

Setting Appropriate Limits

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Why Limits are Important

- Teaches kids self-discipline
- Keeps kids safe
- Keeps kids healthy
- Helps kids cope with uncomfortable feelings
- Shows kids that you care

Teaches Self Discipline

- When you say, "It's time to turn off your video game and do your homework," you are teaching self-discipline.
- Even though video games may be more fun, it's important to be responsible.
- The eventual goal is for kids to learn to manage all their responsibilities, like homework, chores and taking care of their bodies, without reminders.
- Help your child develop strategies that will impose limits on himself. Tell a young child to "beat the timer" when he's getting dressed in the morning and set a timer for five minutes.
- Or, tell an older child she can watch TV as soon as she gets all of her homework done.

Keeps kids safe

- Limits teach kids how to keep themselves safe. Although it might be safe for your child to play outside, he might need limits about what he's allowed to do or where he's allowed to go when he's playing outside alone.
- Limits also keep kids safe when they are using the internet and when they begin doing activities independently. Limits should expand as your child matures.
- Give your child opportunities to show you that he can be responsible with the limits you've given him. If he's able to handle the limits you've set, he can show that he's ready to handle more responsibility.
- Create behavior management contracts to help your child understand concrete ways you'll recognize when he needs fewer limits.

Keeps Kids Healthy

- By nature, most kids are impulsive and enjoy immediate gratification. Therefore, they need adults to teach them how to be healthy.
- Limits should be set with a child's eating habits, for example. Without limits, many kids would eat junk food all day. Setting limits means saying, "I let kids have cookies who have eaten a healthy choice first."
- Limits should also be set in regards to electronics. Many kids would be content watching TV or playing on the computer all day long.
- Set limits with screen time, exercise, hygiene, and other health practices that will encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Helps Kids Cope with Uncomfortable Feelings

- Sometimes parents avoid setting limits because they don't want to make their child sad or mad. But, learning how to deal with uncomfortable emotions is actually an important skill.
- Just because your child is sad that he can't eat that third cookie doesn't mean you should give in. Instead, it gives you a great opportunity to teach your child about feelings and help him find healthy ways to cope with it.
- Each limit you set is an opportunity for your child to practice managing his emotions. Coach his efforts as he tries to deal with frustration, anger, boredom, or sadness but don't take responsibility for cheering him up or calming him down.
- Instead, teach him how to do those things for himself. Kids who know how to handle uncomfortable feelings will be better equipped for the realities of adulthood.

Shows Kids that You Care

- Kids who live with few or no rules, experience anxiety. Kids don't want to be in charge. They want to know that you're in charge and that you're competent to help them stay in control.
- Often, kids test limits just to see how adults will react. A child who hits his brother might feel relieved when his mother steps in. Or a child who jumps on the couch after you've told him to stop might be testing your leadership skills.
- Giving negative consequences for breaking the rules, shows that you are not going to let things get out of control.
- It also teaches a child that you love him. Saying to a teen, "I care about you and that's why I am giving you a curfew," might annoy your child on the surface.
- But, it shows that you are willing to work invest energy into your child's life even if it means having to tolerate hearing "you're the meanest parent ever."

ACT DON'T YAK!

Don't be a Charlie Brown Adult

Love and Logic Approach (Cline and Fay)

- **RULE #1**
- Adults set firm limits in loving ways without anger, lecture, or threats.
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Love and Logic Approach (Cline and Fay)

- **RULE #2**

- When a child causes a problem the adult hands it back in loving ways.
 - 1. In a loving way, the adult holds the child accountable for solving his/her problems in a way that does not make a problem for others.
 - 2. Children are offered choices with limits.
 - 3. Adults use enforceable statements.
 - 4. Adults provide delayed/extended consequences.
 - 5. The adult's empathy is "locked in" before consequences are delivered.

Setting Appropriate Limits

- **Every limit we set, yet fail to enforce, erodes our relationship with our children.**
- **Every limit set, yet not enforced, reduces our credibility in the eyes of our kids.**

Limits

- **Rule One: Keep your limits simple and general.**

Many parents and educators have enjoyed great success by using just one generic limit in most situations: “I allow _____ as long as it doesn’t cause a problem.”

Limits

- **Rule Two: Describe what you will do... rather than what your kids must do.**

When we tell someone what they must or must not do, we are trying to control something we cannot.

When we describe what we will do or allow, we are remaining focused on what we can control.

- I give allowance to those who finish their chores.
- I keep the toys I have to pick up. You can keep the ones you pick up.
- Breakfast is served until 7:30. Get all you need to hold you till lunch.
- My car is leaving at 8 a.m.

Limits

- **Rule Three: Never set a limit you aren't willing and able to enforce 200% of the time.**

It only takes a slight bit of inconsistency on our part for our children to begin viewing us like slot machines. If their limit testing pays off even to the slightest degree, they begin to think, “Our parents enforce limits most of the time, but there is hope that if we just keep playing them, they’ll slip up and we’ll hit the jackpot.”

