

Setting Boundaries as a Parent

Having a child with a mental health struggle can be overwhelming. As a parent, we do our best to help them, but at times, it can seem overwhelming, daunting, and as though your child is not listening to you. As a child especially becomes an adolescent, they begin to gain independence and test boundaries. Boundary setting as a parent can aid in having a healthy relationship with your teen. Here are some guidelines to help with boundaries:

- **Empathy:** even when it can seem overwhelming and frustrating, maintaining empathy for your teen shows them you are listening to them and hearing what they are saying. It helps teens know that you understand them. Statements such as, “That sounds really difficult” or “I went through something like you when I was your age”.
- **Natural Consequences:** allow for these. Natural consequences are a completely normal part of development in addition to teaching valuable life lessons. For example, if your child is refusing to study for an exam, a natural consequence is a bad grade. Instead of trying to force it or “rub it in”, use the consequence as a learning experience.
- **Consistency:** Be consistent and firm in your boundaries with your child. Consistency with your child earns you respect as you do not waver or enable them when it gets tough for you. According to Stephanie Klindt, a marriage and family therapist, “Identify your goals for your teen and identify your own personal relationship boundaries in order to be very clear on what is okay and what is not okay.”
- **Respect your teen’s privacy:** It is normal for a teen to want their own privacy. As a parent, you can honor this and communicate clear lines of what is acceptable in your home as a parent.

Remember your role as a parent. Honoring that role but maintaining empathic boundaries with your child is healthy and aids them in learning valuable lessons.