

Boundaries with Kids

Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend

Session 1-Building Character in Kids

- ❖ One goal of parenting is to keep an eye on the future and raise responsible adults
- ❖ Parents or caretakers act in 3 main capacities: Guardian, Manager and Source
- ❖ Guardian: Set limits then enforce them. Protect and preserve
- ❖ Manager: Makes sure things get done. Children not born with self-discipline
- ❖ Source: Bridge to outside world/Progressively give independence
- ❖ Eight key aspects of character:
 - Loving: World does not revolve around them.
 - Responsible: Take ownership of life/accountability
 - Free: No victim mentality. We are free to act/make choices
 - Initiating: God is a creator and we are in His image.
 - Oriented to Growth: Face obstacles and grow/change
 - Oriented to Truth: Honesty begins with parents who model it/require it
 - Oriented to Transcendence: Grounded in God/Big picture
- ❖ A child's character will determine much of the course his life takes. To develop a child of good character, we must be parents of good character.

Session 2-Kids Need Parents with Boundaries

- ❖ Parents can influence their kids to develop boundaries in three ways:
 - First-Teach
 - Second-Model (boundaries are "caught" more than they are "taught")
 - Third-Help internalize-make them part of yourself
- ❖ Teaching boundaries is difficult. Tolerate and endure your child's hatred of your boundaries
- ❖ Overcoming Obstacles to Boundary Training
 - Depending on the child:
 - Over-identifying with the child
 - Thinking love and separateness are enemies
 - Ignoring and zapping
 - Being worn down
- ❖ When it comes to training your kids in boundaries, remember that you can't teach what you don't have.

Session 3 – Boundary Principles One and Two: The Law of Sowing and Reaping and the Law of Responsibility

- ❖ Consequences: Psychological/Negative Relations vs. Reality Consequences
- ❖ Psychological/Negative Relations: Anger/Guilt Messages/Nagging/Withdrawing love
- ❖ Reality Consequences: Sowing and Reaping-Sowed irresponsibility/Reaped loss of privilege
- ❖ The list of reality consequences is endless. The only limit is your own creativity.
 - Make the consequences a natural outflow of the crime.
 - Save consequences for serious offenses where the behavior may become a bad character pattern.
 - Give immediate consequences.
 - Stay away from emotional consequences and effect reality consequences.
 - Use relational consequences only if they concern your own feelings.
 - Think of consequences as protection from the behavior of the child.
 - Preserve choice as much as possible.
 - Make sure there is not a good reason a child is misbehaving before invoking consequences.
 - Talk to the child and ask about the misbehavior when the child is not misbehaving.

- ❖ Sowing and Reaping-God's Law-Teaches self-control. To give children freedom, allow choices and then manage consequences accordingly.
- ❖ Parenting means giving freedom, requiring responsibility, rendering consequences and being loving throughout.
- ❖ Let kids "suffer" – Hebrews 12:11
- ❖ Recipe for a growing person: Give a person grace (Unmerited favor) and truth (structure and reality) and do that over time, and you have the greatest chance of this person growing into a person of good character.
- ❖ Grace includes support, resources, love, compassion, forgiveness, etc.
- ❖ Truth is the structure of life, tells how we are supposed to live our lives and how it really works.
- ❖ Law of Responsibility-Valuable Boundary Lesson-Children need to know that their problems are their own problems, no one else's. Their life is their own little red wagon and their job is to pull it without expecting someone else to.
- ❖ Mature adults see themselves as problem solvers.
- ❖ Immature people experience life as victims and constantly want someone else to solve their problems.
- ❖ Treasures: Things of great value that we need to take ownership of and help our kids own as well
 - Feelings/Emotions-Signals of what may be going on in us
 - Attitudes-Stances and opinions we make on an issue
 - Behavior-Impulsiveness vs. restraint
- ❖ Being unable is different than being uncomfortable. Part of growing up is learning what we are responsible for versus where we need help from others.
- ❖ Galatians 6 – Burdens: Burdens are the overwhelming problems and pains and crises that everyone needs support with
 - Loads: The normal responsibilities of working, going to school and fulfilling duties to our friends and family and church.
- ❖ Learning the difference between help and rescue.

