

SESSION 6

Setting Limits

Effective Rules

OVERVIEW

Limit setting is one of the foundations of parenting and often what most people think about when they consider parenting their child and the term “parenting skills.” Of course, we know that parenting involves many more skills than limit setting and that limit setting skills are built on a foundation of positive behavior support and successful relationship building.

The first component of limit setting is setting effective rules, which involves parents establishing rules and communicating the rules to their child. The second component is establishing effective consequences and communicating consequences, and the third component is applying rules and consequences (See Figure 7). This session presents an introduction to limit setting and focuses on the first component of limit setting: effective rules. Monitoring and supervision, discussed in session 5, is also in limit setting, given that limit setting is only effective to the extent that parents pay attention to whether children are following rules and adhering to consequences when they are given.

SESSION GOALS

- Learn what makes a rule effective
- Learn why it is important for parents to have effective rules
- Learn the Four Cs of effective rules
- Reflect on factors that make limit setting challenging for parents
- Practice generating effective rules
- Learn and practice how to effectively state rules

TEACH**Rationale**

There are considerable benefits to setting limits for children and adolescents. For example, limit setting helps children learn the critical skill of self-regulation, which is the ability to manage emotional reactions to situations. Self-regulation is at the core of success at school (e.g., doing homework), in personal relationships, and at work. Effective limit setting also reduces problem behaviors and is linked with long-term child adjustment and happiness. Effective rules, the first component of limit setting, provide families with structure and predictability and can reduce negativity, tension, and conflict in families. For example, a family rule that bedtime is 8:00 p.m. sets a clear and consistent expectation for children and parents and will likely reduce arguments when parents tell their children it is bedtime. See the list below of the benefits of effective rules for parents and children.

Benefits for Children

- Helps them learn to cooperate with others and practice self-control
- Reduces likelihood of long-term behavior problems
- Increases sense of security and predictability, supporting positive development
- Prepares for adulthood, which requires being able to follow rules

Benefits for Parents

- Increases cooperation and respect from children
- Increases positive behavior from children, resulting in reduced stress for parents
- Reduces negativity, tension, and conflict among the family, increasing the likelihood of a well-functioning home
- Improves parent–child relationship

FIGURE 7 Setting Effective Limits