**The Best Way to Teach Your Child Healthy Boundaries**

**[](http://kcuthriell.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/fence-q.jpg)**By [kcuthriell](http://thesnowballeffect.com/author/kcuthriell/) On September 17, 2013 · [6 Comments](http://thesnowballeffect.com/the-best-way-to-teach-your-child-healthy-boundaries/#comments) · In [Parenting](http://thesnowballeffect.com/category/parenting/), [Psychology](http://thesnowballeffect.com/category/psychology/)

The best way to teach your child healthy boundaries is to respect your child’s boundaries.

No, this does not mean that you allow your child to do anything he or she pleases. Quite the contrary, really. It just means that you respect that your child is his or her own person with his or her own opinions, feelings, and rights.

*Boundaries are those invisible lines that separate you from others.*

Because they view their child as an extension of themselves, they often unknowingly violate their child’s boundaries. When this happens, the child grows up with boundaries that are either too loose or too rigid.

**Common Boundary Violations**: *Oops, I confused you for me.*

* Calling a child names. (Calling yourself stupid is damaging enough, do not say it to your child!)
* Insulting and humiliating a child in front of other people. (Would you do that to a friend? You might tease yourself, but don’t tease your child.)
* Tickling a child after he or she has told you to stop. (Teach your child that he or she has a right to say no.)
* Hugging or kissing a child who has said no or pushed you away. (Teaching your child to say no to unwanted affection begins with you.)
* Pushing any kind of unwanted physical affection on a child.
* Urging a child to hug and kiss other people such as relatives after he or she appears uncomfortable.
* Walking in on a child who is getting dressed when the child is old enough to dress him or herself.
* Walking in on a child who is in the bathroom when the child no longer needs your help.
* Denying a child’s feelings. (“You aren’t scared, tired, thirsty…”)
* Telling a child that he or she shouldn’t feel a particular way. (Your child can feel the way he or she feels but may not be allowed to act out on that feeling.)
* Discounting a child’s opinions. (You can acknowledge their opinion even if you don’t agree with it.)
* Taking food off of a child’s plate without asking first. (Would you do this to a dinner guest?)
* Sharing your adult concerns with your child and relying on your young child or adolescent for emotional support.
* Putting your child against their other parent.
* Insisting your child be just like you.

**The Impact of Boundary Violations**

When a child’s boundaries are disrespected, they are likely to grow up with unhealthy boundaries themselves. Their boundaries will either be too loose or too rigid.

Loose boundaries:*“There is no me.”*

A person with loose boundaries is more likely to be passive and tolerate abuse. They do not feel comfortable saying no to others, even when others are crossing the line of common decency. People with loose boundaries are often indecisive and defer to others when making a decision. They have a difficult time believing in themselves because they grew up having their feelings and opinions invalidated. They have a difficult time standing up for themselves as adults.

Rigid boundaries:*“I must protect me.”*

A person with rigid boundaries constantly fears being engulfed by others and losing their sense of self. They build walls and are careful not to let others in. They fear intimacy and fear being smothered by others. They fear that if they lower their protective walls, they will become enmeshed with other people. This squashes any chance of having an emotionally intimate relationship.

The impact on generations to come.

Adults with really loose boundaries do not know how to set limits with other people- even with their own children. They often allow their children to get away with unacceptable behaviors. Appropriate structure, guidance, and discipline are usually lacking in these households. As a result, their children do not grow up knowing how to respect the boundaries of other people. They were never taught to respect their parents. They will not respect the rights of others, including their own children. The boundary violation cycle continues.

Adults with really rigid boundaries tend to be defensive and emotionally closed off- even with their own children. This often leaves their children feeling emotionally hungry. These emotionally hungry children often grow up and “smother” their own children because of their own unmet needs. These “smothered” children grow up with self-protective rigid boundaries.The cycle continues.

Often times a parent with rigid boundaries (unbending and emotionally distant) will raise an emotionally hungry child, and an emotionally hungry child will grow up to raise a self-protective individual with rigid boundaries.

**Healthy Boundaries**

People with healthy boundaries understand that their children are separate from themselves. They provide their children with love, guidance, structure, and discipline and at the same time, respect their child’s feelings, opinions, personal space, and right to say no in certain situations. They may not always agree with  or give in to their child, but they acknowledge what their child has to say.