



## JERRY CAMMARATA FATHERS DIARY

# To win respect, enforce the rules

Man has lived by rules throughout most of history. Some were created by the universe and others by himself. Man has, surely, the most control over them since his power to use or reject them is the most superior.

An important responsibility parents have today is to be sure that each member of the family follows rules and regulations. Businesses don't become successful without the implementation of rules, and so it is with families.

Permissiveness seems to have gained a place in society. Today's parents were, after all, nurtured by Dr. Spock. Those of us who grew up in the 1950s had freedom. We moved in and out of daily life with a minimum of curbs and rules. We did what we wanted.

The reason was simple — too much pressure and too many rules were thought to negatively influence the ability to grow. It was thought that children needed to find out things for themselves.

What we failed to consider then and what is clear now is that we, the kids of yesteryear, were crying out for structure and rules even though we wouldn't admit it, or, in some cases, didn't know it.

To establish rules, consider them yardsticks of education. In the positive sense, a rule can aid self-discovery and decision-making.

Think of how often you, as an adult, have become confused and overwhelmed when confronted with piles of things to do and little time to do them. Direction and pacing become distorted and you find yourself far less productive than possible. Now think of how children feel when they have neither your direction nor experience.

It is important to create boundaries and limited choices for children. That's a part of rulemaking. But a noted psychologist adds that parents should be flexible in rules and limits. "It is a mistake to insist on one absolute set of rules for dressing, bathtime or anything else," he says. Options and parameters can foster creative

decision-making in a child and at the same time convey standards of acceptance appropriate to the home, community and society at large.

### Some firm rules

In order to rule in your house, the rules you provide must come from a base your children will respond to.

First, consistency in the way you deliver and enforce rules is important. What you say today must reasonably apply tomorrow. Parents who are inconsistent will quickly lose their children's respect. The children may even interpret the lack of regard for consistency as lack of regard for them. Children have interesting thoughts — right or wrong.

Second, firmness and enforcement of imposed rules should be the top concern. Your effort in this area will be remembered by your child and, hopefully, will be applied to his or her exploratory activities in life.

My wife will say to me from time to time that I have neglected to compliment her on her cooking. She knows I like her cooking because I clean the plate and eat with energy and purpose. She's right, though. If I want to keep eating good meals, I should extend verbal praise.

Children also need praise when they follow the rules. A pat on the back, a single word — "Good" — or even a discussion of your satisfaction with their behavior is apt.

Following rules is a game and a business — it's what parenting is all about. In Monopoly, you can't buy the Boardwalk and collect hundreds of dollars of rent unless rules are followed. And your home can't be productive until each family member is sure of his or her position, job responsibilities and reporting relationship, as well as the ethical, moral and spiritual foundation from which to work. Running a family is no easy business.

Your rules represent knowledge to your children, and knowledge is the key to human achievement.

# family

Jerem Productions