

# ***DEL CERRO ELEMENTARY***

## ***PRESENTS:***

### ***PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC***

*Presented by:*

***Special Thoughts on Raising Kids***

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#### **Setting Limits**

Children need firm limits. Limits are the foundation of security. Children lucky enough to have limits placed on them in loving ways are then secure enough to develop self-confidence. These children are easier to teach, spend less time acting out, and usually get along well with other children and adults.

I have seen many children misbehave in a variety of ways, in desperate attempts to get their parents to set limits. It is almost as if they were trying to say, "Don't you love me? How bad do I have to act before you will set some limits for me?"

Setting firm limits is a gift of love. The problem is that we often find setting limits difficult. Children fight the limits to see if they are firm enough to provide security. They test us by saying that we are mean, or that we don't love them. It is easy to become confused at this point and change the limits. That is the last thing children really need.

Avoid giving orders. Orders do not set limits; they encourage battles. Consider the following order: "I've called you to dinner three times already! You get in here and eat your dinner!" It encourages the child to be late just to test the limits.

Try instead, "I'm serving dinner in five minutes. Hope you join us. If not, breakfast will be at the regular time." This leaves the youngster with much more to think about, such as, "It doesn't sound as if Mom is going to be serving a special

meal for me if I'm late." Most parents are pleasantly surprised at the results when they describe what they plan to do, instead of telling the child what he/she has to do.

#### **Avoid Orders -**

"You're not going to talk to me like that in my own house!" (fighting words)

#### **Try stating what you are willing to do -**

"I'd be willing to listen to you about that when your voice is as soft as mine." (thinking words)

#### **Avoid telling what you won't do -**

"I'm not giving you any more allowance just because you wasted yours already!" (fighting words)

#### **Try stating what you will do -**

"Don't worry sweetie. You'll have some money when your usual allowance comes on Saturday." (thinking words)

Limits are often set by offering choices. A mother getting ready to go shopping, sets limits through choices. "Would you rather go shopping with me and keep your hands to yourself, or would you rather take some of your allowance money and hire a sitter to stay with you at home?" I have an idea that if the children don't behave in the store this week, they will be hiring their own sitter next time, and Mom will enjoy her shopping.



***Set limits using "thinking words" instead of "fighting words"***