

Pocket Reference COPE Center Parenting Workshop

Communications and Boundaries

Five “Dos” for Effective parenting

- Consider who your child is...their temperament, age, developmental level.
- Be a Role Model. Remember you're always on stage. Behave how you want your child to behave. You are modeling for your child how to deal with conflict.
- Ask for help, from fellow parents, teachers and counselors, family members and sometimes even from your child.
- Think about how you speak (your tone, using “when” not “if” statements, commands not requests, humor and compassion).
- Pick your spot: **Know what you are going to say. If you are going to say yes, say "yes" the first time they ask. If you're going to say no, say “no” and stick to it. Don't let your child learn that you can be worn down into permitting a forbidden behavior.**

Figure out what is important to your family. With your spouse, partner or co-parent, take the time to figure out what is important to your family. Take time out to talk through your values and how they relate to decisions you make about raising your child. Getting on the same page is important.

Children need structure and limits. When parents set boundaries and expectations, they are helping their children feel safe and secure. If the rules are clear and children know what is expected of them, they learn not only how to regulate their own behavior, they also learn what your family values.

- Knowing why a limit exists can make it easier to respect the limit.
- Keeping rules simple and consistent also makes it easier to help your child follow them.
- Keep the message clear and focused. Give children clear, age appropriate instructions and be consistent. Know your message.
- Use clear and straightforward language, focusing on “do” rather than “don't.”
- Offering your child choices when possible helps exercise decision-making skills.
- Labeling behaviors rather than the child avoids the trap of promoting a poor self-image.
- Praising success makes everyone happy.
- Never give a consequence you can't enforce.

Use visualization to help support your “picking your spot.” What is your image of strength? This technique involves forming an image in your mind that makes you feel in control and empowered, able to keep your cool in the face of the challenges of parenting. Maybe a superhero image will work for you, or imagining yourself as a large immovable boulder being buffeted by waves, or a large pine tree buffeted by wind, swaying but never breaking? Hold onto the image that works for you, and picture it when you are faced with a tough moment as a parent. Next time you're having a difficult moment with your child, close your eyes, take a deep breath and conjure up your image

of strength; then step back into the situation. Use mindfulness to give yourself a time out and return to issue from place of calm. Don't get drawn into drama.

Further reading:

How to Give Kids Effective Instruction: <https://childmind.org/article/how-to-give-kids-effective-instructions/>

Family meetings: <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/healthy-communication/holding-family-meetings/>

A road map for clarifying your own family's values: [Values Matter: Using Your Values to Raise Caring, Responsible, Resilient Children](#)

Making Rules and Setting Limits; <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/mental-health-matters/social-and-emotional-learning/managing-behaviour-making-rules>

Help with holding firm with boundaries: [Setting Boundaries with Teens: Sticking to "No"](#)

A one-page reminder of 10 things that are important in parent-teen interactions: [10 Principles for Parenting Your Teens](#)

How to Set Effective Limits: <https://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/positive-discipline/effective-limits>

Find the slides from today's workshop, today's handout as well as links to additional resources at <http://www.supportingparentssexnj.org/>.

Share ideas with other parents, join our Facebook group: COPE Center - Supporting Parents of Essex County, NJ (a closed group, you must be invited to participate): (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/copespenj/>)