

SETTING A LIMIT IS NOT AN ULTIMATUM

Limits aren't threats — "If you don't clean your room, your weekend privileges will be suspended."

Limits offer choices with consequences—"If you clean your room, you'll be able to attend all of the special activities this weekend. If you don't clean your room, then you'll choose to stay home. It's your decision."

THE PURPOSE OF LIMITS IS TO TEACH, NOT TO PUNISH

Through limits, people begin to understand that their actions, positive or negative, result in predictable consequences. By giving such choices and consequences, parents provide a structure for good decision making.

SETTING LIMITS IS ABOUT LISTENING

Taking the time to really listen will help you better understand their thoughts and feelings. By listening, you will learn more about what's important to them, and that will help you set more meaningful limits.



DR. KAY SUDEKUM TROTTER

Dr. Trotter and her staff specialize in children and adolescents and use many different counseling modalities to help individuals connect with true self, including traditional talk therapy, play therapy, expressive art therapy, experimental therapy and animal assisted therapy.

OUR MISSION

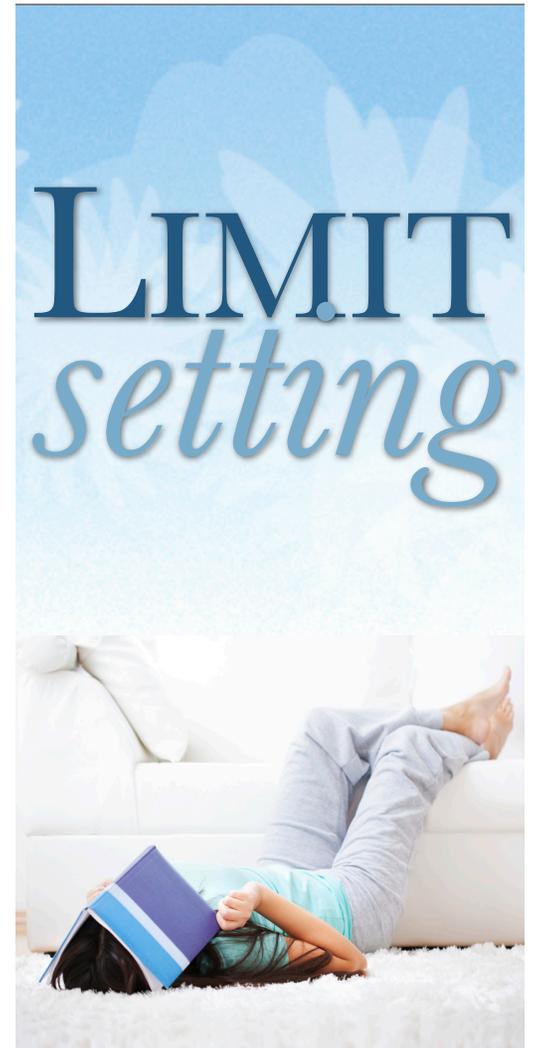
Our mission is to facilitate the prevention or resolution of emotional and behavioral difficulties with individuals and groups in a safe, secure environment that nurtures inner healing and encourages optimal growth and development.

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EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

Before children can resist their first impulses, they must have an awareness of their behavior, a feeling of responsibility, and the experience of self-control. Dr. Garry Landreth, founder of the Center for Play Therapy, developed the A • C • T method to setting limits that provides children with an opportunity to learn self-control, the knowledge that they have choices, what making choices feels like, and how responsibility feels. According to Dr. Landreth, “when limits should be set but they are not, children are deprived of the opportunity to learn something important about themselves.

A•C•T LIMIT SETTING

A • C • T

A = Acknowledge the Feeling

C = Communicate the Limit

T = Target the Choice

“Looks like you [feel, want, wish],
but [first object] is not for [action]-ing.
[Second object] is. You can...”



WHY SET LIMITS?

The purpose of limits is to teach, not to punish, while also effectively illustrating taking responsibility for yourself. Which is important because responsibility accompanies decision-making. Before children can resist their first impulses, they must have an awareness of their behavior, a feeling of responsibility and the experience of self-control. As a result of these limit-setting techniques, children learn to become responsible for themselves and their behavior.

- Limit setting is for the growth of the child
- Limits help develop personal responsibility
- Limits help develop decision-making skills
- Limits promote healthy boundaries
- Limits help develop self-control
- Limits promote consistency
- Limits are not punishment

You need to set limits that fit within your household rules, but allow for more freedom, more exploration and more expression. Be sure to determine your own limits ahead of time such as no: toy damage, throwing toys, pouring water on the floor, hitting another person or pet, etc. Before setting a limit, ask yourself:

“Is this limit necessary”

and before allowing a behavior, ask yourself

“Can I consistently allow this”

LIMIT SETTING EXAMPLE

“Looks like you want to draw, but the wall is not for drawing.” **[point]** “You can draw on the paper or **[point]** you can draw on the chalk board.”

“I can see you feel frustrated, but the doll clothes are not for tearing.” **[point]** “You can tear the shoe box or **[point]** you can tear egg carton.”

“Jim, I know you feel like hitting me, but I’m not for hitting!” **[point]** “You can hit the stuffed bear, or **[point]** you can hit the pillow.”



ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEELING

By acknowledging the child’s feelings, you support the child’s intent, even if you can’t support the child’s behavior. Reflect

feelings, intentions, wants, and wishes. **When the child’s message is clearly understood the child no longer needs to act out.**

“Looks like...”

“I know you’d really like to...”

“I can tell you’re feeling...”

SET THE LIMIT



Use no fault statements, but common sense statements instead.

“Your brother is not for hitting”

“It’s time for bed”

“The wall is not for writing on”

TARGET CHOICES



Understanding the child’s intention helps in selecting alternatives target choices. You need to direct your child’s attention away from the original object by looking, pointing, and stating alternative choices. Point using your eyes, hands, and body to

help your child focus on the (new) targeted choice. Be creative in offering alternatives, provide two choices, and do not use the word “OK.”

“You can choose to hit your pillow.” or

“You can choose to hit the toy bear.”

“You can choose put yourself to bed.” or

“You can choose for me to read a book to you before bed.” Which do you choose?”