

Why Parents should set up clear Boundaries for their Kids

If you ask almost any child if they need boundaries, they are of course going to say, “I don’t need no rules”. Of course, nobody wants to follow rules, almost everyone wants to tell others what to do but at the same time they don’t want to be told what to do. Most people want to do what they want to do and when they want to do it. So why should we set up boundaries for our kids. Parenting children is not simply about how and what you are doing for them right now, it is really about developing their character in order for them to be successful adults that are able to have boundaries with others and be able to develop healthy relationships into the future.

As parents, we are completely aware that children have to be taught how to do everything and this includes how to act and behave. A boundary is like an imaginary line that defines a person of where they are and how they relate to those around them. Children must know what they should take responsibility for, what other people require and expect from him/her, and what they are responsible for. If a parent does not teach boundaries, then the child grows up confused about their own boundaries with other people and usually struggles as an adult with self-control and relating appropriately with those around him/her. Children that are not taught boundaries usually grow up not accepting responsibility for their own actions and they tend to blame others for all of their own wrongdoings. (we call this projection of blame.) So as parents, how do we set up boundaries for our children??

The first step is building a strong character in our children. In order to do so, we can and must not do everything for our children. Children must be taught responsibility in order to build a strong character. Parents often tend to focus on problems that are immediate, for example, your child’s room is a mess so you want to “help” so you go into their room and clean up their room for them and you put their laundry away. This is not developing responsibility in your child, this is an immediate fix of the problem. All the child is learning here is dependence upon a parent “to do things for them.” Establishing boundaries is a key element into developing the necessary components to become a successful adult.

Parents should make children accountable for their actions/behaviors and their emotion/feelings and have them take ownership of what their boundaries are and responsible for their actions. As parents, we do not take responsibility for a child’s wrongdoing. A truly responsible child and eventually adult takes responsibility for their own wrongdoings and will say, “I messed up and it is my fault.” Make kids take ownership over their own problems, teach them to forgive themselves and others, teach them to change bad behaviors, and most importantly teach them delayed gratification. Until their responsibilities are all met, they should not be allowed a reward or to “do whatever they want.” This is teaching them responsibility. No fun until the work is done.

Secondly, as parents we should look at our parenting of our kids. Is our parenting consistent? Do we ignore problems or try to beg or plead with our children to get them to behave or do the right thing and then we can't stand their behavior anymore, do we blow up at them?? Parents, must look at their own parenting styles in order to understand what their own boundaries are with others and how they have established boundaries with their kids. Are the boundaries that have been set up appropriate or are they simply convenient?? Children directly react to your parenting style. The ways that a parent can influence their children to develop these necessary boundaries by teaching them boundaries, by modeling appropriate boundaries, and by having your child truly internalize what boundaries. To internalize something is truly make it your own and make it a part of your reality. What I mean here is that to teach and model boundaries is simply not enough, a child has to experience a situation that will teach them boundaries. A real good example of this is to give your child an allowance for chores that they have completed around the house and make them save up the money to purchase the item. If your child decides to "blow" their money on "stuff" or "junk food" then that there is their decision and this will teach them responsibility. Do not give them more money to buy the item that they want nor should you simply go buy them the item that they wanted. If you as a parent keep your boundaries with your child then you are teaching and modeling appropriate boundaries for your child to learn the boundaries for themselves. .

Now as a parent, you are well aware that when you begin to teach and reinforce boundaries that your child is going to nag, argue, whine, complain, and generally carry on. Parenting is not about being "popular", it is about developing the best possible child you can in order for them to have the necessary tools to cope in life. Do not be a parent that fears that your child will no longer be your "friend" if you discipline them, disagree with them, or confront them. Our children are not our "friends" they are our children and our job is to parent them, not befriend them.

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