

Boundaries, why are they needed? - by Derek Randel and Gail Randel M.D.

Imagine a child who lacks ownership of his own life, has no self-control, and lacks respect for others. If these were the qualities of your son, how would you feel for his future wives?

Yes, wives is plural, this is one major reason we need to set boundaries for our children – their future. One study showed that children born recently on average will have more spouses than kids. Here are a few examples of children who lack boundaries:

1. Little Johnny walks right into his parent's bedroom whenever he wants. It does not matter if the door was open or closed.
2. Twelve year-old Steve changes the channel on the television whenever he wants. It does not matter if anyone was watching a show or not.
3. Susie blames others for her mistakes. It always seems to be her teacher's fault, brother's fault, or a friend's fault when something does not go right.
4. Marie is uncomfortable with how her boyfriend treats her and pressures her for sex. She keeps dating him because she questions who else would want to date her.

Without boundaries children will have problems in relationships, school, and life. Many times addictive behavior can be traced to lack of boundaries. Here are a few results that can occur:

1. Children can have controlling behavior
2. Children can be motivated by guilt or anger.
3. Without firm boundaries children are more likely to follow their peer group. For example, making unwise choices on sex, drinking, or driving.
4. Children don't own their own behavior or consequences, which can lead to a life of turmoil.
5. Children may allow others to think for them.
6. They may allow someone else to define what his or her abilities will be. This denies their maximum potential.
7. When someone has weak boundaries they pick up other's feelings.
8. Weak boundaries may make it hard to tell where we end and another person begins.

What is a parent to do? Many times we hinder the child from developing boundaries. Here are a few suggestions to help you set boundaries:

1. Recognize and respect the child's boundaries. For example, knock on their closed bedroom door instead of just walking in.
2. Set our own boundaries and have consequences for crossing them.
3. Avoid controlling the child.
4. Give two choices; this helps our children learn decision-making skills.
5. Realize we must teach our children boundaries; they are not born with them.

6. When you recognize that boundaries need to be set. Do it clearly, do it without anger, and use as few words as possible.
7. We need to say what hurts us and what feels good.
8. It may be difficult to set a boundary. You may feel afraid, ashamed, or nervous, that's okay, do it anyways.

Another way to work with boundaries and children is to model these for our children.

1. Recognize your physical boundaries.
2. You have the right to request proper treatment, for example, poorly prepared meals in a restaurant should be sent back, ask others to smoke away from your space, and ask that loud music be turned down.
3. Share your opinions with your children. Allow your children their opinions. Opinions are not right or wrong. This will help them think for themselves.
4. Teach them how you decide on the choices you make.
5. Lets own what we do and what we don't do. Take responsibility for when things go wrong.
6. Accept your thoughts, it is who you are.
7. Discover what your limits are, emotional and physical.

Setting boundaries is all about taking care of ourselves. This is the first guideline we teach in our workshops. Other benefits include:

1. We will learn to value, trust, and listen to ourselves.
2. Boundaries are also the key to having a loving relationship.
3. Boundaries will help us with our personal growth.
4. We will learn to listen to ourselves (trusting our intuition). We also will learn to respect and care for others and ourselves.
5. Boundaries will aid us in the workplace.

Boundaries are all about freedom and recognizing when these freedoms have been crossed. Boundaries give us a framework in which to negotiate life events. Recognizing and acting when our boundaries have been crossed will protect our freedom. Boundaries lead to winning relationships for both parties. By building foundations based on mutual trust, love, and respect we can expect our children to grow up more tolerant and with a mature character. Simply put, boundaries simplify life.

Derek and Gail Randel have customized programs for corporations, schools, and parent groups for putting the fun back into parenting so you can enjoy your children. They can be reached at Parent Smart from the Heart 1-866-89-SMART, www.parentsmartfromtheheart.com or info@randelconsulting.com

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