

SPARK 079

(Matrix Code: **SPARK079.00** for StartOver.xyz game.)

DISTINCTION: Clear firm boundaries form the jungle gym upon which children develop muscles of responsibility.

NOTES: A baby can become an Eskimo, an IT engineer, a Tibetan monk, or a village rice farmer. A baby is designed to adapt itself to the clear and precise rules of the culture and times into which it is born. If the rules are not clear and solid the child's efforts to establish itself in that particular reality fail.

Without boundaries, children go crazy. They have nothing to grab onto and they start wildly flinging about trying to find the shape of their reality. If you have difficulty with your children it is probably this: they are frantically testing their environment to find its limits so they have something solid to hold onto. You have not provided it for them.

Without rules reality has no form. If the rules are flexible it is like trying to grab for a metal bar and finding that it is only a rubber band. This is very scary for children and immediately throws them into the realization that if they want to survive they must take care of themselves because no one else is. In any space without clearly established adult authority, children escape their terror by dominating the space with noise and chaos and then make up their own rules. Once children dominate adult spaces it can be difficult to confront their irresponsible authority.

Making boundaries is one way for parents to take care of their children. You may not be skilled in this. You learned how to parent from how you were parented. After World War II there was a strong tendency towards strict authoritarian parenting. Many children of authoritarian parents vowed never to do that to their own children and became anti-authoritarian. You may be bouncing around somewhere between both when it comes to parenting. It is up to you to research and learn how to provide a structure within which your children can safely experiment with becoming responsible.

People are different, so parents may disagree. Each parent may have his or her own rules. For Dad it may be required to wash hands before eating. For Mom this may not be true. What is important is for the parents to announce to the children which of the parent's rules preside in which situation. If you do not make this clear for the parents and the children then the rules conflict. If one parent ignores the other parent's rules it teaches the children to disrespect that parent.

One mother had to re-establish her authority every time the husband went away. The children were boys. The oldest was ten. He ignored his mother's requests just like his father often demonstrated. After learning of the importance of boundaries the mother took a stand for the sanity of her son by starting to make boundaries. She said he should not eat chocolate granola in front of the computer game for dinner but should come downstairs and eat what she had prepared. He said no and wanted to slide by into a different room. She was afraid that he was stronger than her but he did not know Judo and she did. She tackled him, flipped him to the floor, put his arm in a

twist and said, “I will stop when you agree.” He said, “Okay!” But jumped up and called her an asshole while running into his room and slamming the door. She remained unhooked. In about half an hour he came downstairs, wordlessly ate his mother’s dinner, and slinked back to his room. For two hours the mother fought an inner battle as to whether she had made a mistake and had treated him too roughly. When she finally went to his room to say goodnight her son did something different from his usual aloofness – he hugged her and said, “You are the best Mom in the world.” She cried tears of joy as authentic family life suddenly became possible.

Parents may feel guilty when their dear child asks for something and the parent must say no. Instead of saying no the parent might give reasons. Nowadays children are better reason makers than their parents and can win any discussion. The parent squirms, makes excuses, tries distractions, or even says yes when a no is necessary. If the parent’s boundary is tested and fails the test, then there is no boundary. This destroys the parent’s credibility. The child feels abandoned.

When a no is needed, say no. Reasons are not required. After the boundary is made, whose problem is it? It is no longer your problem. It is the child’s problem. Let the child have their problem. Their problem is not your problem. Wrestling with the problem of solid clear boundaries develops responsibility.

EXPERIMENTS:

SPARK079.01 There is no need for you to keep living in compromise. With children, employees, partners, neighbors, parents, siblings, boss, clients, *and yourself*, practice making boundaries. Start with one a day. Write your boundaries into your *Beep! Book*. Here are some hints.

- a) Trust your instincts. If you feel like making a boundary, make a boundary. Watch to see how it goes. Learn from your mistakes. If a person gets offended at your boundary this is not necessarily a mistake.
- b) Make the boundary at the frontier, not at your castle gates. Use your sensing and your foresight to detect early when a boundary needs to be made. Making boundaries the instant they need to be made is like driving a car. Left, or right? Stop or go? Do not wait until the last moment when you are in a panic. Just make the boundary.
- c) Boundaries originate in the feeling of anger. Anger creates the sensation that a boundary needs to be made. Use the energy of your anger to start making the boundary. This does not mean you must express anger with your voice, face or posture. Just use anger’s clarity to make the boundary.
- d) Before you make a boundary or decide “no” ask yourself why? Sometimes we want to say no and make a boundary just to stay comfortable, just so we do not have to learn something new, just to avoid being bothered. Consider whether the boundary is a real boundary or is a matter of your convenience. Ask yourself how much it would serve the other person for you to change your mind? Sometimes change your mind. You may have the habit of being a no. Experiment with being a yes. A yes could be what your child remembers about you for the rest of their lives.

- e) In the case of conflicting realities, only one reality can prevail. When you sense a conflict that could be handled with a boundary, also consider navigating with the other person to the domain of possibility. For example, invite your child to consider how they could take responsibility for making the thing happen in a way that works for everybody? If you support your child to enter the domain of possibility they can learn to work within the rules and also ecstatically create what really matters to them.