

JOURNAL PROMPTS

What were my biggest takeaways from this audio on Discipline?

1.

2.

3.

What is a realistic action step for me to take to move beyond discipline so that I can truly foster my child's emotional intelligence, moral development and connection with me – and help him or her to cooperate more?

What support would help me so my action is more likely to be successful?

GOING DEEPER

Setting Empathic Limits – What Will You Say and Do?

Read the situations below. Under each scenario, write what you could say and do that would help your child to feel understood, and at the same time set the necessary limit.

1. Your child wants a cookie just before dinner.

What you say:

What you think and do:

2. Your child is standing up to look out the bus window.

What you say:

What you think and do:

3. Your child ignores you when you ask him to start getting ready for school.

What you say:

What you think and do:

4. Your child forgets to do his chore.

What you say:

What you think and do:

5. Your child throws his cup in anger.

What you say:

What you think and do:

6. Your child teases her sibling.

What you say:

What you think and do:

7. Your child refuses to wear her coat as you're leaving the house.

What you say:

What you think and do:

8. After you put your child to bed, he keeps getting out of bed.

What you say:

What you think and do:

9. Your child says that the dinner you've prepared is disgusting.

What you say:

What you think and do:

10. Your child hits her sibling.

What you say:

What you think and do:

PRACTICE WITH YOUR CHILD

Empathic Limits Practice with Your Child PRINT OUT AND TAPE TO YOUR REFRIGERATOR!

Sometime in the next few days, your child will do something that you don't want her to (i.e., jump on the couch with her shoes on), or will not do something that you do want her to (i.e., put on her pjs for bed). Instead of getting angry, can you take advantage of this golden opportunity to practice setting limits with empathy?

Calm yourself. Take a few deep breaths. Remind yourself to see the situation from your child's point of view. Use a mantra that you know calms you.

Create Safety with your calm, warm caring. Lower your voice and if your child will let you, touch him reassuringly.

Acknowledge his perspective and empathize:

"You love jumping on the couch, don't you?"

Set the limit clearly and kindly. If necessary, intervene physically to uphold your limit. *"Shoes get the couch dirty. You can jump once you take your shoes off."*

Use connection to help your child want to follow your limit. *"Jump right here into my arms and I'll help you with those shoes."*

Try playfulness. Most children, even when they're feeling irritable, can't resist an invitation to play. And playfulness usually gets them laughing and shifts the mood, so it's an invaluable tool to sidestep a power struggle.

Expect your child to test the limit. That's his job. How else will he know whether you mean it? Keep your sense of humor.

Allow feelings. If your child resists, hold firm to your limit but allow your child to express her dismay. She has a right to want something different than what you want. If she needs to cry, that's fine. Be kind and understanding: *"I'm sorry it's so hard right now."* If she's over-reacting, then she's emptying her emotional backpack. Once she's done, she'll either fall asleep or she'll be more affectionate and cooperative.

If you're worried that your child is "winning" remind yourself that no one wins a power struggle. As long as you're clear about your limit, your child has the right to his feelings about it.

REFLECTION AFTER PRACTICE

Reflect on what happened when you set a limit with your child.

What was your child doing or not doing that caused you to set a limit?

Were you able to calm yourself first? What helped and what didn't help?

What did you say to set the limit empathically?

What did you do, either to uphold your limit or to connect with your child?

How did your child react?

How did you feel throughout this interaction?

What did you feel good about in this interaction?

What would you like to change in your next limit-setting interaction with your child?