

# Communicating Limits to Young Children

*The manner in which you communicate limits to your child is important. Listed below are some suggestions that may help:*

- It is better to enforce 5 rules 100% of the time than 10 rules 50% of the time.  
**Consistency is important.**
- A rule should be:
  - a. Reasonable for the child's ability, attention span and understanding.
  - b. For the benefit of children as well as adults.
  - c. Enforced consistently by all adults in the home.
  - d. Explained to the child prior to enforcement.
- **Discipline is education.** A child is not born knowing what is appropriate. As adults, we help children make this distinction.
- **Eye contact is important.** Go over to the child and get on their eye level when disciplining.
- Use a firm, but matter-of-fact voice when enforcing limits. Be sure to follow through.
- **Avoid issuing empty threats.** You lose believability.
- Do not get personally involved in the situation, i.e. "you did this to make me mad".
- Avoid overuse of, "No" or "Don't".
- **Phrase things positively**, i.e. "Your feet belong on the floor" vs. "Don't stand on the chair".
- **Provide a substitute activity when appropriate**, i.e., the child throws blocks – provide a ball to throw outside; the child is angry, provide a pillow or bop bag to hit.
- **Be clear and specific in your instructions.**
- **Listen when your child speaks.** This is a reciprocal situation. The child is more likely to comply when the parents listens to and values his/her statements.