

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

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AN RCS EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY NEWSLETTER FROM YOUR
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

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USING CONSISTENCY & BOUNDARIES IN PARENTING



For many children entering classrooms for the very first time this fall, young children are entering rich learning environments, where they work with supportive adults and learn and practice new skills. They are building strong brain architecture that will support long-term academic success. One of the universal approaches in our classroom practices is teaching expected behaviors, in a context that provides consistency with firm, loving limits.

WHY CONSISTENCY?

- Children often have little control around their daily activities since we adults make most of their decisions for them.
- Young children often get frustrated by the gap between the things they want to do and what they are able to do.
- Preschool-aged children are just beginning to learn impulse control and may struggle with learning to regulate their emotions and behaviors.
- Well-defined expectations for behavior provide limits and boundaries for teaching children what is and is not acceptable behavior.
- Clear expectations that are positively taught help children predict our behaviors as adults and parents.
- **Consistency allows expectations to be set, which gives children a sense of safety and feel secure.**
- When unexpected changes occur, children's safety and security is impacted, sometimes causing anxiety.
- Having consistent routines and expectations provides a solid foundation that helps children adapt to changes as needed.



**“Love is at the
root of
everything.**

**All learning.
All parenting.
All relationships.”
~ Mr. Fred Rogers**



TEACHING EXPECTED BEHAVIORS AT HOME

So how can you help your child learn to behave? Take a look at the tips below:

First define your expectations

- Clearly define your own role and responsibility in parenting.
- Like any system, when a family has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, things run smoothly.
- Every family member has a job.
- Parents have the job of establishing safety through boundaries as well as validation and empathy.
- Children have the job of exploring and learning, through experiencing and expressing their emotions.
- **Therefore, our children should not dictate our parenting boundaries, and we as the parents should not dictate our children's feelings.**
- Our foremost job as parents is to make sure our children are safe, physically and psychologically.

Teach your child your expectations



- Be specific and use words to tell your child what you want them to do.
- Avoid telling them what *not* to do as they may find it confusing.
- Beforehand, remind your child what you want them to do.
- After, give them positive attention for when they demonstrate the behavior you want.

Set the Boundary

- Boundaries are what we tell our children WE will do, not what we tell our children not to do.
- Boundary setting is about an adult setting a safe, sturdy, firm, limit, while staying calm, taking charge, and help children feel safe again.
- Remember, we cannot control our children's behaviors; we can only control our own behavior.

Review the Boundary, Offer Encouragement

- You may need to remind your child about expectations.
- Children needs lots of practice to learn new skills.
- While your child is practicing the expectations, offer support and encouragement.
- Catch 'em being good - notice when your child is doing something positive and comment on that. Let them know how proud you are!



GUIDELINES FOR BOUNDARIES AND SETTING LIMITS

- **Check in with yourself** - self-reflection can help us respond more thoughtfully.
 - Make sure your child is safe.
 - Ask yourself "What might be driving this behavior? How does this relate to my child's developmental stage, or physical or emotional state?"
 - Ask yourself: "Whose issue is this? Why does this behavior bother me?"
 - Ask yourself: "Does my child need me? Can my child solve this problem? How might I gently guide them to solve this themselves?"
- **Respond to your child.**
 - Try to move to their eye level and connect with them.
 - Speak with a calm firm voice
 - Acknowledge what your child wants and how they are feeling. You might be guessing how they feel so allow yourself to be open to not naming their emotion accurately. Try to empathize to understand how they feel.
 - "It looks like..."
 - "I know you want to..."
 - "You really want... That is really hard. Maybe you feel frustrated."
- **Set the limit.**
 - State the limit simply and briefly.
 - "This is for Mommy to use..."
 - "We have to do..."
 - "I can't let you do...because..."
 - State why you must set the limit
 - "It's not ok to..."
 - "Now is the time to go..."
 - "I need to keep you safe..." or "I need to keep your sister safe..."
 - Redirect your child to something they CAN do:
 - "You can play with..."
 - "You can hold my hand so I can keep you safe."
 - "You can do this or this instead..."



While nothing works all the time (and this moment shall pass), trying positive approaches will likely get better results more often than not.



References and For More Information:

Guidelines for Setting Limits with Your Toddler

<https://ccy.jfcs.org/guidelines-for-setting-limits-with-your-toddler/>

Positive Solutions for Families Workbook

http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/trainings/positive_solutions_workbook.pdf

Kennedy, Dr. Becky. (2022). **Good inside: A guide to becoming the parent you want to be.**

