

Boundaries

Boundaries are invisible barriers that we establish in relationships to protect what we value. They inform us when we need to stay out of others business and let them make their decisions and mistakes. Boundaries impact all areas of our life.

Physical boundaries help us determine who may touch us and under what circumstances. **Mental boundaries** gives us the freedom to have our own thoughts and opinions. **Emotional boundaries** help us to deal with our own emotions and disengage from harmful, manipulative emotions of others.

Set Boundaries Early

The thing that's happening when a child hears "No", is that they're learning boundaries. The boundaries learned at home, early in life, are the first introduction a child has to the world outside the home. When a child learns the concept of boundaries, they also learn that they have a right to personal boundaries. Especially in this culture, it is so important that your children know they have a right to say "no" to another person's physical contact. This takes good boundaries in the home plus talking to them specifically about saying "no" if they are uncomfortable.

If a child's physical boundaries in the home are being violated with physical abuse, slapping in the face, hitting or molestation in the home, they are learning that they have no right to personal boundaries. The best way to teach your children physical boundaries is to respect theirs.

Emotional Boundaries

Emotional boundaries are harder to recognize than physical ones. For a child to develop a healthy sense of self, independent from his parents, his emotional boundaries must be respected. When they are belittled or called "stupid" for having a differing opinion, it is a violation of their emotional boundaries. Laughing at them, mocking them or shaming them for having emotions teaches them their emotions aren't important and others have a right to trample them. Our goal is to help our children learn to handle their emotions and self control.

Praise

Praising our children is like pouring water on a thirsty flower and watching it open up. Children thrive on praise and affirmation. *Affirmation is words that affirm their accomplishments and value.* Praise shouldn't just be offered for accomplishments, however. A powerful character builder is praise for internal things like honesty, kindness, compassion, helpfulness, follow through, etc.

Affection

It is important to show physical affection to our children. Giving them hugs helps to increase their brain development as well as their overall social, emotional, and physical development. Studies also show that showing affection helps our kids be happier, less anxious, and be able to create healthy emotional bonds in other relationships.

The bottom line: If you didn't receive affection, you may not be comfortable being affectionate with your child. However, you can change, adapt and given them what they need simply by deciding you are going to do what is best for your child.

Reference: Wilson, Sandra D. Released from Shame: Moving beyond the Pain of the Past. InterVarsity Press, 2002.