



Setting Limits with Your Strong-Willed Child, Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition: Eliminating Conflict by Establishing CLEAR, Firm, and Respectful Boundaries

Robert J. MacKenzie

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In this fully revised and expanded second edition, *Setting Limits* author Robert MacKenzie is back with even more time-proven methods for dealing with misbehavior and creating positive, respectful, and rewarding relationships with children prone to acting out and disobedience.

Disruptive misbehavior, constant power struggles, manipulative or aggressive behavior--the challenges facing parents and teachers of strong-willed children can seem overwhelming at times. That's why thousands of parents and educators have turned to the solutions in *Setting Limits With Your Strong-Willed Child*. This revised and expanded second edition offers the most up-to-date alternatives to punishment and permissiveness--moving beyond traditional methods that wear you down and get you nowhere, and zeroing in on what really works so parents can use their energy in more efficient and productive ways. With fully updated guidelines on parenting tools like "logical consequences," and examples drawn directly from the modern world that children deal with each day, this is an invaluable resource for anyone wondering how to effectively motivate strong-willed children and instill proper conduct.

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From Reader Review Setting Limits with Your Strong-Willed Child, Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition: Eliminating Conflict by Establishing CLEAR, Firm, and Respectful Boundaries for online ebook

Tara says

Perhaps the best parenting book I've read...very clear, precise instructions on how to set limits and stick to them. I identified myself as setting "soft" limits with my kids too often, and now I understand how to be more "firm" but not harsh. I really needed this book, as I have strong-willed children that like to test boundaries.

Sarah says

This book was extremely helpful for my husband I to start to determine where we were losing control with our 3 year old daughter. We were good with being consistent and following through on consequences but we suffered from 2 major problems. The first was we were in the "mixed" style bucket in terms of trying to convince and coerce and then following through with punitive measures. The second problem was that we were struggling with how to set clear, firm, boundaries right from the beginning. This book helped us recognize what we were doing, shift to a more effective and consistent style, and start communicating with our daughter in ways that make an impact.

The only draw back is this book doesn't really address how you handle the meltdown that can result when the boundary is met. Almost every example in the book ends with "and said child willingly follows the process". Let's be honest, strong willed children do not follow the process right out of the gate. I wanted a little more guidance on how many time outs will be necessary in the beginning and how to EFFECTIVELY go through a cool down period. A child screaming for an hour through time outs and "cool down" isn't exactly effective in my mind.

I will say though, that the methods ARE working. We seem to have gotten over the initial period and our daughter is responding more quickly and with way less drama. If nothing else I'd recommend it for those that are struggling with their strong willed children.

Beth says

I found this book utterly amazing. Robert MacKenzie knows exactly what he's talking about when it comes to strong-willed children and how to effectively shape and guide their temperament in the right direction. My oldest son is almost 4 years old. I wouldn't say he is the most stong-willed child there is (half the time he is the sweetest boy in the world) but he has definitely learned -from us, his parents- that he can get away with defiance. We tried every approach we could think of to stop him from arguing with every single request we made, but nothing ever worked. Desperate, I googled "stong-willed kids help", and this book was the first to come up. I ran to the library and started reading immediately. I kept nodding my head at everything he said, describing the dances we parents do with our children, punitive and permissive approaches that don't work,

and then did a happy dance when he showed me what I should do instead. My son has, of course, given me many opportunities since starting this book to put my new tools to practice. And I've seen results! The author says to expect full changes within eight to twelve weeks, and also setbacks. There may be an increase in resistance once you start, but the younger your children are, the easier it will be to make these changes. I am so grateful that I found this book. It is a life-saver!

Katie Coleman says

I bought this for my toddler who was in the midst of the terrible twos, but as I read through it I realized that all children are strong-willed at times, and it really helped me with all of them. This book, to me, was like a best friend whispering in your ear, reminding you of all the things you *know* you should do as a parent but forget in the midst of conflict. It is PRACTICAL. I have read books that encourage you to talk things out with your child more than this one does, but the older my kids get, the more I realize that you can talk and teach all you want, but if you do it in the midst of a conflict, neither of you are going to get much out of it. Teach your child and talk to them when you are both open to it....but provide firm consequences when they are pushing your limits.

I also love that this book reminds you not to shame your child, use sarcasm, or to make things personal, providing examples of what that looks like. I think some parents say things like, "What is your problem?" or "Why can't you just listen to me?" as a knee-jerk reaction, especially if their parents said those things. It is good to stop and actually think about what you are saying and what your purpose behind it is.

Kristie says

One of the few books that actually changed my life. For three years I had a "compliant" child and then along came his brother. My husband and I were frustrated with his behavior and we couldn't understand why he just wouldn't listen to us like his brother.

This book clearly explained our son's behavior and helped us to change our expectations, which made all of us happier. It also gave us practical instructions for changing our behavior and our son's.

