

young families

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Setting Limits

This is the first of two articles on setting limits for children.

When you set limits for your children, you demonstrate your love and concern. Setting limits tells a child, "I care about you. I want you to be safe. I want you to act responsibly so that you will learn to get along happily with others." Limits are like the guard rails on a bridge — they provide a sense of security.

Take care, however, not to overwhelm your children with rigid controls. Carefully select the limits you think are necessary and, as much as possible, consider the child's point of view. The limits you set should:

- *Protect children from physical harm.* For example, keeping a preschooler away from a hot stove or showing a young adolescent how to handle a rifle are limits set for personal safety.
- *Protect property.* For example, insisting that your youngster return tools to their proper location or showing a preschooler how to use the television set are limits that protect property.
- *Protect children and others from psychological harm.* Helping children learn how to put their anger into words that are not obscenities, or showing children how to resolve conflicts without vicious teasing are examples of limits that show respect for others' feelings and ideas.

Limit Your Limits

Before you set a limit, ask yourself: "Is this rule really important? Am I willing to deal with the conflicts that will occur if my child disregards the limit?"

Your rules should reflect your deeply held convictions or values, ones that you are committed to maintaining consistently. For example, is it really necessary to insist that a child eat all his or her peas, wear certain clothes, or not associate with a particular person? Or is it more important to take issue when a child destroys a friend's toy, swears at a parent, or steals money out of your wallet or purse?

Parents who set too many rules can overwhelm their children with too many demands. You are more likely to be effective if you focus on those rules you believe are most important.

Set Reasonable Limits

You also need to consider whether your children are able to do what is expected of them. It is not reasonable, for example, to expect toddlers to keep their rooms clean or boisterous 10-year-olds to always remember their mealtime manners. Forbidding a child to wet the bed during the night is unreasonable at any age because children have no control over their bladders while they sleep. Denying a child the right to experience emotions such as anger and fear may be

unreasonable because these feelings are often natural, healthy responses to difficult situations.

Young children desperately want to please their parents by doing what is expected of them. They believe in their parents. They think their parents know what's best for them (even if they don't always act as though they believe it). Because of their confidence in parents, if children are given an unreasonable limit, they may conclude that there is something wrong with themselves rather than with the limit. A child who feels this way is likely to have a very low level of self-esteem. Later, when they become aware of the unfairness of unreasonable limits, these children may lose respect for their parents and become cynical towards all adult authority.

You can judge whether a limit is unreasonable by observing the way your children act. They may try their best but still fail or they may show no sign of being able to perform the task. They might become moody and depressed or even angry and defiant. Remember, if children can't be good at succeeding, then they are easily tempted to be good at failing. With this in mind, set limits so your children can succeed. Then gradually raise your expectations so they can continue to be successful.

Ronald L. Pitzer
Extension Family Life Specialist

(Adapted in part from "Effective Discipline," Charles A. Smith, Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Service Publication C-621.)

Danger: Disc Batteries

Quick! Think of a poisonous substance that you might have in your home right now. Chances are the image that comes to mind is a household cleaning liquid. But there is another type of potentially dangerous poison in most homes that is often overlooked: the miniature disc or "button" battery.

These batteries are very easy to swallow. Usually they pass through the body and are eliminated. But sometimes they get "hung up" and may leak or break open, leading to internal chemical burns or poisoning.

If a child (or adult) swallows a battery, call the Poison Control System immediately: Twin Cities, 221-2113 (east metro) or 347-3141 (west metro); outstate (toll-free), 1-800-222-1222. An x-ray must be obtained immediately to determine if the battery is caught in the esophagus.

The most important thing is to prevent the accidental swallowing of button batteries. Follow these tips for safe use:

- Don't change batteries in front of small children. Immediately wrap old batteries securely and discard them where a child can't find them.
- Buy batteries in blister packs. They are hard for children to open.
- Store spare batteries out of sight and reach of children.
- Warn older children not to play with loose button batteries.
- Don't store batteries in pill bottles.
- Never put batteries in your mouth to test or for any other reason.

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Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>



Snacks

Are snacks a bad idea? Absolutely not. Eating between meals is good for growing children. They need the energy, and their capacity at mealtimes is limited. However, continuous eating, eating on demand, or high-calorie snacks that do not contain other nutrients can lead to problems.

Snacks that contain carbohydrate (fruit or fruit juice, vegetables, or plain breads) will satisfy immediate hunger, but they won't satisfy a child's appetite very long. These items may be helpful if the child is going to eat a meal soon. If you want the snack to have more "stick-to-the-ribs" power, combine the carbohydrates with milk, cheese, or other protein foods. A glass of milk, a piece of cheese, or some peanut butter will make the snack more substantial. A more detailed list of recommended snacks will appear in the next issue of *Young Families*.

When to Snack

Timing of snacks is important. It is best if snacks can be offered to the child midway between meals. A regular snack pattern helps small children adapt to the idea that food isn't available all day long. It encourages them to eat at mealtime because they learn that if they refuse a meal, a snack will not be immediately substituted. Sometimes "poor eaters" are coaxed to eat all day long; this may result in a lowered calorie intake because the child is never hungry and doesn't consume a significant amount of high-calorie foods at any time during the day.

Another aspect of timing snacks is to "get there first." In her book *Child of Mine*, Elyn Satter points out that if you wait until the child is famished, your suggestions for a nourishing snack may be rejected because the child will have already decided on the food item to be eaten. The child's choice may not be as nourishing. Try to anticipate hunger and offer snacks before the child thinks of it.

