

# Ep #: Limits and Rules: Why They Matter and How to Peacefully Enforce Them



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host  
**Lisa Smith**

# Ep #: Limits and Rules: Why They Matter and How to Peacefully Enforce Them

Welcome to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*, a podcast for parents that are tired of yelling, threatening, and punishing their kids. Join mom and master certified parent coach Lisa Smith as she gives you actionable step-by-step strategies that'll help you transform your household from chaos to cooperation. Let's dive in.

Welcome, welcome, welcome. Welcome to today's episode. I am so excited to be with you here today. I hope you're doing well. Today we're going to dive into the critical topic of setting rules and limits, and the even more importance of enforcing the rules and limits.

Rules and limits are more than just guidelines for behavior. They're the foundation upon which our children build their understanding of the world around them. In the Hive, I'm always teaching coaching and reminding the parents the rules help kids feel safe, loved, and know what is expected of them.

I mean, as adults, this is kind of how we roam the Earth. Rules help us feel safe, know what is expected and loved. Now, let me state right up front here. I am not talking about punishing kids. Punishing is often from a place of anger. It's meant to harm for past events. It often does damage to the self-worth. It is not delivered in a calm, rational, and from your higher brain way.

Today, when I say rules and limits and consequences, I am 100% talking about discipline. Discipline is to teach and peacefully setting limits and enforcing them in a calm, firm, and empathetic way is the roadmap to discipline. It is.

Now let me define a limit. I've done a podcast episode on this before that you can go back and search for. But in summary, when we set a limit, we are letting our kids know upfront that if they choose to do something or choose not to do something we've requested then the consequence will be

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X. So if you choose to get on your phone in the morning before we get in the car on the way to the bus as a teenager, then there will be no electronics the rest of the day.

If you choose to get up in the middle of the night, and take your phone back to your bedroom, then there'll be no phone for 24 hours. If you choose not to turn in homework, then we'll need to take a pause on gaming until all the homework gets turned in.

If you choose to not clean your room by noon at Saturday or finished the chore checklist then there'll be no payment of the allowance this week. If you choose to swear when we've talked about not swearing as a family, then you need to go outside and pick up five pieces of trash. If you yell at your sibling, then we need to do 10 pushups. It's that kind of example.

According to Webster's Dictionary, a consequence is defined as a result or effect, a result or effect of an action or condition. So a consequence is a result of an action. So if the result of you not choosing to turn in your homework, could be no screentime until homework's turned in, as we've reviewed.

These limits are set by us, the parents, well in advance of the action and while we are in our higher brain. We are setting the limits when we are calm and rational. We can think about the results of our action. What is going to be the consequence when the limit is not met? We also have to ask ourselves things like am I willing to follow through? Can I be consistent? Is the consequence fair? Is it age appropriate? Does it make sense?

This is why setting limits are so powerful because we're not doing them in the heat of the moment. We're setting them while we're in our higher brain. A punishment is often decided on the fly, decided and delivered from a

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dysregulated place, and intended to harm or at least inflict pain or shame on the kid to teach a lesson. Sidenote, it rarely works.

Now the truth is the setting the limit, once you do it a few times, is usually pretty easy. Although side note many people have way too many limits for their kids. I recommend three to four. But that's a conversation for another day. Now let's talk some real truth here.

The hard part in the entire setting limits process, the hard part is to enforce the limit in the heat of the moment. I mean, if you're honest, do you agree with me? It can be really, really hard to enforce a limit. I get this. I still struggle from time to time as a recovering people pleaser to enforce the limit I've set with my son.

Today I want to dig into why this is so hard, and provide you with some insight and ideas that I think could significantly help you enforce the limit that you've set consistently, time in and time out, from a firm and empathetic position.

Now, in order to provide the insight, we need to talk about what happens when we fail to enforce the limit we set with our kids. It might seem harmless in the moment, but the repercussions can be far reaching. Now, this may be hard to hear but here's the thing. Not following through, not enforcing the limit in the heat of the moment, can inadvertently foster entitlement.

Picture this. You've set clear limits with your kid or kids. When they crossed the line, you hesitate to enforce the limit. Believe me, I get it. Some common reasons that we hesitate to enforce the limit are maybe you're trying to avoid conflict and maintain peace in the household. Maybe you struggle because you really hate the big outburst or the storm that comes from your kids when you go to enforce the limit because you don't like the noise and the chaos created from the storm.

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Or even worse, maybe you're afraid of your kids a little bit. Maybe when you go to enforce the limit. I know this one all too well, your kid tries to renegotiate the limit with you while you're in the middle of enforcing it. You get confused and upset and feel whipped around like a rag doll because he or she is so good at arguing their point.