Within one week, we were a much, much, happier household. Now, we know what to expect from our son and he knows what to expect from us. His behavior has changed because of the way that we've learned to deal with his strong personality.

You must read this book!

Karen Mahtin says

This book has some good points about getting (older) kids to follow thru on things you want them to do, but... the author seems to think that all strong-willed kids are doing is testing to see at what point the parent will make them stop doing unwanted behaviors. I think that there is a certain amount of impulsivity (lack of impulse control?) that makes kids do things without thinking - it's not always a conscious desire to rebel or "aggressively research" parents' boundaries.

The book is written like many other parental advice books (it seems like several authors use the same ghost writer) - it's easy to read, has far too many quotes from the text excerpted in the middle of the pages, it repeats the same points over and over again, and it includes far too many made-up examples of effectively and ineffectively handled situations, complete with a view into the mind of the disobedient child (oops, aggressive researcher). I really didn't like the way that MacKenzie "quotes" the kids' thoughts while he's reporting on supposed stories that were allegedly related during sessions in his office.

Erika says

I thought this was an excellent book full of solid, practical advice to effectively and positively disciplining children. It is targeted for ages 3 to 12. My toddler is almost three and likes to push the limits and test me and this book gave me great suggestions on how to set limits with him.

Outline of main points below that I quickly typed up as notes, so I can refer back. Feel free to read if you are interested.

Ways parents teach rules:

Punitive approach – based on fear, excessive punishment, solving problems by force, parents win and kids lose, kids react with anger, stubbornness, rebellion, withdrawal

Permissive approach – kids have all power, problem solve by persuasion, tell children right thing to do but don't follow through with any action, kids ignore and tune out words and wear parents down w/words

Mixed approach (neither firm or respectful, worst of above two)

Democratic approach – children are capable of solving problems on own, children should be given choices, cooperative, mutual respect

Limits:

If you set a limit follow through – kids learn by your actions not words

Clearly set limit – don't state wishes and hopes and think children will understand e.g. "I wish you wouldn't play with my phone" and child doesn't stop "I don't like you playing with my phone" child still doesn't stop "I'm getting angry." There was no clear message in those statements. A statement such as "please don't play with my phone or you will have to take a time-out" is a clear statement.

Soft limits: wishes, repeating and reminding, warnings/second chances, reasoning and explaining, speeches/sermons, statement of fact, ignoring misbehavior, unclear directions, ineffective role modeling, pleading, bargaining/negotiating, arguing/debating, bribes, inconsistency between parents

Firm limits: state in concrete terms, words supported by actions, compliance required, provide accountability. Children learn no means no not maybe.

Don't get into a "dance" with your child. If you make request, don't repeat, remind, bargain, lecture, yell, threaten, etc. State the request and if they don't listen go to consequence such as time-out. Children like to wear parents down by getting them to take their "bait" and get them to dance.

Clear messages: focus on behavior, be specific and direct, use normal voice, and specify consequence for

noncompliance

Stop power struggle before it begins: when kids tune out, check in with them by asking if they understand your request; when kids argue, cut it off; when kids challenge, give limited choices; when kids dawdle, use a timer; ignore attitude, not misbehavior (kids will mumble to try to pull you into a dance – don't give into attitude just sent to time-out); when kids cross line, hold firm and still give consequence; when kids get hot, cool them down; when parents cross line, apologize; don't personalize misbehavior

Effective consequences: immediate; consistent; logically related (if they ride bike in street and aren't supposed to, take bike away for rest of day (don't say they can't have dessert); proportional (don't ground for 3 wks for being 20 minutes late); followed by clean slate (don't lecture or rehash after punishment); natural consequences (use when children lose or damage an item – make them pay for next one or part of it; if children frequently forget lunch don't keep taking it to them, let them go w/out and they'll remember; when children dawdle; when they fail to do their part-make them wear dirty laundry if they don't bring it to laundry room); logical consequences (when kids don't cooperate w/others, when they aren't responsible for toys-put in Saturday basket, when they don't take turns, destructive behavior, failure to do chores, whining

Time-out - introduce it, set appropriate place, use a timer, clean slate, use as often as needed (even when out in public, use the car, lounge area, bench, etc.)

Motivating – encourage better choices, better behavior, encourage cooperation, independence

Teaching skills – show them what works best, don't expect them to figure out on own. Help them explore choice, break skills into teachable parts, role-model corrective behavior, try it again, catch children being good

Change takes time but keep at it and be consistent. The biggest struggle will be for the parents reverting to old habits. We tend to discipline how we were growing up, but to make a change really try and have people supporting you, such as spouse and child's teacher.

Audra says

This book is very much like Love and Logic, except that it goes even further where L&L left off. The first half of the book was a lot of regurgitated fluff, but had occasional "AHA!" statements that rang very true. The second half was most helpful, giving practical and sensible guidelines for how to live by and enforce the limits you set for your strong willed children. I would definitely recommend this along with L&L, both "must reads" for your parenting library collection.

