

Family Boundaries and Discipline

A Discussion Guide for Adults



5 Facts and Discussion Questions

We want kids to behave and follow the rules. However, one aspect of becoming independent is to question rules and authority. How do we encourage kids to follow boundaries and behave well while also encouraging them to be independent?

Research Findings

1. Most kids say that their families have clear rules about what they can and cannot do.¹
2. Although 52 percent of sixth graders strongly agree that their family has clear rules about what they can and cannot do, only 21 percent of high school seniors say the same.²
3. Fifty-nine percent of kids say they if they break one of their parents' rules, they usually get punished.³
4. Although 27 percent of sixth graders strongly agree that they usually get punished if they break one of their parents' rules, only 11 percent of twelfth graders say the same.⁴
5. Thirty-two percent of kids strongly agree that their parents have clear rules. Thirty-one percent strongly agree that their school has clear rules, and only 22 percent strongly agree that their neighborhood has clear rules.⁵

Sources

1. Search Institute, Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth, (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 2005), unpublished report, Appendix A-6.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., Appendices A-6, A-7.

Take It Further

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Discussion Questions

- **Why are boundaries important for kids?**
- **Why do adults and kids get into so many power struggles around boundaries?**
- **Which boundaries do kids get mixed messages about?**
- **Why is it easier to set boundaries for younger kids than for older kids?**
- **Which rules do you think parents are too lax about enforcing?**
- **Which rules do you think parents are too strict about enforcing?**
- **Overall, do you think parents have a healthy balance of boundaries? Why or why not?**
- **How can we give consistent messages about boundaries for kids?**

It's important for adults in any community to work together to create consistent boundaries for the kids in their community—and to enforce those boundaries with discipline when needed.