Dental Problems

Snacks can be a problem when it comes to dental health or oral hygiene. The more times sugary snacks are eaten, the more often the bacteria in the mouth make acid. These acids dissolve tooth enamel and lead to cavities. Sticky, chewy sweets that stay in the mouth longer do more damage than sweets that are swallowed quickly, such as sweetened beverages. However, babies or small children who drink beverages continuously from a bottle or cup run the risk of ruining their teeth. In children who drink continuously from a bottle, this dental problem is called "nursing bottle syndrome."

Snacks Away From Home

A recent study of children aged one to five found that 43 percent of the children surveyed ate some food away from home on the day of the survey. If other people take care of your child during the day, discuss what snacks are to be offered your child. With the many forms of convenience foods that are nicely packaged and available at every turn, it isn't easy to control what children eat. All the more reason to establish good snacking habits at an early age.

Mary Darling
Extension Nutritionist

Spending Priorities

Most of us have spending patterns that we don't think about very much. But when there is a change in the family, it's important to think about spending priorities. These changes may be for the better or worse, for example, a new baby, a raise in salary, a tax bill, a tax refund, an illness, an automobile accident, or loss of a job.

In reviewing your priorities, think about the following types of spending:

Debts. These are expenses you incurred in the past but are paying for now. Are payments a problem? Do you need to avoid adding additional debt until present debt levels are reduced? Do you need to renegotiate some contracts? Do you need to sell, trade, or return some items to reduce your debt?

Major expenditures. Think about past decisions that affect current expenditures, for example, housing, telephone service, automobiles, insurance, boats, and recreation memberships. Do these still make sense in your current situation? Should changes be made? What would it cost to make changes?

Daily expenditures. How much are you spending day to day, and on what? If you don't know, have family members keep records for a few weeks and then discuss the expenditures. Separate needs from wants. Your grocery bill may contain both needs (food) and wants (candy, beer, magazines, etc.) How many and which wants can you afford?

Unexpected expenses. Do you have insurance, savings, or a line of credit to deal with the unexpected — illness, accident, death of earners, loss of home, liability for injury to others? What about lesser, but still costly, unexpected events — ruined tires or washing machines or television sets that break down?

Long-range plans. Do you want to buy a house? A car? What about college plans? What kinds of savings and investment programs do you need now to make these possible in the future?

Now you are ready to put it all together, trade off, or add to, so you have a balance of past, present, and future needs and wants plus the ability to handle the unexpected.

Dottie A. Goss
Former Extension Specialist
Family Resource Management

This Issue

This newsletter is published for Minnesota young families by the Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, and distributed through your local county extension service office. Please call your county extension agent, Home Economics, with your suggestions for its content.

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March - April 1986

Greetings,

This letter includes some thoughts and challenges of parenthood and a precaution too. It also includes information to help you provide nutritious snacks for your family members.

* * * * *

This newsletter is one way of my being able to communicate with you regarding information the Minnesota Extension Service has to share. At this point in time, we are facing retrenchment, an immediate effect of the federal Gramm-Rudman bill, and also uncertainty of state funding. Not unlike other agencies and services, we in education will be looking for the most expeditious way of serving you - parents of young families.

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Many of you work with or live with teens. You may be interested in a metro-wide conference we are co-sponsoring - "Teens In Distress." It will be held Monday, April 21, 8:15 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Dr. Barry Garfinkel, University of Minnesota Medical School, will address "Stress, Depression and Suicide of Youth." There will be many other presentations and mini workshops too. If you are a caring adult working with youth and would like to be involved, please call me at 559-4321 for a registration form.

* * * * *

This may be an article you'd like to share with grandparents of your children.

BE A SAFETY CONSCIOUS GRANDPARENT

Anyone who is a grandparent should remember this statistic: "Thirty-six percent of the accidental childhood ingestions related to a prescription vial involved a grandparent's medication." This startling fact turned up in a recent study done by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in association with the Poison Information Center at the Children's Hospital, Birmingham, Alabama. It ties in well with the 25th observance of National Poison Prevention Week, March 16-22, 1986.

Grandparents need to realize that their medicines are attractive to children and keep close watch both when they are visiting the children's home or the children are visiting their home.

Said the study, grandparents often have non-child-resistant prescription vials or loose pills on tables, kitchen counters or in purses or pockets. And it follows that children are great imitators, they want to do what the grown ups do -- so it's natural they would want to try the pills they see others taking.

To prevent these tragedies, the CPSC has the following suggestions:

- * Parents and grandparents must keep medicines out of the reach and out of the sight of grandchildren.
- * Grandparents should use child-resistant vials if they are able to, at least whenever children are around. It is true that child-resistant closures are inconvenient to use, but saving a child's life is worth the inconvenience.

CPSC was begun in 1973 and since then an estimated 325 million potentially hazardous products have been called back from the marketplace. Most were voluntarily recalled by manufacturers who established programs to repair or replace the products or refund the purchase price.

Minnesota Poison Control System can be reached in the Twin Cities area by phoning (612) 221-2113.

* * * * *

Are you interested in learning more about the IBM Personal Computer? Are you also willing to share your time giving consumer information to people calling the Extension Office?

We are seeking volunteers for the ANSWER-U Telephone Teacher Program. Applications are due April 10 with computer training held in late April.

To qualify, a person should have homemaking experience or home economics training, be enthusiastic, be willing to learn computer information retrieval and have free time. A time commitment of 48 hours or 1/2 day for 12 weeks is expected.

Call the Extension Office at 559-4321 for an application or more information.

Sincerely,

Diane Corrin

Diane Corrin
County Extension Agent - Home Economics

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