



BOUNDARIES—Teach children to say no.

Teaching Children the Right to Protect Themselves

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Why Boundaries Are Essential

Boundaries are not about being unkind, antisocial, or fearful.

Boundaries are about **staying in control of one's body, time, attention, and choices.**

Children who do not understand boundaries are not more loving — they are more vulnerable.

They are easier to pressure, easier to manipulate, and less likely to recognize danger when it appears in subtle forms.

Boundaries are one of the strongest protective tools a child can have in a complex world.

What Often Goes Wrong

Many parents unintentionally teach children to **override their own limits.**

This happens when:

- children are forced to hug or kiss adults
- politeness is valued over comfort
- saying “no” is treated as disrespect
- adults dismiss discomfort as overreaction

Over time, children learn:

“My feelings don’t matter as much as keeping others comfortable.”

This belief can be deeply dangerous.



What Boundaries Really Are

Boundaries are:

- internal (thoughts, feelings, intuition)
- physical (body, space)
- emotional (what feels safe or unsafe)
- digital (screens, messages, images)

Boundaries are not walls.

They are **filters**.

They allow good in — and keep harm out.

The Parent's Role

Parents are a child's **first boundary teachers**.

Children learn boundaries when parents:

- respect their “no”
- model saying “no” themselves
- question unsafe situations
- back children up when boundaries are challenged

A child who knows their parents will support them is far more likely to speak up.

Real-Life Examples

Example 1: Physical Boundaries (Young Child)

A relative wants a hug.

The child hesitates.

A boundary-respecting response:

“You don’t have to hug if you don’t want to.”

This teaches the child:

- their body belongs to them



- consent matters
 - affection should feel safe
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Example 2: Situational Boundaries (Elementary Age)

A child is invited to a sleepover where supervision feels unclear.

A parent says:

“Something doesn’t feel right to me. We’re going to say no.”

The child learns:

- adults can say no even when something sounds fun
 - safety outranks social pressure
 - intuition matters
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Example 3: Social Pressure (Teen)

A teen is pressured to stay somewhere uncomfortable.

Teaching the script:

“I’m leaving now.”

“I don’t feel comfortable.”

“I need to go.”

No explanations required.

Teaching Children to Say No

Children must hear and practice that **no is a complete sentence**.

This includes:

- no to touch
- no to secrets
- no to situations
- no to online requests



Practice phrases at home:

- “I don’t like that.”
- “Stop.”
- “I need to leave.”
- “I’m calling my parent.”

Practice builds confidence before it’s needed.

Digital Boundaries Matter Too

Children need help understanding:

- not everyone online is who they claim to be
- private images should never be shared
- pressure online is still pressure

Teach children:

“If someone asks for secrecy, that’s a red flag.”

Common Boundary Mistakes Parents Make

1. Prioritizing politeness over safety
2. Minimizing a child’s discomfort
3. Explaining away intuition
4. Expecting children to “be nice” at all costs

Kindness without boundaries is not kindness — it’s vulnerability.

Boundaries at Different Ages

- **Young children:** body autonomy, simple choices
- **Elementary:** situational awareness, saying no
- **Teens:** social, emotional, and digital boundaries

Boundaries evolve, but the principle stays the same.



One Rule Parents Must Remember

If a boundary costs your child approval, that approval wasn't safe.

Children need permission to disappoint others in order to protect themselves.

Biblical Wisdom

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

— Proverbs 4:23

Healthy boundaries are not about shutting people out. They are about protecting what God has entrusted to us—our hearts, our minds, our bodies, our relationships, and our choices.

Children often receive mixed messages. They are taught to be kind, helpful, and polite, but sometimes those lessons are misunderstood as "always say yes" or "never disappoint anyone." Scripture teaches a different balance. We are called to love others, but we are also called to exercise wisdom and stewardship.

Teaching children healthy boundaries helps them understand that they can be respectful and still say no. They can be kind and still protect themselves. They can care about others without surrendering their own safety, convictions, or well-being.

Boundaries are one of the ways we guard what God has given us.

"Let your 'Yes' be yes, and your 'No,' no."

— Matthew 5:37

Together they create a very strong biblical foundation for boundaries:

- Guard what is valuable.
- Speak clearly and honestly.

Practical Wisdom / Application

Most people hear:

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

and think about protecting their faith or personal character.



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That's certainly part of it.

But imagine a parent teaching that verse to a child:

Someone wants a hug you don't want to give. —**Guard your heart.**

Someone pressures you to keep a secret from your parents. —**Guard your heart.**

A friend repeatedly ignores your "no." —**Guard your heart.**

Someone online asks for private information or pictures. —**Guard your heart.**

Someone makes you feel uncomfortable and tells you you're overreacting. —**Guard your heart.**

Healthy boundaries are not about being unkind.

They are about protecting what God has entrusted to us—our bodies, our minds, our emotions, our relationships, and our choices.

Now consider Jesus' words:

"Let your 'Yes' be yes, and your 'No,' no."

Children need permission to be clear.

Not rude.

Not angry.

Just clear.

Sometimes wisdom sounds like:

- "No."
- "I don't like that."
- "I need to leave."

Boundaries teach children that they can be respectful and still protect themselves.

Guard what is valuable.

Speak clearly and honestly.

Final Takeaway

Boundaries do not make children fearful.

They make children **strong, wise, and less easily exploited.**

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A child who knows they can say no — and be backed up — is far safer than one taught to always comply.

One Thing to Try This Week

Option 1: Practice Boundary Scripts

Role-play with your child:

- "No."
- "Stop."
- "I need to leave."
- "I'm calling my parent."

Make it fun and low pressure.

Option 2: Give Permission

Tell your child:

"You never have to be polite at the expense of your safety."

Then discuss what that means.

Option 3: Respect One Boundary

Notice one time this week when your child says:

"No."

"I don't want to."

"I'm uncomfortable."

Pause before overriding them and explore what they're feeling.

Wisdom Principle: Guard what is valuable.