MVPARENTS.com

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

Short, Simple Boundaries

Author Stephen Covey knows the importance of setting and talking about boundaries and expectations. At a family meeting to discuss who would do which chores, Covey's seven-year-old son volunteered to care for the lawn.

Dad gave the boy a tour of the yard and pointed out which neighbor's yard he wanted the lawn to most look like. He and his son then agreed on two concise, clear expectations: clean and green.

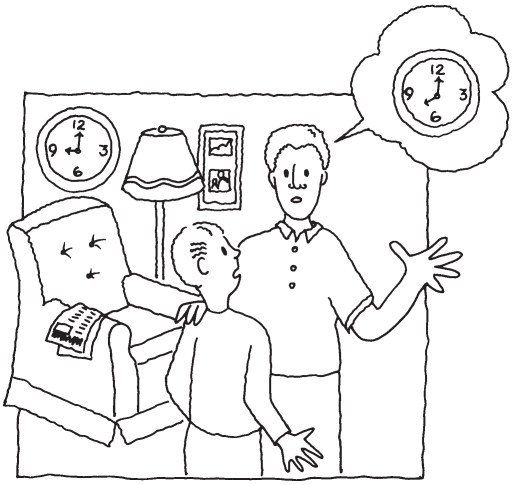
After two weeks, Dad asked his son about the lawn. "It's fine," the boy replied, even though his dad knew he had done nothing to take care of it.

"Let's walk around the yard together and you can show me how it's going," Dad replied.

So they walked around the yard. It was obviously in bad shape, and the boy became upset. "It's so hard, Dad," he said. Dad didn't respond but wondered, "How hard is it not to do something?"

Dad then reminded his son that he—not Dad—was in charge of the yard, but he had a few minutes to help out if the boy wanted it. The two then cleaned up the yard. When they were done, the yard was clean and green.

Over the summer, the son only asked his dad to help him a few more times and did the rest himself. The boundaries were clear. The expectations were clear, and the seven-year-old succeeded at keeping the yard clean and green.



Helpful Hints

Tips that make setting boundaries easier:

- ***Make boundaries positive, simple, and within reason.***
- ***Adjust boundaries as your child becomes older.***
- ***Help children understand that some rules change as brothers and sisters reach different ages.***
- ***Let your child earn more freedoms as he or she shows more responsibility.***

time together

Three ways to set boundaries together with your child:

1. Observe the boundaries of other families (neighbors, television families, etc.). Discuss what's appropriate and what's not for your family and why.
2. Post your family boundaries on the refrigerator. Have only five or six. Make sure they are concise and clear, and apply to everyone—not just kids.
3. Meet monthly to discuss boundaries. Are they fair? Do they still fit? Do they reflect the values and principles you have? Adjust them if you need to.

FAST FACTS

ASSET #11: Family Boundaries

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when families have clear rules and consequences, and monitor young people's whereabouts.

48% of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Family boundaries" is one of six boundaries-and-expectations assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999–2000 school year.

Dos and Don'ts of Discipline

Quick Tip:
Tell your children why you chose the boundaries you have.

Do

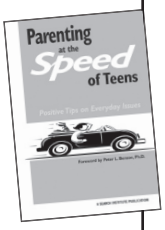
- Notice and comment when your child does something well. Be specific.
- Create specific and relevant consequences.
- Respond as quickly as you notice a violation.
- Respond consistently.
- Make sure your child understands the reason he or she receives a consequence.
- Be consistent by setting the same standards for boys and girls.

Don't

- Only notice your child when he or she violates a standard.
- Use threats.
- Use physical punishment.
- Attack or ridicule your child.
- Manipulate your child with shame, humiliation, or guilt.
- Use labels, such as "You're lazy" or "You're such a slob."
- Notice the violation of a rule at some times and not others.

More Help for Parents

Parenting at the Speed of Teens is a quick and easy-to-use book that offers positive, commonsense tips for dealing with both the everyday issues of parenting and the serious issues that teens may encounter.
Available at: **mvparentstore.search-institute.org**.



talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- How does our family compare to others in regard to discipline?
- Is our family too lenient, too harsh, or just right in enforcing boundaries? Why?
- What important lesson have you learned after violating a boundary?

Final Word

"The external structure parents provide for their children . . . helps children develop their own internal structure of self-discipline for taking care of themselves and other people."
—Jean Illsley Clarke and Connie Dawson, authors of *Growing Up Again*

This information may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only.
Adapted from *Ideas for Parents* (Newsletter #15). Copyright © 1997, 2003 Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN; www.search-institute.org. All rights reserved.