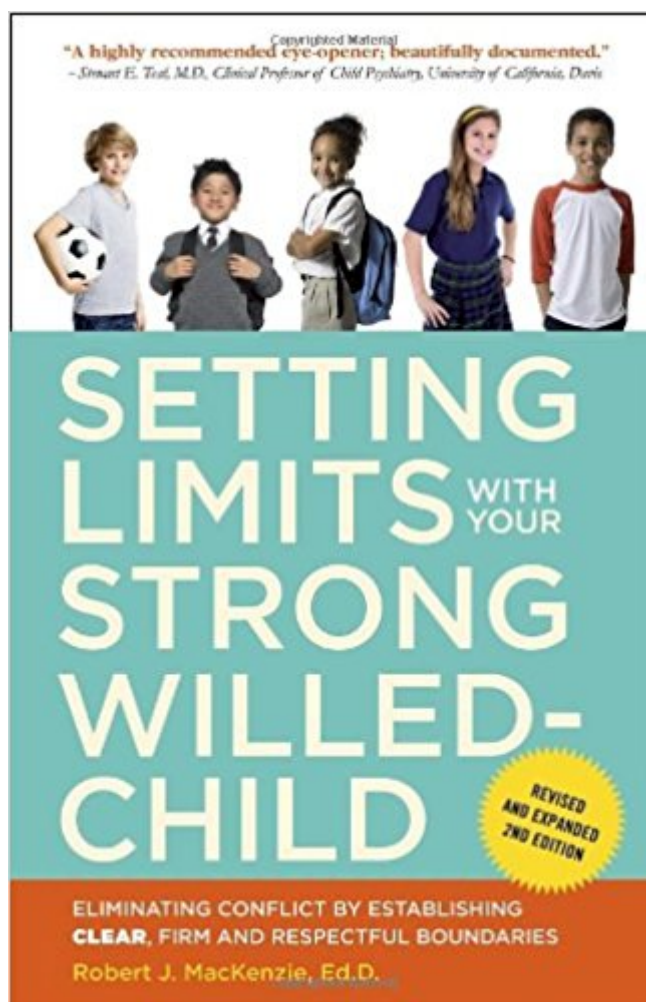


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Setting Limits With Your Strong-Willed Child, Revised And Expanded 2nd Edition: Eliminating Conflict By Establishing CLEAR, Firm, And Respectful Boundaries





Synopsis

In this fully revised and expanded second edition, Setting Limits author Robert MacKenzie is back with even more time-proven methods for dealing with misbehavior and creating positive, respectful, and rewarding relationships with children prone to acting out and disobedience. Disruptive misbehavior, constant power struggles, manipulative or aggressive behavior--the challenges facing parents and teachers of strong-willed children can seem overwhelming at times. That's why thousands of parents and educators have turned to the solutions in Setting Limits With Your Strong-Willed Child. This revised and expanded second edition offers the most up-to-date alternatives to punishment and permissiveness--moving beyond traditional methods that wear you down and get you nowhere, and zeroing in on what really works so parents can use their energy in more efficient and productive ways. With fully updated guidelines on parenting tools like "logical consequences," and examples drawn directly from the modern world that children deal with each day, this is an invaluable resource for anyone wondering how to effectively motivate strong-willed children and instill proper conduct.

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Customer Reviews

ROBERT J. MACKENZIE, EdD, is an educational psychologist and family therapist who founded the Setting Limits program. He is the author of Setting Limits and Setting Limits with Your Strong-Willed Child.

1Understanding Your Strong-Willed ChildFour-year-old Corey is a challenge. He begins his typical