Mary says

This is a great resource for simple discipline methods, many of which we probably already know, but, if you're like me, fail to implement much of the time. This, along with "You Can't Make Me, But I Can Be Persuaded", I intend to buy and reread on a regular basis as reminders. There were a few little things about this book that bugged me, namely the pointless drawings and text boxes that only re-state a sentence that was already on the page to begin with. But I can overlook those and I still got a ton out of this book to keep in

mind with my parenting. Well worth a read.

Jen Goddeeris says

Knowing what to do as a parent of a "strong-willed" and being able to do are two VERY different things. I read this book on my almost 4 year old son's pediatrician's recommendation. It helps give parents the tools to be able to do what we know we should do and more importantly how to not get wrapped up in the "dance" we do with our strong-willed children. It involves realizing what kind a person you are, strong-willed or compliant and how to relate to your strong-willed child. It helps you figure out how to stop the arguing by stopping it on the parents end. You tell your child what you expect and you follow through with the consequences, done and done. I read it and said to myself..yes I can do this...and I am really hoping that I can!!

Nikki Morse says

I highly, highly recommend this book for anyone parenting or working with children who are strong willed. It discusses ineffective parenting styles such as being too permissive or being too harsh, and explores a better model based on clear communication and action follow ups. Let's see how it goes implementing, but I really learned a lot from it!

Jennifer Manning says

I really really liked this parenting book. It is probably one of my favorites. I don't know if I agree with everything he says but having a very strong-willed child myself it really helped me appreciate Caleb more and not get into so many battles with him. I feel like a better parent and feel like I understand Caleb better.

Danielle says

This book has some useful theoretical information about how children learn, some basic information on parenting systems and which ones work, and a lot of scripts for clearly explaining limits to your kid and then enforcing them kindly and respectfully. What it does not have is any information on working with children who have anxiety, spd, autism, adhd, or any kind of neuroatypicality, where enforcing a consequence too immediately leads to a tantrum or panic attack that can last for an hour. So if you have a neurotypical kid, this is probably a great, if somewhat repetitive, book for you. If you need a system for limit-setting that includes some flexibility for neuroatypical kids, this book is not very helpful.

Kat says

Not that I'm a strong-willed person with a strong-willed oldest child (cough)....

I really, really would recommend this book to anyone who has any sort of discipline issues with any child in their life. Seriously, it's very instructive. Jeremy and I were already doing this method with Ben about half of the time, but hadn't realized that it was the magic bullet of discipline happiness until I started reading this book and tried to use it all of the time. It's been wonderful.

Basically, the idea is that strong-willed children do not leave much room for ineffective parenting (whereas compliant children will): nagging, pleading, belittling, yelling, etc. will not get them to do what you want them to do (i.e. you'll still have behavioral issues). The author teaches you how to set firm boundaries and stick to them by clearly stating expectations and consequences, and promptly following through with logical actions if necessary.

I thought that the examples were very helpful, and I have caught myself being the parent in a lot of the less-than-effective verbal power struggles portrayed -- he does a great job pointing out where the flaws are and what you're actually teaching your children by your behavior. The reason for 4 stars instead of 5 is that I thought the author could get a bit redundant, but I would still highly, highly recommend this one as good food for thought. I don't think it's the "do all, end all" of your interactions with your children (or other people's children), but it's still very effective and worth trying.

Laura says

I have three strong-willed children, which isn't too surprising as they have two strong-willed parents. I liked the subtitle of this book which is "eliminating conflict by establishing clear, firm, and respectful boundaries." I hate conflict so eliminating it sounded great to me.

The book explains the "family dance" which is when your kids discover that you are going to tell them a million times to do something, so they don't do it, which enrages you, and things quickly go downhill. MacKenzie gave many examples on how to avoid this. Basically this book gives you great examples of a giving a firm limit, and then following it up by a "natural consequence" or a time-out immediately. This is great advice for both me and my husband. It's hard when you are busy to try to be direct and not get into the "kids put away your shoes." Five minutes later while you are cooking dinner, "kids put away your shoes." And so on. Instead, "kids put your shoes away, or some consequence." If they don't do it, they get the consequence immediately. The book also has you use timers, which we already do to great effect.

We had been using 1-2-3 Magic with the kids (counting them for misbehavior) and it doesn't really work that well for our testers. We've been trying the methods in this book, which are mostly the same as 1-2-3 magic without the counting and it works better with our strong-willed children. Giving them a choice with a consequence if they don't make the correct choice and then having the consequence directly follow has been working much better. I also liked the Saturday bin idea where I've been putting toys that aren't picked up into a bin that they can't use until Saturday. It has been a great motivator for the kids to pick up.

Overall, *Setting Limits with Your Strong-Willed Child* is another good set of tools to use in my parenting basket.

Book Source: Purchased from Amazon.com

This review was first posted on my blog at: <http://lauragerold.blogspot.com/2013/...>

