

5 Tips for Teaching Your Kids About Boundaries



Many of us think of boundaries as the lines on a sports field. They mark the line that you don't cross to avoid going out of bounds, stopping the game, or getting penalized.

Boundaries in healthy relationships can be understood in much the same way. It's like drawing a line that you don't want someone to cross and telling them it is not ok to treat you a certain way – and it works both ways. In relationships, that might sound something like, “I want you to stop calling me that nickname, I don't like it” or “I don't want you to touch me that way.”

So, it's important for your kids to not only set boundaries for themselves, but to also respect the boundaries that others set. As dad's, you can help guide your kids down this path and set an example for them.

Setting boundaries teaches people how to be in healthy relationships with you. Learning these skills early will help your kids know what to do in future relationships

Here are 5 things to teach your kids when helping them understand boundaries:

1

Ask what needs to be different

Before setting a boundary, your child needs to figure out what needs to change. Have them think about what feels bad and what they wish wouldn't happen anymore. Getting clarity is the first step to setting boundaries.

2

Make the message clear

If you are setting a boundary with someone, they should know exactly what you want or don't want. It is important to use clear and firm language and not words like “maybe”, “it would be nice if”, or “I think”. Each of these examples water down what's being asked.

3

Be consistent and follow through

This can be hard. After a boundary has been set, it may or may not be respected by others and you may have to protect your boundary. If someone continues to disrespect the boundary, it's important to let them know every time that it's not ok.

4

Treat others how you want to be treated

A way to help other kids understand something is to model it. If your child wants people to respect their boundaries, then they need to respect the boundaries of others. It is important to teach your kids to respect boundaries and not be a boundary violator. Boundary setting and respecting goes two ways.

5

Remember NO means NO

Everyone has a right to set their own boundaries. Sometimes boundaries won't make sense to your child. Just because something may not seem like a big deal to them, doesn't mean it isn't an issue for someone else. If someone sets a boundary with your kids, it is not ok for them to try and find a way around it. Respect for boundaries is a two-way street.

Boundary setting and respecting is an important skill for people of all ages to learn. It is vital to healthy, lasting relationships.