day by refusing to wear the clothes his mother picks out, then dawdles for the next twenty minutes while she prods and pleads with him to put them on. When he arrives at the breakfast table, he turns up his nose and complains that he doesn't like what's offered. This is not a battle I want to fight, his mother says to herself as she prepares Corey his own special meal. She tells her husband that she worries about Corey's nutrition, but what she really worries about is the tantrum Corey will throw if he doesn't get what he wants. Her husband thinks she's too soft on Corey and so do her two daughters. "It's not fair!" they complain. "He always gets his own way." By the time Corey makes it out the door in the morning, his mother is ready for a nap. But this is only the beginning. Round two begins in the afternoon when Corey returns from preschool. Sometimes Corey's mother wonders how long she can take it. Six-year-old Kristal is sweet and cooperative one moment, angry and defiant the next. Little things set her off—unexpected changes, departures from routine, or simply things not working out her way. Tantrums are not uncommon. "Living with Kristal is like riding on a roller coaster," says her mother. "It's exhausting!" Kristal's parents alternate between punishing and giving in, depending upon how worn down they feel; but nothing seems to make any difference. They wonder if Kristal's behavior is normal and question whether they did something to cause her to behave this way. Nine-year-old Alex has a short fuse and often acts before he thinks. When things don't go his way at school or in the neighborhood, Alex gets loud, calls names, threatens, and sometimes hits other kids. Alex has been suspended from school three times this year for being disrespectful to teachers and fighting on the playground. It's only December. "It's too bad they don't spank kids at school anymore," Alex's father laments. "When Alex acts like a brat at home, we give him an earful, then we paddle him. He has to learn. We've threatened to take away his TV privileges for the rest of the year if he gets suspended again." Lynn, age twelve, is destined to be a great trial lawyer. She's bright, intense, and very persistent. Lynn will argue with anyone if she thinks there's a chance of getting things to work out her way, and she's willing to use drama, rudeness, and disrespect when she believes it will help her win her case. "I never would have imagined talking to adults the way she talks to us," Lynn's father complains. "We reason with her every way we know, but everything turns into an argument." "Do any of these children sound familiar? If your child resembles one of these, you're not alone. I see more than a hundred children each year whom parents and teachers describe as challenging, difficult, spirited, stubborn, hell-raising, a pistol, or just plain

impossible. Although no single term adequately describes all, or even most, of the children I see, the one that comes closest is “strong-willed.” These are normal children with extreme behavior who are hard to raise and difficult to discipline. Strong-willed children are not part of some conspiracy to make life difficult for others. They just do what strong-willed children do. They test harder and more often, resist longer, protest louder, use more drama, and carry things further than most of us would ever imagine. They are movers and shakers, powerful kids who bring out strong reactions in others. Teachers and principals know them as the 10 to 15 percent who cause 90 percent of school discipline problems. Parents know them as their big challenge. I know them affectionately as “my kids” because I spend a lot of my time with them, both at work and at home. Yes, I am the proud parent of a strong-willed son. My youngest son is a delight, but he is also a workout, and he is not the least bit impressed by the fact that I write books on this subject or that I am supposed to know what to do. At home, I get no breaks or professional immunity. He pushes hard against my rules and authority. At times, I have wondered whether his behavior is normal. Strong-willed children are not part of some conspiracy to make life difficult for others. They just do what strong-willed children do. They test. Do you sometimes question whether your child’s behavior is normal? Perhaps you worry that you have done something to cause your child to behave this way. If so, you will be relieved to know that the problem, in most cases, is not parents. Most are doing the best they can with the discipline tools they have. The problem is not the child, either. Most strong-willed children are just being themselves. The real problem is a bad match between the child’s temperament and the parents’ discipline methods. The parents’ tools are not well suited for the job. The predictable result is conflict and power struggles. When parents arrive at my office looking for help in dealing with their strong-willed child, one of my first tasks is to assist them in understanding their child’s temperament. Then we examine how their discipline tools match up with their child’s temperament and discuss the predictable conflicts and friction points that develop around a bad match. That is what we are going to do in this chapter. A new perspective awaits you. You are not the problem, but you are a big part of the solution. Improving the match is well within your control.

Who Is This Strong-Willed Child? My youngest son, Ian, is a great force in our family and a great source of pride and joy. He is bright, creative, sensitive, and very determined. Sometimes, I think he is more determined to train his parents than we are to train him. He keeps us on our toes. If we are unclear, inconsistent, or indecisive when we ask him to do something, Ian lets us know. He holds out for a clearer signal. Like most strong-willed children, Ian understands the “bottom line.”

and he knows how to get there. He just pushes hard until he finds it, and when he does, he pushes a little more to see whether it holds up. If it does, he stops pushing, at least for a while, and accepts the boundary. But Ian pushes a lot before he gets there. It's wearing! My older son, Scott, usually cooperates for the asking without all the pushing. How would you react if you asked two children to cooperate in the same respectful manner and got two consistently different responses? Would you become upset? Would you question whether something is wrong? The persistent testing that is so characteristic of strong-willed children is also what drives most parents crazy. Why would anyone do this? I'd ask myself. Is this normal? I would never push anyone as hard as Ian pushes me. Does your child push hard against your rules and authority? Has he or she done so from an early age? Do you react in extreme ways and question whether your child is normal? Join the club. Now it's time to get better acquainted with your child. Following are some basic facts about strong-willed children that will help you better understand your child and your reactions to his or her behavior. The persistent testing that is so characteristic of strong-willed children is also what drives most parents crazy.

