



# Did You Know...?

# # 48

## Discipline

**Stop using words that hurt. Start using words that help.**

**Will my children like me when I set down limits? Will they think that I'm a "meanie"?**

Setting limits does not make you a "meanie" forever- not if you are fair. When you stick to you limits, your children may not like what you are doing. It makes sense that they might be unhappy. Try not to get upset. It only makes thing worse.



### How can I set limits?

1. **Start with only a few rules.** The more you have, the harder it will be for your children to remember them.
2. **Be sure you know why you are saying no.** As a parent you must keep your children healthy and safe. You must help your children to learn to get along with other people, and you must stick to what you believe in. Explain your reasons for saying no. Be sure your child understands your reasons. "You cannot take your bike across town because there is too much traffic and you might get hurt.
3. **Give kids a voice.** Kids need a voice in setting limits. They need a chance to tell you what they think and feel.

Even a child of five or six can talk with you and help you to set limits. When kids help you make rules they are more likely to obey them. It's important to understand their point of view, but just because you listen does not mean that you have to agree with them and change your rules. You can set limits together, though some may have to be set by you alone.

4. **Say what you mean.** Be very clear about your limits. For example, state clearly the hour you want your child home. Say "12 o'clock" instead of "Not too late."

Accept their feelings, but stick to your limits. For example, "It's hard to leave when you are having so much fun, but it is time to go." Fair limits show that you care. If you set limits by yourself that are unfair and too strict, your children will try to get back at you. If you do not set any limits, your children will push and push until someone sets a limit for them, maybe even a school principal or a policeman.

## What do I do when my children break the rules?

Stay clam. Do what is fair. Sometimes, your children can help you decide what is fair to do when a rule is broken. Do something that makes sense and will help them learn not to make the same mistake again. For example, if they write on the wall, have them help clean it up.

You can use these problem solving steps to help children think through what happened and figure out how they can help themselves not make the same mistake again:



1. **Have the child say what the problem is.** For example, “I want to go across town, and my parents say I cannot take my bike.”
2. **Have the child come up with as many solutions as possible.** At this point, the number of ideas can be more important than how good the ideas are.
3. **Discuss solutions together.** Have the child choose which solution to try next time. Be sure it is a solution you both can accept, such as “I will take the bus.”
4. **Try out the solution.**
5. **Check the results.** If it works, great. If not, start again.

Two important messages come across to children when you use this approach. First, no problem is so great that you cannot solve it. Second you are responsible for your own behavior.

## What do I do if my children get really angry because I discipline them?

Their anger is no reason to feel as though you’re a bad person. Often children get angry when disciplined. As long as you are being fair, it’s okay. Let them be angry but keep your cool. Children must get their angry feelings out. Help them take time-out, draw, listen to music or go to a room alone and scream. Most important, when they are ready, help them to talk about their feelings. Letting children get their feelings out is like taking out a splinter before it get infected. Teach them how to talk about their feelings without hurting or attacking other people.

Remember: **Discipline is how adults teach children to grow to be happy, safe, well-adjusted members of society.** Raising children is a tough job, but as children learn to control their own behavior, discipline gets easier. And you can feel proud that your loving care guided them on their way!

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