Provide Choices Within Limits

- Example of a Child throwing a Tantrum during dinner
 - “Would you rather eat dinner with us, or would you rather be in the time-out area? It’s really up you. If you decide to go to time-out, please come back as soon as you can handle it. We’d love to have you back. Thank you!”
 - Children need some control over their life. This is what drives misbehavior. Giving choices, gives them some control over their destiny.

Power Struggles and Choices

- One of the most powerful strategies for avoiding power struggles involves giving choices within limits. It's all about sharing control. We can either share control by giving small choices...or wait for our kids to fight us for it over big issues.

Power Struggles and Choices

- Choices within limits are only effective when we remember to follow these guidelines:
 - For each choice give two options, each of which are ok with you. For example, “Do you want to do your chores now or in fifteen minutes?”
 - “Do you want to do your homework before or after dinner?”
 - Give choices before your child gets resistant. If you give them afterwards, you reward resistance.
 - For each choice, give them no longer than 10 seconds to choose.

Power Struggles and Choices

- If they don't choose, or they choose an option you didn't provide, choose for them.
- Only give choices that fit your value system.
- Give 99% of your choices when things are going well.
- When things aren't going well, say, "You've been getting to make a lot of choices around here. Now it's my turn."

Power Struggles and Choices

- **Some Love and Logic Examples of Little Choices**

“Would you like to wear your coat or carry it?”

“Are you going to clean the garage or mow the lawn this week?”

“Will you be coming home by 8:00 or 8:30?”

Turn your garbage into gold

- Stop arguing with me.
- Quit breaking the rules of the game.
- You're not going out without your coat.
- I'll be glad to discuss this with you as soon as the arguing stops.
- Those who can follow the rules are welcome to play the game.
- You may go out as soon as you have your coat

Consequences with Empathy

Benefits of Delivering Love and Logic Consequences with Empathy

- The child is not distracted by the adult's anger.
- The child must “own” his or her pain rather than blaming it on the adult.
- The adult–child relationship is maintained.
- The child is much less likely to seek revenge.
- The adult is seen as being able to handle problems without breaking a sweat.
- The child learns through modeling to use empathy with others.

Consequences with Empathy

- Keep Your Empathy Short, Sweet, Simple, and Repetitive
 - Most adults find it difficult to deliver empathy when a child has misbehaved. The more natural tendency is to show anger, threaten, and lecture.
 - Use one Love and Logic empathetic response to repeat over and over with their kids.
 - When children hear this same statement repeated over and over, they learn two things:
 - My parents care about me.
 - My parents aren't going to back down. No use in arguing!
 - My favorite: "I'm sorry you made that choice."

Consequences with Empathy

- The Power of Nonverbal Communication Studies estimate that between 70% and over 90% of what we communicate we do without words through subtle nonverbal gestures.
- Research also reveals that children are experts at decoding these nonverbal cues. When delivering empathetic responses, the delivery is as important as your actual words! **AVOID SARCASM AT ALL COSTS!**
- Keep your voice level and do not yell. Remember—put the responsibility back on the child. “I’m sorry you . . .”

Apply Consequences With Empathy

- Example of Missing Curfew
 - “That’s too bad! You may not use the car next weekend since you missed curfew last night. I’m sorry you chose to stay out too late.
 - When a parent displays anger. The child gets caught up on the anger. The result is that the consequence does not register in the child’s mind the way it should.
 - When the parent uses empathy in describing the consequence, the child’s mind tends to focus on the mistake with more intensity. This leads the child to build a thought process about the mistake.

Why Give Delayed Consequences

- **Problems with Immediate Consequences:**
- Most of us have great difficulty thinking of an immediate consequence while we are teaching.
- We “own” the problem rather than handing it back to the child. In other words, we are forced to do more thinking than the child.
- We are forced to react while we and the child are upset.
- We don’t have time to anticipate how the child will react to our response.

Why Give Delayed Consequences

- We don't have time to put together a reasonable plan
- We often end up making threats we can't back up.
- We generally fail to deliver a strong dose of empathy before providing the consequences.
- Yelling may make us feel better, but there will be no long term change.
- This gives us time to phrase the consequence that takes the ownership from us to the child.

Summary

	Supportive Parent is accepting and child-centered	Unsupportive Parent is rejecting and parent-centered
Demanding Parent expects much of child	Authoritative Parenting Relationship is reciprocal, responsive; high in bidirectional communication	Authoritarian Parenting Relationship is controlling, power-assertive; high in unidirectional communication
Undemanding Parent expects little of child	Permissive Parenting Relationship is indulgent; low in control attempts	Rejecting-Neglecting Parenting Relationship is rejecting or neglecting; uninvolved

Questions?

- You may contact me at
- Rebecca.boyle@aeaohio.org

Resources

- Cline and Fay (2016) Parenting with Love and Logic
- www.loveandlogic.com
 - <https://www.verywellfamily.com/reasons-why-it-is-important-to-set-limits-with-kids-1094884>