

LIMIT SETTING

Top Ten things to remember when setting limits:

1. **Take Charge!** Your child must know **YOU** have the power. **YOU ARE THE BOSS.** Rule or be ruled. Give yourself permission to be in charge and begin expecting your children to obey you. Be a benevolent dictator (**Authoritative Parent**). Having too much control is scary for a young child. It makes them feel safe to know their parents are in control. Other styles of parenting “permissive” and “authoritarian” are not as effective.
2. **Create a list of 10 to 12 non-negotiable household rules.** Make sure everyone knows what they are (for example: no hitting, 8:00 bed time on weekdays, eating only allowed at the table, media limits, safety limits-must ride in a car seat, etc.) Adults must agree on these and enforce them. You have the right and the responsibility to take charge and make rules. Limit your list to no more than 12 rules.
3. **Put some thought into consequences for breaking the rules:** Remember your child’s developmental stage when coming up with consequences. Try to make the punishment fit the crime and use natural consequences (they are the most effective!).
 - a. Two year olds – be proactive; remove temptations and redirect. Ignore minor behaviors, they will only increase with attention. Give limited choices – “do you want your blue pajamas or red pajamas?” This gives the illusion of power, they get to choose but **YOU** create the menu.
 - b. Three to five year olds – try redirecting behavior, if that doesn’t work give logical consequences, **BRIEFLY** explain what rule was broken and why he must have a consequence. Reconnect with your child and briefly discuss what she could have done differently (problem solve). Let her know you aren’t mad anymore.
 - c. When redirecting behavior be sure to tell your child what they **can do** instead of what they cannot do. For example: *Instead of “Stop cutting the tablecloth!” Try “You can use scissors to cut paper.”*
4. **Spanking, shaking, squeezing, and long time outs are inappropriate and harmful.**