Session 4 – Boundary Principles Three and Four: The Laws of Power and Respect

- ❖ I can't do it all, but I'm not helpless.
 - We can't do it all for them: Your child needs to learn what he has power over, what he doesn't have power over and how to tell the difference.
- ❖ Gaining power over ourselves:
 - Stop denying dependency-Mature/Healthy people need others and God
 - Stop demanding power over all choices-Need help making choices. No unlimited time/energy
 - Stop avoiding consequences-Learn to prevent bad consequences by taking control of actions
 - Stop avoiding failure-Learn to grieve lost perfection/Accept failures/Grow from them
- ❖ 5 Principles of Power Development
 - Stay connected, no matter what-Help them through tough times
 - Don't be an omnipotent parent-Accept your own limits/Own your own powers
 - Be a parent who makes free decisions: Your choices are not dictated by response of child
 - Work toward giving your child self-governing power: Stretch don't break them
 - Limit omnipotence, but encourage autonomy-Can't do it all/Must make choices
- ❖ I'm not the only one that matters-Respect for others (Pg. 75)
- ❖ How to stay in control:
 - You will not subject yourself to abuse
 - Your child will learn that his behavior hurts other people
 - If the behavior is not self-correcting, it has to cost the child something
- ❖ The limit is reality if you keep it
- ❖ Separateness (Pg. 78-79)

Session 5 – Boundary Principles Five and Six: The Laws of Motivation and Evaluation

- ❖ Life beyond because I'm mommy
 - Motives drive our behavior: motives are the internal “because” for what we do.
 - Love first/Limits second (pg. 86-87)
 - Stages: Fear of consequences
 - An immature conscience
 - Values and ethics
 - Mature love/Mature Guilt
- ❖ Pain can be a gift
- ❖ Hurt vs. Harm
- ❖ 4 Rules for Evaluating Pain
 - Don't let your child's pain control your action
 - Keep your pain separate from your child's
 - Help your child see that life is not about avoiding pain but making good pain an ally
 - Make sure the pain is the pain of maturing, not the pain of need or injury

Session 6 – Boundary Principles Seven and Eight: The Laws of Pro-activity and Envy

- ❖ Reactive and Proactive Boundaries
- ❖ Reactive boundaries are necessary for survival and growth-Not solution
- ❖ Proactive boundaries
 - Go beyond problem identification to problem solving
 - Encompass both what the child is “for” and “against”
 - Others can't control the child
 - Not about revenge and fairness, but about responsibility
- ❖ I'm happier when I'm thankful-gratitude
 - Envy-perpetual wanting more
 - Entitlement- I am owed
- ❖ Gratify needs and some wants and frustrate some wants.
 - Giving-the gratification of needs and wants. The most important gratification is the one of love, connection and care
 - Limiting-making sure children do not get too much...or do not get inappropriate things. It is making sure that their wish to be in control of everything is not gratified
 - Containing- helping a child to work through their feelings about a limit and to internalize that limit as character. Containing is, then, the addition of love, understanding and structure to limits.
- ❖ Don't be afraid to be “hated”
- ❖ Help children learn to express gratitude, it starts at home
- ❖ Envy vs. Desire: Desire moves our children and us to work. Envy just burns within.

Session 7 – Boundary Principles Nine and Ten: The Laws of Activity and Exposure

- ❖ Build in your child a tendency towards activity-TO DO. Does not supercede dependency
- ❖ Helps kids learn/experience/
- ❖ Causes of Passivity: fear of closeness, conflict or failure
 - Inability to structure goals
 - Clairvoyant expectations
 - Conflicted aggression
 - Laziness-at the root of most lazy kids is a parent who enables
 - Entitled attitude

- ❖ Encourage seeking and growing
 - Become an active person, not just a parent
 - Work through any enabling of your child's passivity
 - Require initiative and problem solving
 - Teach your child to move towards relationship
 - Make passivity more painful than activity
 - Allow time for the process to develop
- ❖ Honesty is the best policy
- ❖ Use direct communication
- ❖ Law of exposure-life is lived better in the light-things are better out in the open even if they are negative
 - Not everything that bothers us needs to be brought out, but where values are violated or if someone is injured or behaving unacceptable then avoidance can cause more problems
- ❖ #1 Live the law of exposure yourself
- ❖ #2 Make the boundaries clear
- ❖ #3 Cure their fears and make communication safe
- ❖ #4 Don't reinforce non-expression
- ❖ #5 Don't get in the middle
- ❖ #6 Teach them boundary words to use
- ❖ All the boundaries in the world can be summed up in 2 things:
 - Love God
 - Love your neighbor as yourself

Session 8 – Six Steps to Implementing Boundaries with Your Kids

- ❖ Roll up your sleeves-get to work
- ❖ Step 1: See the three realities
 - There really is a problem-your child is not perfect
 - The problem really isn't the problem
 - Time does not heal all
- ❖ Step 2: Plug in-don't do it alone
- ❖ Step 3: Grow in boundaries personally
- ❖ Step 4: Evaluate and plan
- ❖ Step 5: Present the plan
- ❖ Step 6: Follow through over time
 - Expect disbelief and testing
 - Be patient and allow repeated trials
 - Praise the child's adaptations
 - Fine-tune and shift issues
- ❖ Stick with the consequences: a team effort by you and God to nurture and train your child
- ❖ Start young (if possible), don't quit, remember God is on your side and you are not alone other parents are a resource