

# Setting Limits Without Breaking Spirit



Authoritative parenting (high warmth + clear limits) produces the best outcomes.



Few, clear, consistent, calm. A household with 50 rules has no rules.



Connection-based parenting works because corrections register when the relationship is intact.

## What good limits look like

- ▶ Clear. "We don't throw food" is better than "Stop being silly."
- ▶ Few. Pick the lines that matter; let smaller things go.
- ▶ Consistent. The same limit, every time, from both parents if possible.
- ▶ Calm. Rage lands as scary; shame lands as wounding. Clear and calm is the goal.

### Where to put your limits

- ▶ Safety: car seats, hand-holding near streets, not playing with the stove.
- ▶ Bodily autonomy: no hitting, no biting, no taking from other kids without asking.
- ▶ Daily structure: bedtime, mealtimes, brushing teeth.
- ▶ Respect for shared spaces and other people's belongings.

## Limits that tend to backfire

- ▶ Food limits (eat this, finish that, no dessert until you eat). Set up disordered eating.
- ▶ Emotion limits ("stop crying, you're fine"). Teach suppression, not regulation.
- ▶ Bodily-function limits outside of toilet training. Usually counterproductive.
- ▶ Limits driven by parent embarrassment rather than child wellbeing — worth examining.

### Gaux Note

If you find yourself enforcing a limit in the heat of frustration, take a beat. Calm enforcement is more effective and less damaging than angry enforcement. You're allowed to pause, breathe, and come back.