

SETTING BOUNDARIES AND LIMITS

As a parent it is important that you:

1. Show confidence in the teen's ability to make decisions
2. Support your teen without suffocating his or her interests
3. Allow your teen to experience the consequences of his or her behavior
4. Learn to say "no" when appropriate
5. Exercise leadership without giving in and without fighting
6. Learn that both coercive and pampering approaches to parenting steal initiative and self-confidence from your teen.



Setting Rules and Limits

1. Establish and discuss rules and limits with your child before they need to be enforced. These rules should be appropriate for the child's age and abilities.
2. Make sure that the consequences for not abiding by the rules are clear.
3. Make only rules you can enforce. A child will test rules to see whether the consequences are real. It is crucial that you are consistent in enforcing the rules.
4. Remain fair but firm with your child.

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5. If you have a spouse or a significant other involved in the rearing process, make sure you and that person work together, that you agree on the set rules, and that you are consistent in disciplining. Unity of parents helps discourage the child from playing “divide and conquer” and provides a feeling of stability for the child.
6. Remember, if the child intentionally, willfully, or arrogantly breaks a major rule, the child has made the choice to be disciplined. Discipline is not something the parent does to the child but is something that is done for the child.
7. When grounding your child, set a realistic time that can be adhered to (e.g., 6 months is not realistic, but the weekend is realistic). Make the consequences natural and logical (e.g., the child didn't bring the car back on time so the child can't use the car for 1 week).
8. Make the rules explicit by forming a verbal or written contract with the child. The content of the contract includes behaviors you want from the child (e.g., cleaning his or her room) and behaviors you don't want from the child (e.g., staying out past curfew), rewards for exhibiting positive behaviors, and consequences for breaking the rules.
9. Let the punishment fit the crime. Consequences should be natural and logical. Solicit input from your child—what does he or she think the consequences should be? Focus on the most troubling behavior and not on the “little things.”