

The Framework of Limits

Values

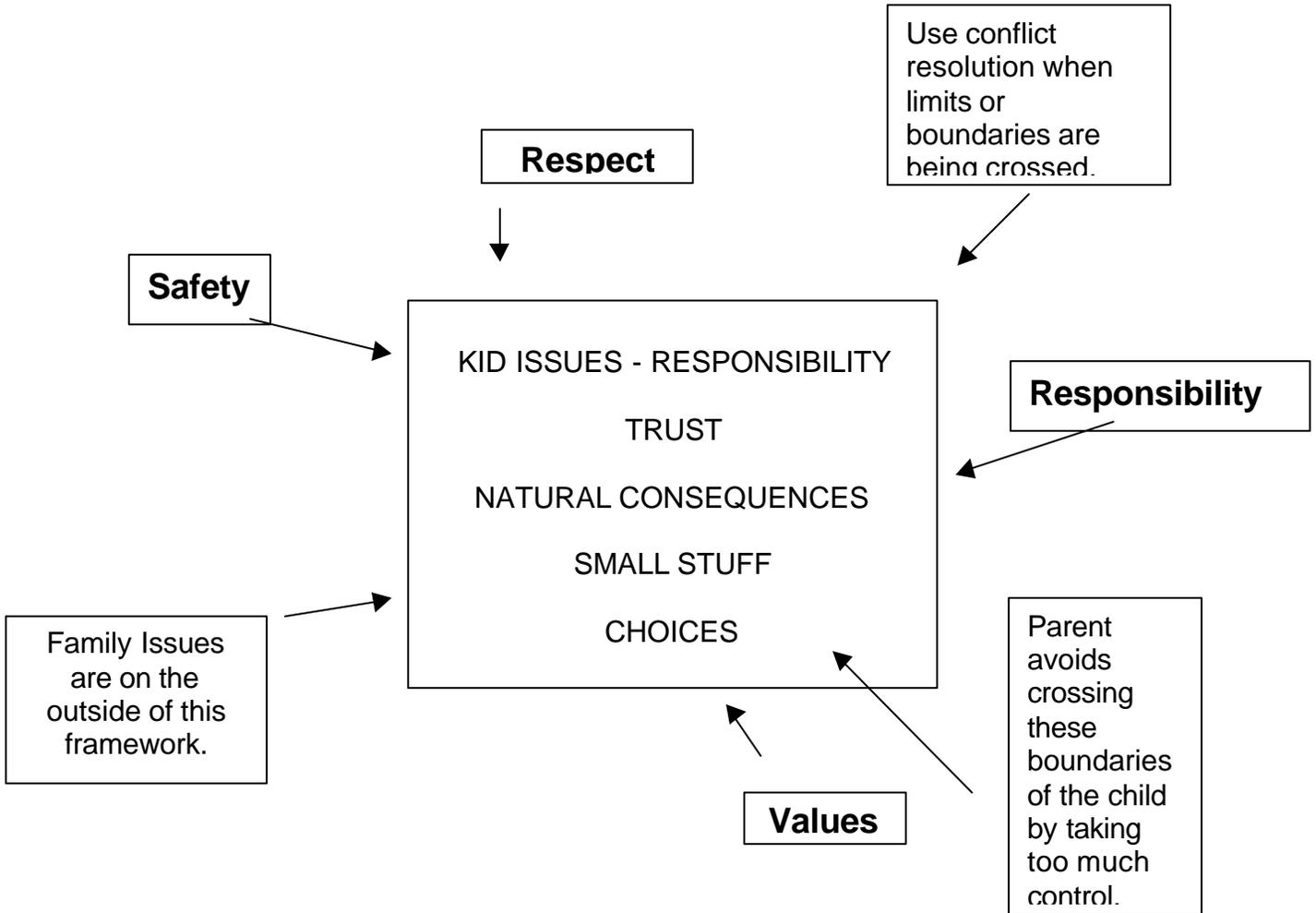
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<p>Kid Issues: the child is old enough safety isn't an issue nobody else is affected the child has been taught</p> <p>Parent's role: support without nagging offer choices recognize success and positives avoid rescuing or lecturing ignore attention getting behaviours</p>
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Limits, Boundaries & Needs



This framework shows four categories of limits; safety, respect, responsibility and values. Each category is unique and parents need to get clear with limits and how to enforce them. Inside the framework are kid issues – areas of responsibility that belong to our children. There they can experience natural consequences, choices and trust. Here they are old enough and won't be devastated if they experience failure. Nobody else get hurt if the child fails to take responsibility.