Maybe you struggle to enforce the limit because it causes confrontation and conflict in your home that freaks you out, or you don't know how to, quote, do it. Truthfully, you'd rather just avoid it. You're conflict averse. Maybe you struggle to enforce the limit in the heat of the moment because you're overly empathetic or highly sensitive. You, quote, feel bad that your child is in so much pain with the consequence. It's hard to watch them be unhappy.

Maybe you struggle to enforce the consequence because your mind starts to tell you in the middle of it, or maybe your kid tells you, that the consequence is too harsh. Now you feel bad when it's time to enforce it. Maybe you struggle because you grew up in a permissive household and you don't actually know how to enforce the limit, and it feels incredibly uncomfortable.

Maybe you struggle to enforce the limit because you feel bad about yourself, or you feel like a bad person when you're trying to enforce the limit. Maybe you struggle because you're a people pleaser and can't handle the idea of someone being mad at you. Let's be honest, our kids are typically not happy, nice, or pleasant to be around when we're enforcing the limit.

In other words, they're usually very mad about this. Especially the strong willed kids have no problem letting us know this. Maybe you struggle to enforce the limit because you're afraid that enforcing the limit will harm them in some way or affect their self-esteem or mental health. I hear you. I

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so appreciate how hard, how difficult, how challenging it can feel to enforce the limit in the heat of the moment. I do. I struggle myself.

But consider this. What you're actually doing when you struggle to enforce the limit, when you let it go, when you're not consistent is you're sending a message the rules are negotiable. That I can storm really big and loud and change the enforcement of the rules. That actions don't have consequences. Even though it was stated up front that there would be a consequence for the action. It's easy to fall into this trap.

I get it especially when frustration sets in from parenting after repeated reminders go unheeded, after there's been a power struggle before, during, and after enforcing the limit. But what we also know is that resorting to control tactics don't work either. What we really want to focus on is encouraging turning on the internal compass, encouraging, quote, good behavior by peacefully setting limits with empathy and firmness.

What I am 100% sure of at this point, after 15 years of parent coaching, having raised my own son, and having grown up in a dominant household is that the very first step is understanding that discipline is about teaching, not instilling fear or shame. If you look up the root word of discipline, it is to teach.

On the flip side, what I also know is that when we rescue our children from the consequences of their actions, or when we refuse or choose not to enforce the limits that we've set, for all the reasons I mentioned above, we are robbing our children of learning valuable lessons. We're robbing them a valuable learning experiences. Let me say that again. When we rescue our children, especially from the consequences that we've set. When we rescue them from the consequences of their actions, we're robbing them a valuable learning experience.

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It's through facing consequences that our kids learn things like how to do it differently next time, accountability, responsibility, and decision making. It is through facing consequences that we're enforcing firmly and with empathy that the internal compass gets turned on in our kids. If you struggle with things like boundaries and consequences and people pleasing and permissive parenting, avoiding the enforcing of the consequence might seem like the path of least resistance. But in truth, it sets a dangerous precedent.

What happens is, our children start to believe that their actions have no real impact, or little impact, and they start to believe that rules don't apply to them? This can lead to a sense of entitlement and maybe even narcissism.

So what's the alternative? How can we guide our children towards responsible behavior while respecting their autonomy? It starts with setting limits that peacefully stick. By peacefully stick, I mean, we're willing to enforce them in the heat of the moment with a combination of firmness and empathy. It starts with clear communication upfront, which means communicating the limits to them with age appropriate expectations. If I know nothing else, I know that kids thrive when they know what's expected of them, and they understand why those expectations are in place.

Now hear me this is not about controlling every aspect of their lives. It's about empowering them to make choices and then face the consequences of their choices. I feel like I need to say that again. It is about empowering them with choices, empowering them to make choices, and then face the consequences of the choices, which is the recipe or the roadmap to turning on the internal compass. It's about teaching them right from wrong rather than fearing getting caught.

But discipline isn't just about consequences. It's also about emotional guidance. Teaching our children how to manage their emotions, how to self-soothe, how to self-regulate, lays the groundwork for responsible

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decision making and doing the right thing. I've seen the power of this approach in my own parenting journey.

Raised in an environment of strict control and unpredictable punishment, I knew there had to be a better way. Through trial and error, I discovered the transformative power of peaceful parenting and setting limits with empathy and firmness with my own son. What works really well is setting clear rules and limits up front, following through with the consequences laid out, and guiding our children through their emotions.

As a result of this, we're not just shaping their behavior. We're shaping their character. We're empowering them to become thoughtful, compassionate individuals who understand the impact of their actions on the world around them.

So to further reinforce this, I want to share with you some specific strategies that I recommend for enforcing limits that can help you, as the parent, feel more equipped to follow through. Number one is consistent communication. Clearly communicate the rules and limits with your children in advance, no surprises. In age appropriate ways, explain the reasons behind them.

