

## **Your Village: Parenting Beyond Discipline**

### **#53: Setting Boundaries with Respect Transcript**

**Erin:** Hello and welcome to the Your Village podcast, Parenting Beyond Discipline, the place to learn about ALL things parenting and get your questions answered. I'm your host, Erin Royer.

This episode is dedicated to all the single parents out there, who I admire beyond what I can possibly share. I am extremely lucky, not just to have a partner but one who pitches in, a lot. But parents end up single parents for so many reasons and life never turns out the way we expect and sometimes that means single parenthood. Some parents have shared custody and some have their kids 100% of the time on their own and with no financial support.

Single parents have extra challenges that dual parent households don't. Of course there are some dual parent households where one is basically a single parent. Everyone has their own challenges. I think of my poor husband, he was basically a single parent for almost a month while recovered, a single parent with a recovering wife that he also had to bring dinner in bed, and water, and ice and...and...and. I tried not to be too demanding and tried to ask for only what I really needed and all in one request. But I saw how worn out he got and that was only one month, not years on end.

First, I'm going to discuss a couple of areas, that while they do pertain to everyone and where everyone can benefit, single parents tend to have more challenges.

The first area is support and self care and the second is around setting and holding boundaries with kids.

So first, I'll discuss support and self care. This means getting some help when and where you need it. It's no surprise that in most instances, single parents will have a bigger challenge with this. It's 8PM and you're tired after doing everything for everyone all day and probably working a full day. You have to get the kids to bed by yourself, clean up the kitchen by yourself and prep for the next day, all by yourself. Day after day, week after week, depending on your situation. Some may have shared custody which offers a little respite but others do not. It is a tough row. So what do you do? How do you take care of these growing people and also yourself? A lot of times we don't. We take care of our little people and we take the back burner, again and again and again. We are so busy keeping all our balls in the air, if we stop for a second to pick one up, like taking care of ourselves, we'll drop them all. So I'm going to go off a

small, but very related tangent right here. I've shared a little about this before. But when I worked for Disney, I took a class called the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, yes, based on the book by Stephen Covey. This was working through all those steps in a workshops fashion. I can honestly say it changed my life. So many of the steps fit this scenario, but one of them, the last one, of course (and you work through them in numerical order) but step 7 is sharpening the saw and it's critical. You have to sharpen your saw, you have to take care of you, you are your saw when it comes to raising your family. If your saw is dull, you won't be nearly as effective. You end up working harder and harder for the same result, and eventually the saw will break if it isn't taken care of. OK, great advice, Erin. That's awesome! But HOW?! That's where the previous steps come in, getting everything aligned to be able to make time for yourself for sharpening your saw. How do you manage to pick up another ball when you barely keep all your current ones in the air? and perhaps even sometimes drop one or two? There is no magic but you need to carve out a little time, somewhere for this process. Waiting at the Dr's office, at dance practice, sometime, anytime you can fit it in and start brainstorming how you can get extra support. If you can pay for it, great, even a mothers helper, a neighborhood tween or teen who comes in every Sunday for a few hours to help prep meals, fold laundry and maybe even stays with the kids for an hour or two so you can run errands - ALONE! I love an errand alone! Such a treat! Ha ha!

If you can't bring in anyone is there anything you can do to trade with neighbors, school mates, or team mates with drop offs, pickups or after school or weekends for a few hours? If you can trade pickups after school 2 days a week, then that's 2 days a week you might be able to free up a few hours to get some things done or make a plan for your next week, whatever you need it for. I ran into a problem when my kids needed to be at two different places at the same time. My twins swim practice and my oldest's swim practice all started at the same time but 15 minutes apart from each other in driving time. I was able to get a friend who's son was also on the team to pick up my oldest and take him, since we were on their way. That was a lifesaver. Otherwise, i was dropping my oldest off early and running across town and taking my younger 2 a few minutes late. It was hectic! So getting some help from your community in any way you can, is key.

If you have any relatives close that you can count on, that's a huge blessing! I don't know many who do but if you do, take advantage of that. If aunt or grandma will take the kids once a week for a few hours, take that opportunity! My whole family is in Colorado so we don't get that. But when we went there last summer, my sister took our kids for an evening and we went out with a group of my college buddies and that was super fun. We have to drive to Colorado to get that but hey, I'll take it when I can get it!

What areas do you really feel you need to start finding time for taking care of yourself? Stress relief? Exercise? Nutrition? Heck, even just getting to the doctor. Some appointments are OK but if you've ever tried to go to the dentist or an annual exam with kids in tow, you know that's just plain torture, well more torture than it already is anyway! We need to be able to do these things for ourselves. Make a list of just a few things you need and want to do for yourself, the most pressing things and how much time you need for those and figure out how/when you will get the support to accomplish those. If stress is what you want to work on, can you find 20 minutes before bed for yourself to relax, listen to music, stretch, or read, whatever. or go for a walk during a lunch break to clear your head. Figure out what options are available to you and try them out to see which one works best.

