



Parenting Is Prevention

#9

Setting Limits

4 Keys to Successful Parenting

1. Communicate
2. Show love and stay involved
3. Establish clear limits and consequences
4. Provide opportunities for growth and independence

"Don't!" "Stop!" "No!" These words come so easily to parents. However, if we want children to learn what they *should* do, we need do more than tell them what *not* to do.

Limits give children guidelines for their behavior. Making sure limits are clear and enforced consistently helps children feel secure and know that their parents care.

Healthy Start Council

MISSOULA FORUM  FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

435 Ryman * Missoula, MT 59802 * www.MissoulaForum.org



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Here are some tips about setting limits and making rules for your children:



1. Know what is appropriate for your child's age.

Make sure your children are capable of doing what you expect them to do. Expect your rules and limits to change as your children grow older and gain more self-control.

2. Make rules positive. Tell your children what to do rather than what not to do. Instead of saying "Don't poke your baby sister," say "Touch your baby sister gently." This helps your children understand what behavior you expect.

3. Explain why the rule is important.

Children are more likely to cooperate if they know the reasons for rules. Saying "Poking your baby sister hurts her" gives your children information so that they can understand why you set limits.

4. Involve the child in setting limits.

Children "buy into" rules that they help set, and the process helps them gain confidence and self-control.

5. Limit rules to important things.

Limits should prevent harm to self or others and promote respect. Too many rules are difficult for both parents and children. Make sure your rules reflect your priorities and values and will help your children become the people you want them to be.

6. Expect your child to test the limits.

Be consistent in enforcing your rules. Children really WANT parents to be firm. They become confused if they are expected to follow the rules sometimes but not other times. Follow through with consequences calmly and consistently.

7. Remember to praise your child for following the rules!



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