Strong-willed children are normal. You've probably worried about whether your child is normal when his teacher or a well-intended relative pointed out that his behavior seems extreme. They're right, but extreme does not mean abnormal. Most strong-willed children are normal with well-defined temperament traits. They're not brain damaged, emotionally disturbed, or defective. Most have no diagnosable problems at all, though some do. In addition, no rule says you can only have one thing going on in your life at a time. Some strong-willed children also have learning disabilities, hyperactivity, and other special needs, but a strong will does not mean they are abnormal.

Strong-willed children are not all alike. Each strong-willed child is a special individual with his or her own unique temperament. No two behave in exactly the same way. Sure, they all test parents and behave in extreme ways, but they don't all test in the same way or to the same degree. Some are easier. Others are more difficult. Some are almost impossible.

Strong-willed children are hard to understand. Our individual temperament shapes the way we think, learn, and behave. When others think and behave as we do, we can readily identify with them and understand their experience. When others think, learn, and behave very differently from us, however, it is not easy to understand them or to identify with their behavior. Why would anyone do that? we ask ourselves. The behavior makes no sense from our perspective. Strong-willed children are hard to understand for exactly this reason. As you learn about your child's temperament and how that temperament shapes the way your child behaves, behavior that once seemed confusing should begin to make sense. When others think, learn, and behave very differently from us, it is not easy to understand them or to identify with

their behavior. Strong-willed children require a lot of guidance and discipline. Of course, this statement sounds obvious: Children who test frequently require frequent discipline. Yet when you accept this statement as a fact of life rather than a source of annoyance, your attitude and perspective changes. Mine did. I stopped feeling so angry and resentful when my son tested me and developed patience I didn't believe was possible. I realized that his job was to test, and my job was to guide him in the right direction. Those are the hands each of us were dealt. My new perspective didn't change his behavior, but it sure made my life a lot easier. I stopped taking it personally. Strong-willed children do not respond to discipline methods that seem to work with other children. Why do children respond so differently to the same request? One cooperates, the other resists. Is the problem the resistant child? Or the request? Most parents feel confused when their best guidance efforts work with one child but not with another. The issue is less confusing when we consider the individual temperaments involved. Compliant children will cooperate with most discipline approaches, even ineffective ones, because their underlying desire is to cooperate. They have a different learning style than their strong-willed counterparts. Compliant children permit parents a wide margin for ineffectiveness. Strong-willed children, on the other hand, do not respond to ineffective discipline. They require clear, firm, and consistent guidance. Ineffective discipline is a fast lane to power struggles with a strong-willed child. Strong-willed children learn differently than their peers. Strong-willed children do much of their learning "the hard way." That is, they often need to experience the consequences of their own choices and behavior before they can learn the lesson we're trying to teach. It's not enough just to announce that kicking the soccer ball in the house is not okay. Strong-willed children need to experience having the ball taken away for a while each time they decide to test the rule and kick the ball anyway. They may need to repeat this drill many times before they accept the rule as mandatory. Their behavior is not malicious, but can be very frustrating and confusing because it is so unlike that of compliant children who cooperate the first time they're asked. Parents must learn to accept that "hard-way learning" is good learning for strong-willed children. Strong-willed children bring out extreme reactions in others. How do you feel when your child challenges your rules and authority? Angry? Frustrated? Confused? Threatened? Intimidated? Embarrassed? Guilty? Inadequate? Discouraged? Exhausted? All of the above? These are all normal reactions to extreme behavior. Strong-willed children often place strain on a marriage, cause sibling conflicts, and create other problems within the family. The traits of strong-willed children that drive many of us crazy can actually become strengths when we give our kids the understanding and

guidance they need to choose the right path. With proper guidance, strong-willed children can develop into dynamic, cooperative, and responsible individuals. Once you discover that your child has a strong will, the next question is: How are you going to deal with it? Your options are clear. You can fight with it and try to control it. You can give in to it and let it control you. You can try some of both. Or you can accept your child's strong will as a fact of life, make peace with it, and learn better ways to guide him or her down a healthy path. The choice is yours. The traits of strong-willed children that drive many of us crazy can actually become strengths when we give our kids the understanding and guidance they need to head down the right path.

