



**Beech Brook**

HELPING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THRIVE

# Setting Boundaries and Limits:

Communication strategies,  
responding to conflict, and creating  
routines that set you and your  
family up for success

*“Parenting is hard.”*

You can learn many things from your children.  
How much patience you have, for instance.

”



# Start with understanding. Even when you don't.

Try to view the situation through their perspective and reality.

*You find your child online chatting with her friends when she is supposed to be doing her schoolwork. It drives you crazy because you're thinking, "she's barely getting by in school and she doesn't seem to care or understand that she needs to do her homework."*



# Start with understanding. Even when you don't.

Try to view the situation through their perspective and reality.

Ask your child, honestly, why she is chatting. Try to be understanding of her reality, even if you don't completely understand. Once you know what is going on, try saying:

*"I understand how difficult it is for you when you have a fight with one of your friends. I also know that you need to pass this test tomorrow. Schoolwork is your job and it's your responsibility to do it to the best of your abilities. We can figure out how to manage your time tonight."*

# Validate their feelings

Sometimes a listener is more effective than a problem-solver. Downplaying feelings rarely makes them feel any better.

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Your child is going through a break-up. You didn't think the person was right for them and are relieved.

You're tempted to say, ~~“they weren't right for you anyways.”~~

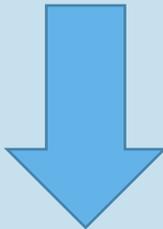
“Wow, that does sound really difficult.”



# Show trust

- Asking them for a favor shows that you can rely on them.
- Volunteering a privilege shows that you believe they can handle it.

Show them you have faith in them.



Boost their confidence and help them rise to the occasion.



## Give praise

Teenagers might act like they're too cool to care about what their parents think, but the truth is, they still want your approval.

Finding opportunities to give praise can help:

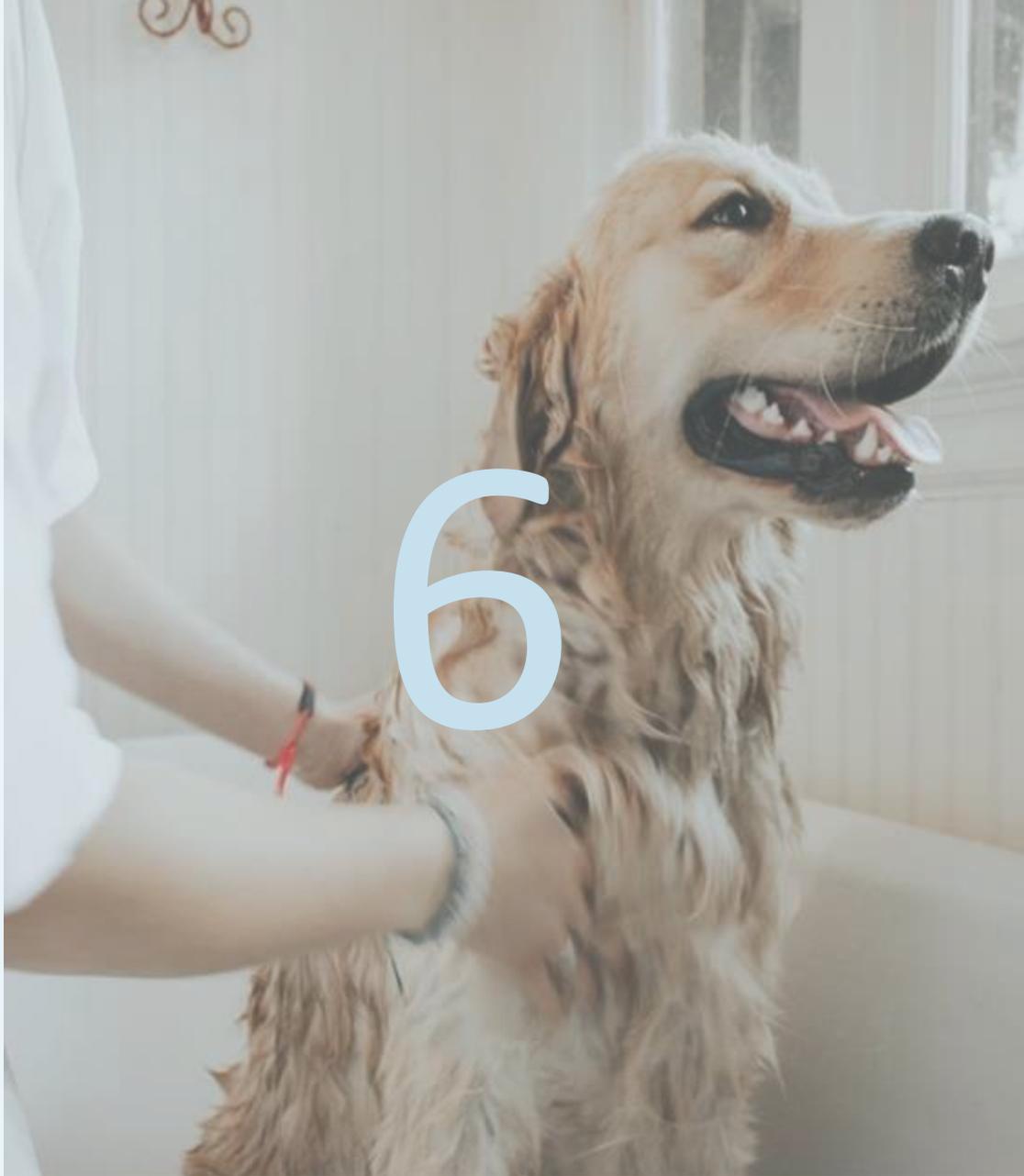
- Improve a strained relationship
- Build their self-esteem
- Improve your own mental health



