**Parenting Tips for Setting Limits with Your Child(ren)**

1. Don’t give in when children are uncooperative or disrespectful, and don’t try to overpower them with threats, shaming, or long, drawn-out consequences (or long lectures). Instead, hold you ground, maintain a respectful tone, give clear messages with your words, and support your words with effective action.
2. As you try to do things differently the changes may not feel comfortable to you or your children in the beginning. You’ll likely encounter pressure and resistance, not only from your child, but also from within yourself.
3. Strong-willed children require a lot of guidance and discipline: when you accept this statement as a fact of life rather than a source of annoyance, your attitude and perspective changes.
4. A child brings his or her temperament/nature into the arena and a parent provides the nurture.
5. Parents who repeat and remind are actually teaching their child to tune out and ignore.
6. Parents who bargain over their limits on a regular basis invite children to test and redefine their rules.
7. Strong-willed children respond best to clear, firm messages without a lot of drama or strong emotion.
8. Ignore the attitude, not the misbehavior. Grumbling, mumbling, eye rolling, door slamming, and looks of impatience or disgust are tempting baits that are hard for many adults to resist but if you bite and respond on the child’s level, then you are back in the dance.
9. Have your child(ren) and/or yourself take a time out to cool down before problem-solving.
10. Consequences are most instructive when they’re logically related to the behavior.
11. Consequences are most effective when they are proportional to the behavior, that is, not too much, not too little, not too long, and not too short.
12. When the consequence is over, it should be followed with a clean slate and forgiveness.
13. Anger, drama, or strong emotion conveys over-involvement on your part and sabotages the instructive value of your consequence. Logical consequences are most effective when carried out in a matter-of-fact manner using your normal voice. Remember, logical consequences are intended to stop misbehavior, not shame, blame, humiliate, or discourage your child.
14. Time-out sends all the right messages to children about our rules and expectations. It stops misbehavior, prevents dances (parent being pulled into a back and forth with their child), and provides them with the time they need to restore self-control. Length of time out should be 1 minute for every year of age that a child is. Always use a timer so your children will experience it as consistent rather than pick up on the inconsistency and resent it as arbitrary and unfair.
15. Negative messages inspire resistance. They convey little confidence in the child’s ability to make good choices and cooperate, and carry an underlying message of shame, blame, and rejection. Positive messages feel good and motivate us to cooperate. They meet our need to belong, reaffirm, our feelings of competence and self-worth, and give us confidence to handle challenging problems on our own. Example: “Jacob, we don’t push others when we want them to move out of our way (said matter-of-factly).”
16. Parents are in an ideal position to help children explore their choices and make better ones. Note: can draw a road on a piece of paper with two or three other roads leading off of it and each road can be one possible choice and the end of each road could be a possible outcome or consequence of that choice.
17. Other ways to teach problem-solving, making better choices, and having better behavior: role-modeling corrective behavior and role plays, try it again or re-dos, breaking down skills into teachable parts then teaching the skill piece by piece.
18. Transitions in the day, such as leaving the house in the morning or arriving home in the afternoon, require skills from children that parents may not have bothered to teach them.
19. Example of trying a new approach using time-outs and natural and/or logical consequences: “We’re not going to repeat or remind anymore when we ask you to do what we ask.” We’ll ask once. No more arguments or debates. No lectures or raised voices. If you choose not to cooperate, we’ll be using some new consequences.” Explain logical consequences and time out (goal of time out is to calm down and be more ready for problem-solving).
20. Change, even positive change, is stressful. Resistance is a normal and expected reaction to change. You can’t change your child’s behavior or beliefs unless you’re willing to change your own.
21. To bring about enduring change it requires consistent application of your methods over time. Note: the encouragement and positive feedback you need to feel effective as a parent is not likely to come from your child.
22. The biggest obstacle will come from within ourselves as we struggle against our compelling desire to revert to old habits and do things the way we always have.
23. Children learn more rapidly when the important adults in their life are teaching the same lesson.
24. Setting limits involves an interaction between three primary factors: your child’s temperament, your own temperament, and your limit-setting approach.
25. Reminders: time outs are 1 minute for each year old a child is. Try to have them in a place that is neutral and not a reward or punishment, so not in the bedroom if filled with electronic gadgets and not in a terrible spot either. When possible try to use natural or logical consequences so child can learn personal responsibility from the experience.

From: “Setting Limits with Your Strong-Willed Child” Eliminating Conflict by Establishing Clear, Firm, and Respectful Boundaries by Robert J. MacKenzie. Prima Publishing, 2001.

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