

# Parenting Skills: Setting Limits



The idea of setting a rule for the household is often better in theory than execution. A persistent child or tired parent can make it difficult to follow through with the positive intention of wanting more structure.

Here are some tips to help your family implement rules effectively:

- **Be consistent:** Children thrive on predictability. Avoid “just this once” exceptions unless it’s a special plan you both agree on.
- **Collaborate when possible:** Involving kids in rule-making (age-appropriately) increases buy-in.
- **Stay calm:** Your regulation teaches their regulation.
- **Expect pushback:** Defiance is developmentally normal. Respond, don’t react.
- **Repair, don’t retreat:** After a hard moment, reconnect. “That was tough earlier. I love you, and we’ll keep working on this.”
- **Reframe the purpose:** Setting a rule can make a child focus on what they are losing rather than the opportunity to build a positive habit. Shift the perspective to create more emphasis on the benefits.

**You are not being mean by setting limits —you’re building lifelong skills in your child: emotional regulation, patience, and balance.**

Structure isn’t about control, it’s about balance, routines, and boundaries.

If your child resists or has a meltdown, it doesn’t mean you’re doing it wrong. It means the strategy is working—and the nervous system is adapting.

**“Rules without relationships lead to rebellion. But structure with support leads to success.”**

# Parenting Journal: Setting Limits



## Emotional Awareness: How It Feels to Set Limits

How do I feel before, during, and after setting a rule or boundary?

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What emotions come up for me when my child cries or gets angry?

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Do I feel guilty, unsure, frustrated, or something else? Where might that come from?

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What message do I tell myself when my child is upset because of a limit I set?

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In moments like this, what do I need to hear – and can I offer that compassion to myself?

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### **Values & Intentions: Remembering the “Why”**

Why is setting this limit important to me and our family?

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What long-term lessons am I hoping my child will learn from this?

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How do I want my child to feel in our relationship, even when they don't like the rules?

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What kind of adult do I hope my child becomes, and how does this structure support that?

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## Growth & Repair: Processing Past Moments

What's a recent moment when my child responded strongly to a limit? What went well? What was hard?

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How did I respond to their distress? Would I change anything next time?

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Did we reconnect or repair afterward? If not, how might I do that now?

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## Beliefs About Parenting: Internal Scripts

Growing up, how were rules or structure handled in my home? How does that influence me now?

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Do I believe that “a good parent” avoids upsetting their child? Why or why not?

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What do I fear will happen if I set limits? Are those fears true or helpful?

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## Compassion & Reconnection

What does my child need from me when they're dysregulated?

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How do I care for myself emotionally after a tough parenting moment?

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If I could speak to myself as a friend right now, what would I say?

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