Discovering Your Child's Temperament

When my son was born, there was no tag attached to his heel that said: Caution! Strong-willed child. Handle with Care. There were no warnings at all. I discovered his temperament the way most parents do. I watched it emerge as he grew up. I had clues about his temperament from the beginning. He was colicky and screamed a lot during his first few months. He was picky and finicky when we introduced solid foods. Mornings were the hardest. He was slow to get going and cranky. For some reason, his schedule never seemed to match up with the rest of ours. But Ian didn't put his cards out on the table until he was eight and a half months old. One Saturday morning, while I was sitting on the couch reading the newspaper, I saw Ian pull himself up to a standing position. Watch out! I thought to myself. We're entering the furniture-walking phase. His older brother went through this phase about the same age, and I thought I knew what was ahead. But to my amazement, Ian let go of the furniture and walked all the way across the living room! When he got to the end, he plunked down, then pulled himself up and did it again. Wow! I called my wife in the other room to come see Ian walk. When she arrived, I tried my best to get him to do it again. I pleaded, begged, coaxed, and cajoled, but Ian wouldn't budge. He just sat there with this look on his face that said, Watch out. I'm Ian. Nearly two weeks went by before he walked again; but when he did, he did it the way he prefers to do most things • on his terms. Looking back, I realize this was one of those defining moments.

This book offers very practical advice that is easy to implement and follow. I think the tools even work for children that aren't strong willed. After reading and implementing techniques, my toddler better understands his choices and consequences if he makes a poor choice. I Definitely recommend for parents or others looking for communicate better with children.

This is the perfect book for parents who are having a hard time getting their child to listen. It gives so many scenarios and examples of how to deal with your strong willed child. It helps you

understand why your child behaves the way s/he does. Would definitely recommend it.

I learned a lot from this book. He explains the concepts clearly and repeats them over and over with plenty of examples. My baby is only 19 months, but I see her strong will already.. I'm prepared to handle her the best way, and if I forget, I know exactly which parts to read again to refresh my memory later on...

Saved my life; literally. I was spanking my 5 year old and yelling at him a lot. He was becoming more and more defiant and was hitting me and his sister. I managed to turn things around in about a month following this book. I am using it still and it really works. My son is turning 6 in a couple of weeks and rarely hits me or his sister now. He also hugs me more and listens to me more when I ask him to clean up, put his clothes away, do homework, etc. There is more respect in our household over-all. The 15 minute cooling down period for sibling rivalry is awesome!!! All I have to do now is say, "Do you guys need a 15 min cooling down period or can you guys work it out?"....they usually come to an agreement on their own.

This book REALLY helped me as straight forward and intuitive that it is. There's really only one premise to this book and its stated in the title: Establishing CLEAR, firm, and respectful boundaries. In theory we should all know this but why don't we practice it? Well it seems that society and in particular our parents really shape our parenting style. Once I listened to this and the examples that follow I really had an AHA moment. I immediately started applying it that evening when my 3-year old got home with immediate results. The great thing about this book is that you don't need to listen to all of it to start applying it (even though the author recommends that you do) because again the premise is the same throughout the book. He certainly builds on it with many many examples which someone noted was annoying but repetition is a great way to learn, especially if you are listening to the audiobook like me and doing several other things as well. Not to mention that the book doesn't use tons of explanations but leads by examples which I think most will like. The majority of the book gives an example and then a way to address the situation at hand - real life learning! Okay, back to my 3-year old ... As soon as she came home I had everything ready for her and the new tools in my pocket. Wasn't but 15-minutes until she needed me to give her a firm, clear reminder of a rule. No emotions, drama, or long explanations but just a clear establishment of the rule. Sure enough it worked. That night I had a compliant child who went to bed at 8:30pm which hadn't happened for close to a year. Next day, same thing, and every day thereafter we've had no issues with setting

limits and boundaries. Does she test here and there? Of course, but as the author notes these "scientists" jobs are to test and learn the world and our rules in this way. I learned that not only can I apply this to my preschooler, but I can actually apply it to my team at work and even my husband. Be clear, don't add any drama, don't go into a song and dance, don't beg and plead, don't use statements that are vague like be good, what's wrong with you etc, don't belittle, don't do anything but just give a clear and firm explanation. BRILLIANT!! I owe this author my sanity. My life and my family's life has significantly improved and I feel so much more relaxed knowing that I have the tools needed to address many of the issues I face and may face with my preschooler. The book that I really liked prior to this book was called "Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids". I do recommend reading/listening to that as well because that really gives long answers and explanations and really helps you work on yourself first but after listening to it my husband and I were left not knowing how to discipline. When I heard this book, it was like the missing link to the the Peaceful Parent book because it addresses how to discipline as well. Read my review of that book as well but I suggest the combo of the two. If you feel lost and confused, do give this a listen. You may have your AHA moment as well.

I found this extremely helpful and practical for turning around our family, ruled by the tyranny of a 3yo's whims. The only other book I liked more is "How to talk so your kids will listen and listen so your kids will talk" which is more about setting up patterns to avoid disciplining -- but this is a terrific companion for how to establish authority once you've started down the permissive parenting route. Adhering to the principles in this book made us far more effective parents, and once that authority is accepted, makes it easier to implement the strategies in the talk/listen book better.

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