# Don't be a dictator.

Set the rule + Explain the reasoning for the rule

- Encourages problem-solving
- Models healthy decision-making
- Encourages independence over time



# Set clear expectations and connected consequences.

We respond (and behave best) when we know what is expected of us and what the consequences would be for not meeting those expectations.

As we get older, consequences tend to be more natural and firectly connected to a behavior.

- Didn't do the math homework → Complete the assignment and take consequence from teacher.
- Arguing with their sibling → Both sit down and explain their side.
- Forgot to take the dog for a walk → Take her on an extra walk, then brush/bathe her.



# Do things together.

Communication doesn't always include talking.

It's important for teens to know that they can be in your proximity, have fun, and not be asked questions or be called out for something.

Conversation often naturally evolves when you're busy doing something else and there's less pressure of eye contact.



# Ask honest questions... just not loaded ones.

A loaded question is one that does not lead to an answer. In other words, you're implying the answer, or judgment, with your question.

**Loaded Questions = Defensiveness**

Encourage them to develop problem-solving skills, predict and/or accept natural consequences for decisions, and demonstrate that you're confident that they can make choices.



# Ask honest questions... just not loaded ones.

*Your teen is waking up late every day and you keep getting calls from the school.*

**Loaded questions:**

- Why can't you get up on time?
- You stayed up late again, didn't you?

**Instead:**

- Do you have any ideas to help you get up on time?
- What do you think makes it hard for you to get up with your alarm?

# You're best when you're at your best.

If you/your child are angry, then it's okay to take a minute. There is no shame in calling a "time out" to gather yourself before you finish the conversation.



The brain is not able to use reasoning and problem-solving skills when you're angry or otherwise escalated.

# Keeping your cool



- Count backwards from '100.'
- Recite the alphabet backwards.
- Create an inner mantra or slogan. **Self-talk matters!**
- Trace a shape or connect your thumb to each finger.

*“I have managed this before. I can manage it again.”*

*“The house will soon be quiet.”*



# What other supports do you need?

*Next week:*

Increasing Connection –  
Maintaining a healthy relationship  
with your teen

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

Photographs by [Unsplash](#)