

LEARNING TO LISTEN

BOUNDARIES

Boundaries ensure your child feels safe and confident. This way, your child knows what is allowed by mum and dad and doesn't need to continuously test the limits. By setting boundaries, your child will also learn to be independent and to deal with other people.

TIPS

1. BE CLEAR

Make sure the rules are specific and worded in a positive way. Say what your child should do, rather than what it shouldn't. This way, an immediate alternative is offered. You can always explain why a rule applies. Your child will learn a lot by watching you. Therefore, lead by example as much as possible.

2. BE ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH AS YOUR PARTNER

If you and your partner agree about the rules, you increase the chance of your child listening. Your approach can differ slightly, but make sure that you are on the same wavelength about the most important rules and that you do not undermine your partner's authority. This way, children learn to deal with different approaches.

3. PERSEVERE AND BE CONSISTENT

It can be very tiring to consistently stick to the rules and boundaries, but it is worth it. If you give into your child's whims, you will teach your child that he/she can get his/her way, as long as he/she keeps nagging. Therefore, make sure rules keep applying and don't give in.

4. BE CONFIDENT

Your child will figure out quickly when you lack confidence. He/she will know you are more likely to give in. Make sure that your posture conveys the same as your language. Being resolute, doesn't mean the same as being cross or unfriendly. You don't need to be angry to set clear boundaries.

5. TAKE YOUR CHILD INTO CONSIDERATION

Children want to be independent and long for their parents' appreciation, love and attention. Your child wants to be able to do things by himself. Help your child to achieve this by letting him/her decide some things for him/herself. You can think of an alternative together when your child tries something which he/she can't yet do.

6. LOOK AFTER YOURSELF!

Of course, some days it is more difficult to be patient than others. Everybody occasionally has an off-day. This is ok! You may choose to share this with your child. Let your child know you don't feel so well. This way, he/she will understand why you are irritable and that you are not cross, just tired. Make sure you regularly make time for yourself and your partner. Organise a bit of me-time. If you feel good within yourself, it will be easier to be there for your child.

ENCOURAGE DESIRABLE BEHAVIOUR AND TACKLE UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOUR

POSITIVE PARENTING

Create a positive atmosphere. Talk to your child, give affection, enjoy quality time together. Watch your child and emphasise the things he/she does well. Sometimes this is not easy, often we pay more attention to what doesn't go so well.

REWARDS

A reward is a fun way to show your child what you want from him/her. A reward doesn't mean you are spoiling your child. Your child will learn from it. There are different types of rewards. You can give your child something, such as a sticker, a hug or attention or you can reward your child by doing something together that your child enjoys.

IGNORING

It is best to ignore behaviour that is difficult but tolerable. You don't need to react to everything to be a good parent. Set your priorities. When your child stops the behaviour you ignored, give a reward.

ADDRESSING BEHAVIOUR

When your child displays behaviour that is unacceptable for you, address it. Talk to your child and make sure you have his/her attention. Tell him/her what is not allowed and what behaviour you wish to see instead. Give your child time to co-operate and wait 5 seconds. If he/she does what you have asked, you can reward him/her.

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE

A logical consequence is a consequence that is closely linked to the negative behaviour that your child displays. It works best if the consequence is short-term, maximum 30 minutes. Explain what you do and keep to the agreement: end the consequence after the agreed time. Then restart the activity and try to prevent the behaviour from recurring, by guiding your child. If the problem recurs, you can decide to stop the activity for a longer time.

TIME OUT

Time out is a positive strategy ensuring that there is no need to shout or threaten when your child is disobedient. The aim is to calm your child down and to teach your child to control his/her emotions. It is therefore very important you stay calm. A time out will also give you an opportunity to calm down. You can use a time out when your child doesn't want to listen, despite having tried all previous tips. With serious transgressions, such as hitting, a time out is recommended.

TODDLERS

TANTRUMS

You will notice immediately when your child has a tantrum: he/she will throw him/herself onto the floor, kick his/her arms and legs about, or bang his head on the floor. But a temper tantrum might also look very different: some children can go completely rigid and stop reacting for a few minutes.

STUBBORNNESS

Children between 1.5 and 3 years of age can be very stubborn. It sometimes seems as if they are being stubborn on purpose, but this is not the case. Children of this age are unable to take the feelings and wishes of others into account. The world revolves around them and they are not aware of the consequences of their wishes.

TIPS

Of course, the above tips also apply to toddlers, but you will find some more tips below specifically for small children.

1. RULES

Your toddler wants a lot and it is important to give him/her the space he/she needs, but this doesn't mean everything is allowed. Set clear boundaries and teach your child to stick to the rules. This way, he/she will learn more about the world. It will also make him/her feel secure and calm.

2. BE CONSISTENT

If your child is stubborn without being too difficult, it is best to ignore him/her. Often, he/she will come round. If he/she takes things too far, be consistent and clear. No means no.

3. STAY CALM

If you stay calm, this will help your toddler to calm down. Of course, this is often not as easy as it sounds. Often, you feel ignored, cross or you don't have time for this kind of behaviour, but your toddler needs you for his/her mood to pass. Don't get cross, this will make him/her lose his/her temper even more, but set clear boundaries, also during the tantrum. Your toddler is not allowed to hurt anyone. Definitely don't give in, even if you feel embarrassed in front of other people, as this way, he/she would learn that having a temper tantrum will help him/her to get what he/she wants and that this is the way to express anger. You can however (afterwards) name your child's frustrations and show you understand his/her feelings.

4. ATTENTION

If your child often loses his temper and is stubborn, he/she will get a lot of (negative) attention. It is important that your child also receives lots of positive attention, at times when he/she is good and kind. Otherwise, your child will learn that he/she will only be given attention when he/she is badly behaved. Then your child will behave badly more often.

5. UNDERSTANDING

Toddlers have a lot of frustrations: something doesn't work, they don't have the words to explain things, they don't have much patience... For them it seems like they are continuously being hampered by others or by themselves. Your toddler will then start feeling cross or sad. Try to understand your toddler and let him/her know you are there for him/her. You can also help your toddler by offering other options.

6. BE THERE FOR YOUR CHILD.

Toddlers like to explore and learn about the world. On their journey of discovery, they will experience a lot and break away from their parents. This journey of discovery will go more smoothly if they know you are keeping an eye on them. This way, they will feel safer and take more initiative.

7. PATIENCE

Even though it is not always pleasant, it is important to give your child space to experiment with things. Be patient if it takes more time than expected or if it doesn't quite go as you want it to.

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