For example, if you set a limit on screen time, explain how excessive screen time can impact their sleep, their mood, and their social interactions. When we set the limit up front, we're also setting a tone that it's the beginning of the conversation not the end of the conversation, where the law is being laid down with a punishment.

Number two, setting the consequences, establish the consequences for crossing the limit and ensure they're appropriate and related to the behavior. For instance, if your kid refuses to clean up their toys, the consequence might be losing a toy for a period of time or having to clean up one toy before moving on to the next one in the future.



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Another example. If your child gets on their phone in the morning before you leave for the bus, you don't want that because it slows them down and it creates chaos in the household in the morning. So the limit might be no electronics for the rest of the day.

Saying no electronics for a week or a month or a year might be over indexing. That feels more like a punishment rather than a limit, which is to reinforce and teach them that you're serious about the rule that's been set. The consequence is just short enough for them to feel a slight amount of discomfort, but not for so long that they give up and feel hopeless and then want to turn against cooperating with the family.

Number three, follow through consistently follow through with consequences when the limits are breached. This demonstrates to your kids that you're serious about the rules and reinforces accountability. Oh my gosh, so important, right?

For example, if a consequence for not completing homework is no screen time, it is your job to ensure that screen time is indeed restricted until the conditions have been met, like the homework has been completed. I feel like I need to say again when you consistently follow through with the consequence, you show your kids that you're serious, and it reinforces the accountability.

Number four, empathy and understanding this one is so, so, so important. You want to approach the consequence with empathy and understanding of your child's emotions. It's okay for them to be mad. It's okay for them to storm. When you acknowledge their feelings, acknowledge their feelings and validate them while still upholding the limit.

For instance, if a child is upset about losing screentime, and let's be honest most are, you can empathize with their disappointment, while reinforcing the reason they lost the screentime in the first place. I always like to say

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setting limits from a higher brain while we're enforcing the limits set and the consequence with both firmness and empathy.

Number five positive reinforcement. Alongside the consequences provide positive reinforcement for following the rule and meeting the expectation. Please, please, please, I beg you. Praise your child when they adhere to the limit and show responsible behavior. This is how we turn on the internal compass. This is how we teach right from wrong. This reinforces positive habits and encourages continued compliance.

Number six, modeling behavior. You know I'm big on this. I talk about modeling all the time. This one is really important. We need to lead by example, by demonstrating the behavior you expect from your children. Show them how to manage emotions, how to handle conflicts peacefully, and respect boundaries.

What we know for sure is children don't do what we say. They do what we do. They're observing, and they're imitating your actions. So make sure you're modeling the behavior you want.

Finally, number seven, we want to encourage problem solving. Encourage your child to come up with solutions to problems or conflicts within the limits you've set. Encourage them to come and talk to you about a limit if they don't agree with it or understand it. One of the beauties of setting limits is it's the beginning of the conversation, not the end. You're not the dictator coming in to impose or the judge declaring the punishment the criminal will enforce or will serve out because of their crime.

We're peacefully setting limits with consequences. We're enforcing them 100% of the time with firmness and empathy. This encourages and opens up to a world of problem solving, which fosters critical thinking skills and empowers your kids to take responsibility for their actions.

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For example, if your siblings are fighting over a toy, encourage them to find a mutually acceptable solution rather than intervening as the judge. So good, right? By implementing these strategies, you can effectively enforce limits. Even if it's a struggle, you can enforce them while nurturing your child's emotional development and promoting responsible behavior.

I really hope that this podcast has given you some insight that leads to confidence in enforcing the limit and really helps you understand why we need to enforce the limit in the heat of the moment, and the downside of choosing not to enforce the limits. Remember, consistency, empathy, and positive reinforcement are key elements in the discipline process. Rules help our kids feel safe, loved, and know what is expected of them.

As we wrap up today's episode, I really hope that I've been able to show you that setting rules and limits is about so much more than controlling their behavior. It's about nurturing the development of responsible compassionate individuals. By approaching discipline with empathy and firmness, we empower our children to navigate the world with integrity and self-awareness.

Parenting is a journey and every effort we make to guide our children with love and understanding shapes not only their behavior, but their character. Some good food for thought there, right. All right. Join me next time as we continue to explore real world strategies for peaceful parenting. Until then, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

Thank you so much for listening today. I want to personally invite you to head over to [thepeacefulparent.com/welcome](http://thepeacefulparent.com/welcome) and sign up for my free peaceful parenting minicourse. You'll find everything you need to get started on the path to peaceful parenting just waiting for you over there at [www.thepeacefulparent.com/welcome](http://www.thepeacefulparent.com/welcome). I can't wait for you to get started.

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Thanks for listening to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. If you want more info on how you can transform your parenting, visit [thepeacefulparent.com](http://thepeacefulparent.com). See you soon.