or not.

rocknrollchuck • 2 points • 1 October, 2019 12:34 AM

u/OsmiumZulu's response was very detailed and covers pretty much all the major points. And he's right: you should **never** put up with disrespect. However, sometimes you may not be able to leave or walk away. In that

case, here are some responses you might use:

"If you're going to be like that, there's the door. Come back when you're ready to be sweet again and talk to me like an adult. "

"Someone's got all her feathers ruffled. What would Jesus say?"

"Babe, did you get enough to eat today at lunch? You sound irritable. We could stop and get you something."

".... right. So as I was saying..."

"Look who got up on the wrong side of the bed today.....!!!!"

"Are you serious?"

"It's so adorable when you get feisty."

"Hey, you don't talk to me in that tone. Try again."

Say nothing. Best in groups. Let that hate hang in the air poisoning its owner with each passing second. The longer the silence the better. You don't react. People look to you. You're just carrying on with doing nothing. When someone next says something you immediately interrupt them and say "no.. hang on a second... my wife was just saying (whatever the disrespectful statement was)." Then silence again.

However you respond - be aware of your body language. Stand straight, look her in the eye. Do not break eye contact, especially by looking down (submission).

And as with all things, YMMV so calibrate accordingly.

Rifleshoot[S] • 2 points • 1 October, 2019 02:12 AM

We were in the pharmacy drive through when I responded to her. My response was similar to what deep_strength said. I basically let her know that I wasn't going to let her talk to me disrespectfully like that and that it didn't matter if she "meant it" or not.

lololasaurus • 1 point • 1 October, 2019 03:46 AM

I love your say nothing option. That is amazing. All of these responses are excellent. This is my weakest point, and it's really important to not be weak at this.

rocknrollchuck • 2 points • 1 October, 2019 03:51 AM

Yeah, but you better have the Frame to pull these off if you go to use any of them, otherwise she will eat you alive by deflecting, as OZ mentioned. And then you'll just end up in a huge argument.

agree-with-you • 1 point • 1 October, 2019 03:46 AM

I love you both

Red-Curious • 2 points • 1 October, 2019 04:27 AM

Hmm ... the other comments here are a little disappointing. Way too much emphasis on what to *SAY*. Depending on how you manage your frame ...

You could do like /u/Deep_Strength, /u/rocknrollchuck, or /u/OsmiumZulu suggest and just set a clear verbal

boundary, like you did: "Don't talk to me like that!" Or ...

You could say, "I like your boobs. Honk, honk!"

And either option would get you roughly the same response from her. In fact, the latter, as demeaning as it is, probably fares better than the first, even. What you say matters very, very, very little. How you say it and the presence that is communicated when you say it is what matters.

The thing is: you're too hung up on trying to change your wife. There is certainly a degree to which you want to train her and raise her up to be a godly woman. However, the more you get invested in this concept, the more covert contracts will creep up in your life.

"How many times have I had to tell you to stop talking to me that way?"

"What's wrong with her? She doesn't listen to the things I'm saying."

"Is this going to happen in front of our kids too?"

You're going to find yourself constantly spinning circles in your mind about why she won't conform to your expectations that at the end of the day you're going to forget: you're a man and she's a woman. She's not going to think and act like you, and that's okay.

Do you have amused mastery yet? I don't mean if you can practice some conversational art you call amused mastery. I mean actual amused mastery - a mental state that sees the universe from a broader perspective than your immediate circumstances. If you do, you wouldn't give two craps about how disrespectful she talks to you because you realize: (1) in the grand scheme of things, how she talks to you matters very little, and (2) you have more important things going on that can make a difference for eternity than to worry about someone who talks to you that way.

When you understand those two concepts in conjunction, you don't feel the need to snap at her, lecture her, try to change her, etc. You simply give her a choice: "This is what I'm doing. You coming along or not? Oh, and if you want to come, there are some rules. You okay with that?"

When I go to an amusement park, my kids aren't tall enough for half the rides. But the rules are the rules, right? Are those rules an effort by the park staff to force my kids to be taller so they can get on the ride? No. That's absurd. They're kids. I can't force them to be taller, neither can the park staff. It'll happen when it happens, as they mature. In the meantime, they're enforcing their boundaries all the time by refusing my kids the ability to ride the big rides. But they're not yelling at the kids for being too short. They just say, "Sorry, you can't ride the ride because you're too short." There is no anger or animosity. It's just how it is.

See how that works? Now go have that attitude with your wife and the way she speaks to you. Don't let it get to you so much. The instant you feel like you have to talk to her the way you did, the more power she has over you. This very much came off as a loss of frame. Don't tell her what to do. Tell her what you're going to do. Don't tell kids to grow taller. Tell them you're not going to let a short kid on the ride. She can do what she wants, but you're going to do what you want too.