Outside the framework are family issues, areas where safety is a concern or where others will be affected. A messy kitchen may be a family issue while a messy bedroom might be a kid issue. Limits are negotiated at a neutral time by using conflict resolution.

Safety

Safety is an area where consequences should be discussed ahead of time and followed through with when the agreed upon limit is broken. When you follow through with a logical consequence don't let your anger get in the way.

The child needs to know:

- why the limit is there
- what the consequence will be
- that it is a choice that he made
- that it isn't negotiated again just to suit the mood of the day

Parents need to:

- follow through without lecturing, scolding or letting anger get in their way.
- be consistent
- use conflict resolution to negotiate limits at a neutral time
- maintain the limit once it has been agreed upon
- avoid power struggles by *exiting with empathy*
- use consequences that are fair and that matter
- give their child empathy without giving in

Respect

Respect becomes an issue when a person does not consider the needs and feelings of another person. As parents, we need to understand our children's development enough to know where to place our expectations. There are some behaviours that we can simply ignore and learn not to take personally, such as whining and toilet talk from preschoolers, typical mouthiness, or cursing from teens. But when a child's behaviour crosses over that boundary and hurts us we need to state our disapproval. Some parents become upset by normal child behaviours because they don't understand their child's temperament or developmental level.

When respect boundaries have been crossed:

- Use the three "I's" **Ignore** some of the behaviour
- Make an "**I Statement**" expressing your feelings
- **Isolate** yourself or the child for a cooling down period



We teach respect slowly by:

- role modeling respectful dialogue
- discussing the feelings of self and others
- using non-judgmental language
- putting limits on strong behaviour
- practicing kindness
- praising respectful behaviour
- focusing on positives



Dad never did follow through.

Responsibility

The boundary of responsibility is crossed when someone either takes over another person's responsibility or doesn't take on enough responsibility himself or herself. Other people suffer when the balance of responsibility is out.

Common family issues arise from the responsibility boundary. Issues around chores, a child's homework, self-care and caring for things, pets and people come up here.

Toddlers can learn to dress themselves and wash their hands and face. They might be expected to help put things away when they have finished playing with them. When they reach the school years parents can begin to have more expectations. A six year old may set the table and help tidy his room, along with self-care and caring for the pet hamster. He may be expected to be part of the Saturday morning family clean-up time. Pretty soon, he will be making his own lunch and learning to do other things around the house.

As the child grows older, more things naturally become his responsibilities ("kid issues"), like making and taking his school lunch, or cleaning up his bedroom, or doing his laundry. If these things don't get done he can experience the natural consequences of going hungry, having a messy room, and having no clean clothes to wear. With healthy responsibility boundaries, mom or dad can keep their support in place without taking over a child's responsibility.

We teach responsibility by:

- using a level system of slow teaching and inclusion
- letting go of kid issues when the child is ready
- allowing natural consequences to unfold
- refraining from nagging and taking over
- using the "when/then" "When we clean up, then we can play."
- giving choices
- using logical consequences for family issues

Values

Stages of Moral Thinking

Reward-and-punishment morality

Law-and-order morality

Love-your-neighbour morality

How we parent our children plays a large influence on their moral development. Using a style called “induction” has been proven to win handily over more authoritarian methods. Induction involves:

- discussing how our behaviour effects others
- talking about the child’s feelings
- expressing our feelings effectively
- explaining rules and limits
- involving children in decision making
- role modeling is the greatest teacher in this category
- avoiding judgmental language and punitive methods
- teaching kindness

This can be explained with the statement – “It is **what we do.**”

What - Request and Rule - “Please give Jane her doll back.”

We - Family Value – “It is important to respect people’s things.”

Do - Do Unto Others – “You would want her to return your doll.”

So ask yourself some important questions:

What is the limit?

How do I enforce it?

Is my child old enough to get it?

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