

Don't Set Too Many Limits

by Dr. Charles Fay

Kids yearn for limits. Limits say, "I love you enough to show you how to have a responsible and happy life." Limits also say, "I love you enough to keep you safe."

Limits also help us take good care of ourselves so we can remain loving. They keep us from feeling like doormats; therefore, they prevent us from developing resentment.

So... if limits are so important... why did I title this tip, "Don't Set Too Many Limits"?

When we try to set too many limits over too many things, we spread ourselves thin and lack the time and energy to enforce them.

**Every limit we set, yet fail to enforce,
erodes our relationship with our children.**

**Every limit set, yet not enforced,
reduces our credibility in the eyes of our kids.**

Yes! The stakes are very high.

This is why Love and Logic teaches three essential rules for setting limits:

Rule One: Keep your limits simple and general.

Many parents and educators have enjoyed great success by using just one generic limit in most situations: "I allow _____ as long as it doesn't cause a problem."

Rule Two: Describe what you will do... rather than what your kids must do.

When we tell someone what they must or must not do, we are trying to control something we cannot.

When we describe what we will do or allow, we are remaining focused on what we can control.

Rule Three: Never set a limit you aren't willing and able to enforce 200% of the time.

It only takes a slight bit of inconsistency on our part for our children to begin viewing us like slot machines. If their limit testing pays off even to the slightest degree, they begin to think, "Our parents enforce limits most of the time, but there is hope that if we just keep playing them, they'll slip up and we'll hit the jackpot."