

Signs You Are too Strict With Your Child

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Updated on June 03, 2019

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Do you ever wonder if you're a little too strict with your child? Do you worry that your expectations may be too high? Do you question whether the consequences you give your child are just a bit too harsh? Here are 15 signs that you may be too strict with your child.

You Have a Zero Tolerance Policy

While it's important to have clear rules, it's equally important to recognize that there are always exceptions to the rules. Rather than taking an authoritarian stance on everything, show a willingness to evaluate your child's behavior in the context of the circumstance.

Your Child Lies a Lot

While it's normal for kids to stretch the truth sometimes, research is clear that harsh discipline turns kids into good liars. If you're too strict, your child is likely to lie in an effort to avoid punishment.

Your Child Has More Restrictions Than Other Kids

There's nothing wrong with having different rules than the other parents. But, if you're always the strictest parent in the crowd, it could be a sign that your expectations are a bit too high.

You Have Little Patience for Silliness

Most kids love ridiculous jokes and silly games. And while those jokes can get old fast, and silly behavior can slow you down, it's important to savor the moment and have fun sometimes.

You Struggle to Tolerate Other People's Lack of Discipline

Strict parents often have difficulty tolerating everything from the way a teacher runs his classroom to the way Grandma handles behavior problems. It's OK for kids to be exposed to adults who have different rules and different types of discipline.

You Have a Long List of Rules

Rules are good, but too many rules can be harmful. Keep your rules simple and only include the most important ones that you want your child to remember. Post your list of household rules in a place where you can refer to it as needed.

Your Child Has Little Time for Fun

Many children with strict parents run from activity to activity with little downtime. While some structure is essential, it's also important for kids to have free time.

You Don't Allow for Natural Consequences

Strict parents often go to great lengths to avoid letting a child make a mistake. But, kids are often capable of learning from their mistakes when they face natural consequences.

You Nag a Lot

Nagging prevents kids from taking responsibility for their own behavior. If you find yourself nagging your child about everything from when to do her homework, to when she should practice playing the piano, she won't learn to do those things on her own.

You Hand Out Directions Constantly

Constantly saying things like, "Sit up straight," "Quit dragging your feet," and "Don't slurp your drink," will cause your child to tune you out. Save your instructions for the most important issues so your voice will be heard.

You Don't Offer Choices

Rather than ask, "Would you rather put your clothes away first or make your bed?" strict parents often bark orders. Giving kids a little freedom, especially when both choices are good ones, can go a long way to gaining compliance.

You Struggle to Let Your Child Do Things Her Way

Sometimes strict parents insist children do everything a certain way. They insist on making the bed the 'right way' or playing with the dollhouse 'appropriately.' While there are times that kids need adult instruction, it's important to allow for flexibility and creativity.

You Praise the Outcome and Not Your Child's Effort

Strict parents usually don't offer a lot of praise. They reserve their affirmations for perfection, rather than their child's effort. If you only praise your child for getting 100 on a test, or for scoring the most goals in the game, your child may think your love is conditional on high achievement.

You Make Outrageous Threats

While most parents are guilty of making an over-the-top threat once in a while, strict parents make outrageous threats on a regular basis. They often say things like, "Clean up your room right now or I'm throwing all your toys in the trash!" Avoid making threats that you aren't prepared to follow through with and make sure consequences are about disciplining, not punishing your child.

The Focus Is Always on Learning

Strict parents often turn every activity into a mandatory lesson of some kind. Kids can't color a picture without being quizzed on their colors, or they can't play with a dollhouse unless they're constantly reminded of proper furniture placement. Play itself gives an opportunity for imagination and creativity and can be a great escape from the normal structure and routine.