

RULES & BOUNDARIES

Why it is so important.

One of the main roles that parents play in their child's growth and development is to provide them GUIDANCE, which inherently comes with rules and boundaries. But how to do this naturally and in a way it is not stressing?

If adequate boundaries are in place, they help to provide a framework in which a child feels safe and supported. Boundaries provide guidelines for behaviour and help children to learn what is socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. They learn self-control and self-discipline and begin to set limits for themselves. In this way children are more likely to grow up into responsible, socially and emotionally mature adults than those children who have been set few or no limits.

Research has proven that children need rules/boundaries in order to grow and develop;

Rules prepare children for the real world. Your child will learn what is expected of him and what will happen if he doesn't comply. Having expectations of your child and enforcing consequences if the rules are broken, will help your child adapt better to new situations.

Rules teach children how to socialise. Some rules are basic manners; saying "please", "thank you", "excuse me".

Rules provide a sense of order. Certain rules can help a child remember what will come next (like washing hands before eating, putting on shoes before going outside). Young children cooperate better when they know what is required of them and that helps them gain a sense of belonging.

Rules help to keep children safe. Many rules are designed to protect children (hold the railing when going up/down the stairs, holding hands of an adult before crossing a street, wear a helmet on the bike, etc).

Rules boost confidence. If you gradually expand the limits placed on your child, he/she will become more confident about his/her growing independence and his/her ability to handle responsibility.

Young children take pride in achieving simple milestones (like putting on shoes by themselves, going to the toilet by themselves, having play-dates at a friend's house without mum, etc).

Being clear and consistent and age appropriate, helps you and your child to not feel any stress on establishing these boundaries; and most importantly realize your child is learning, which is a process where you need to help him to get used to it. It is a process to go through together.

Literature Reference: "Why kids need rules" Marianne Neifert - KidsMatter.edu.au - Childalert.co.uk

Establishing Rules & Boundaries.

- Make sure the limits you set are in line with your child's development and support your child's natural drive to explore, learn and practice new skills. When possible, give an explanation for the reasons of the rules. (you can't expect your 2,5-year-old to put his toys away without being asked, but you can expect him to help you tidy up. Explain your child: "the faster we tidy – up, the earlier we can go outside".)
- Set clear consequences for breaking rules and be consistent and follow-up on what you have said. When you allow a certain kind of behaviour one day and then you don't allow this the next time, you'll confuse your child. Of course being consistent doesn't mean being inflexible – you can bend the rules once in a while under special circumstances (but explain your reason.)
- Involve children in setting basic rules. This helps them understand the value of having rules and it motivates your child to cooperate.
- You might need to discuss as a family (include nannies, drivers, grandparents!) the sort of rules/boundaries that you want to set for your child. These might include things like: talking to each other instead of shouting, asking before taking things, no hitting, putting away toys after playing with them, washing hands before eating, no television or I-pads during meals, bedtime-rituals, etc.) Many rules you want to set will depend on your own values, cultural beliefs and individual style of parenting, but it is important for your child that everyone in the family is on the same page!
- Don't be too easy or "weak" to set rules. Today, in many households the child's voice or opinion is equal to those of his/her parents. Although it is extremely important for children's emotions to be heard and validated, a parent still needs to be in charge, in order to create a secure and stable environment for their children. Parents are responsible for setting boundaries in the household, in order to foster an environment where their children can be heard, but also encouraged to develop patience, self-awareness, responsibility and independence.



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