

10 Scripts for Setting Limits

Mindful Mama Mentor

10 Scripts for Setting Limits Without Punishment

Setting Limits Is Not Instinctual

When you are moving away from yelling and punishment, it can be hard to know what to do to set limits with your child. Your knee-jerk response may be to use a threat ("If you _____, I will _____!"). However threats ultimately pit us against our children and build resentment over time, making our child less willing to cooperate.

Instead, aim to set limits kindly and firmly. You are teaching your child, not cracking down on them.

Describe What You See Nonjudgmentally

When you describe the events (without using judgmental language), you are making the problem explicit to everyone. You can describe the environment, the people, the feelings: "I see you are very upset, there is a broken toy over there, and your brother is crying and mad. What a difficult situation!"

10 Scripts for Setting Limits

1. "This is hard for you, so I'm going to help."
2. "We're not having any more. I won't let you grab them."
3. "I won't let you touch it."
4. "This (object) doesn't like to be touched. What can you notice with your eyes?"
5. "You can ride in the cart or you can help push. Which is it?"
6. "I won't let you _____ here. It's not safe around little ones."
7. "He's telling you he doesn't like that."
8. "The rule is hands to ourselves. Seems like that's challenging right now."
9. "I know you really want to _____, but I can't let you."
10. "Are you ready to try again?"

If Your Child Gets Upset

It's okay for your child to be upset when they bump up to a limit. You can empathize and soothe your child while holding the limit. Practice to listen to their feelings empathetically, as a steady, comforting presence. Practice to regulate your own nervous system, taking long exhales to soothe your nervous system. Take a few moments to acknowledge and take care of both your child's and your own feelings.

Mindful Parenting helps parents from around the world calm their reactivity and communicate in positive ways with their children, changing harmful generational patterns. To learn more about Mindful Parenting, get on the waitlist at mindfulparentingcourse.com.

10 Scripts for When Your Kid is Upset



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Big Emotions are Normal

It's okay for kids to have ALL of the emotions—from rage to sadness to frustration. It's okay for kids to be upset and cry. Our job is not to stop those feelings (even though they may be uncomfortable for us). Our job is to teach kids how to process their big feelings and soothe themselves. We do that by acknowledging their difficult feelings and soothing them time and time again, as well as by modeling how we take care of our own big feelings. We want to send our kids the message that their feelings are normal and that we are here for them.

Describe What You See Nonjudgmentally

When you describe the events (without using judgmental language), you are making the problem explicit to everyone. You can describe the environment, the people, the feelings: "I see you are very upset, there is a broken toy over there, and your brother is crying and mad. What a difficult situation!"

10 Scripts for When Your Child is Upset

1. "You are really upset/sad/mad about this."
2. "Tell me more."
3. "You wish that _____ didn't happen."
4. "Oh man, this is hard, huh?"
5. "You just don't want it!"
6. "You're really disappointed."
7. "It's okay to cry when you're frustrated. It's okay to feel mad."
8. "Come, sit with me. I'm here for you."
9. "Sounds like this is important to you."
10. "You seem overwhelmed. I'm going to help you calm down. Let's take three deep breaths together."

Your Presence Helps, And...

Emotions are contagious. Your calming, steady presence can be a soothing element for your child. By staying with them, you send a message that it's okay. However, you may not be able to stay if you are getting triggered—that's okay. You don't have to be perfect! If you need to, get some space to regulate your own feelings. "I'm going to take a break to breathe now, and I'll come right back to be with you."

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10 Scripts for When Your Child Misbehaves

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Firm & Kind Boundaries

When we move away from fear-and-threat-based parenting, sometimes we don't know how to deal with misbehavior. Boundaries are healthy and necessary. We need to expect kids to be immature and unskillful—and give them limits to keep them healthy and safe. The goal is to be firm and kind. Mindful discipline is about teaching our kids how their behavior affects others and how to do things differently in the future.

Describe What You See Nonjudgmentally

When you describe the events (without using judgmental language), you are making the problem explicit to everyone. You can describe the environment, the people, the feelings: "I see you are mad, there is a broken toy over there, and your brother is crying and mad. What a difficult situation!"

10 Scripts for When Your Child Misbehaves

1. "You're hitting me and it hurts!"
2. "Tissues go in the trash."
3. "I don't like food thrown on the floor."
4. "I can't allow sand-throwing. We're leaving."
5. "Name-calling isn't allowed, but if you need, I can help you out."
6. "Are you ready to try again?"
7. "I feel disappointed when you _____."
8. "When you say that, it's hard for me to know how to help you."
9. "I feel annoyed when you don't put _____ back because then I have extra work putting it back for you."
10. "Look at your sister's face. Can you tell what she's feeling? Why do you think she looks so sad?"

Permission to Be Human

The goal is to be firm and kind, yet situations like this can be very frustrating! That's okay. Don't try to be "fake calm." Instead, acknowledge your feelings. Saying "I'm feeling really frustrated" helps you to realize that you may need to regulate your stress before you speak. If you need to, get some space to regulate your own feelings. "I'm going to take a break to breathe now, and I'll come right back to be with you."

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