



# PARENTING PERSPECTIVES

Promoting Healthy Development and  
Nurturing the Unique Potential in Every Child

## EFFECTIVE LIMIT SETTING

### Effective Parenting Tools

- Talking with respect
- Calm tone
- Gentle touch
- Eye contact
- Get down to child's level
- Firm & Kind approach
- Respond vs. React
- Empathize
- Use encouraging statements
- Offer choices
- Set Limits
- Plan ahead – give notice of time, remind child of rule
- Keep your cool – avoid yelling and avoid power struggles

### Children Need Limits

- Limits show you care. Children raised without limits often feel abandoned.
- Limits provide security. When children don't know your limits, they feel lost and confused.
- Limits help children recognize and respect other people's boundaries.
- Limits help children define themselves. Limits help kids clarify their own limits and boundaries. They can set boundaries because you have modeled how when you set limits.
- Limits help children learn what is socially acceptable and what is not.
- Limits also let children learn that if they go past a certain point, there will be consequences.

### Things that Get in the Way and Prevent Parents from Setting Limits

- Wanting our children to like us
- Feeling afraid or not liking conflict
- Not knowing how to set limits
- Not wanting to deal with your child's reaction
- Feeling guilty about our own actions/situation such as working too much or divorce

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- Not being allowed to say “No.”
- Getting messages that it wasn’t “nice” to assert yourself or go for what you want
- Experiencing no limits as a child
- Experiencing harsh and punitive limits as a child

### Steps for Limit Setting (ABCD)

- A. Acknowledge** feelings and empathize with how the child feels
- B. Briefly** state the limit clearly or ask the child what the agreement is
- C.** Give them a **choice** (4 years and younger) or ask them what their options might be (5 years and older)
- D. Done**

### Key to Making Limit Setting Effective

1. Calm tone
2. Few words
3. All words should be a part of the 4 steps
4. If you need to walk away, walk away calmly – do not re-engage
5. Be consistent
6. Make few exceptions
7. Expect your child’s behavior to escalate at first, with consistency your child will learn it is not worth it to push the limit
8. Firm, kind and respectful at same time
9. Non-punitive. Children do not need to suffer to learn. Threats of punishment escalate the situation.

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