It's going to take some time, some trial and error and unfortunately just when you get everything figured out, something changes, your mother's helper moves away or your child graduates to a more advanced team and the practice time and location changes. It's a never ending process to navigate and balance.

Also, what can your kids do to help that they aren't already? Where can they pitch in? Kids under 6 aren't going to be a whole lot of help and even then it's tough with a lot of them until they are 8 or 9 but figure out how and where your kids can help, especially if you have older ones. I know this can be difficult and a lot of times it seems easier to just do things ourselves than to nag our kids to do it. This is where boundaries come in, setting boundaries and sticking with them.

I know in many households but in single parent households especially, it's just a triumph to get through the day. But boundaries and expectations are part of that sharpening the saw. When our kids understand and respect our boundaries, it frees us up as parents, frees up our time and our energy. When we have high expectations of our children's behavior and hold them to it, most of the time they will rise to meet it. Of course, every child is different. My 8 year old comes right in from school, empties out his backpack, and gets to work on his homework before he goes out to play. He also gets himself up and dressed every morning, usually even before I do without any prompting. But he struggles with other stuff like helping around the house. So for each child you'll want to ask what expectations do you want to put in place for that you don't have now? So to follow this example, we felt it was high time Carter started contributing more to helping out around the house, to helping the household run smoother. We decided emptying the dishwasher was a very helpful thing that he was fully capable of doing. Of course he complained. "It's boring! Can't I do something else? I'll wash windows or something!" Windows are all well and good but windows are a low priority for me. What I do need is to have clean dishes that we all can eat on so

the answer was no, this is what we need you to do. We coached him and explained this, that life is full of things we don't want to do but we do them anyway. That when he's older he's going to have wash all his own dishes and a whole lot more, and so he needs to learn to do these things now, little by little and that he needs to figure out how he's going to do tasks he finds unpleasant without griping and maybe even, just maybe with some gratitude for having the ability to even do it in the first place, for having a dishwasher, for having dishes and food and a healthy body that accomplish these tasks and so much more.

So setting up and maintaining boundaries gets easier as kids learn that we mean what we say. It may be a pain in the short run but it makes our lives a lot easier in the long run and not only that, it will make our kids lives easier too because they won't expect the world to cater to them and their every need.

So how do we set and maintain boundaries with our kids. First and foremost, never lay down a boundary you aren't willing or able to follow through. If you tell your kids they have to turn the TV off in 5 minutes, say it and mean it. Don't walk away and talk on the phone for the next 15 minutes and then expect they are going think you mean 5 minutes or even any other limit or boundary you set down in the future. Because you've just shown them your boundaries waver, they're fluid. If you are cooking dinner and the timer will be going off in 3 minutes and you know you want that TV off in 5 minutes for sure, then tell them that. When 5 minutes comes, ask them nicely to turn it off. If they don't then you set the consequence, "Please turn off the TV now and come to the table or I will turn it off." If you feel you need more weight, "If I turn it off, it won't come back on for the next 3 days." But again, only say this, if you mean it, if it really won't come back on in the next 3 days. You can't go 2 days and say, "Oh you've been so good so I guess we can turn it back on tonight." No. If you say 3 days. It's 3 days. If they ask on day 2, the answer is no. I've had my kids do this to me. My answer is, "If I gave in, if I let you have your way right now, what kind of lesson would that teach you? How would you know that I mean what I say? How would you not think that all you have to do is ask or beg or plead to get me to change my mind? You wouldn't. So no. The answer is no. I said 3 days. I meant 3 days. Don't ask me again."

Now I have talked in this podcast and I also talk on the website about setting these consequences as a last resort. Boundary setting can, and more often than not, requires setting a consequence. So of course, when your children comply, you want to give them positive feedback for doing so, especially if it's BEFORE you had to set a consequence. "thank you for turning the tv off when I asked. That was very helpful." But sometimes we do have to set consequences in order to let our kids know that we mean business when we set down a boundary. They have their place.

Now if you have a toddler, a good tool for setting boundaries is 1-2-3 magic. For older children, the class on consequences and also on power struggles have some great tools for setting boundaries and sticking with them. You can find these classes on the website at [YourVillageOnline.com](http://YourVillageOnline.com) under the Discipline section. Also if you want your kids to help more around the house and aren't sure what things you'd like them to do, there is a class on Chores and Allowance under the Modern Parenting section. I cover not only what tasks are good and can be expected at each age but different ways to navigate the jobs as part of family responsibility versus jobs for allowance.

If you have a parenting question you'd like answered, you can send an email to [Podcast@YourVillageOnline.com](mailto:Podcast@YourVillageOnline.com).

Thanks for listening and see you next time!