



OU ISRAEL PARENTING COLUMN

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The Most Important Rule to Remember When Making a Rule

One of the many jobs a parent has is to set boundaries. It's not always easy to lay down the law and follow through, but ultimately it's a way that children feel their parents protection.

The important question to ask yourself before making a rule is if it's something you can stick to. Is it a rule that you can follow through with? One way to decide if the rule will be successfully implemented is to ask yourself if it aligns with your values, if it's consistent with your way of life, and are you and your spouse on the same page regarding enforcing this rule?

If you are vague with children / teens, they will find the loophole. So, be sure you know what's important to you and why.

Many kids tend to whine and negotiate with parents when they are given a hard NO. This likely happens when there is precedence for this type of negotiation. Kids are smart! If they've succeeded in getting their way before, by whining and negotiating, they will try it every time. Kids realize when their parents are not 100% aligned with their rules or with each other. The more the parent negotiates and gives into the child the less capable the child is to accept rules. And the more likely

the whining will escalate into fits or tantrums.

As your child grows, new situations will present themselves. Either your child will grow into a new stage or you will be confronted with a new cultural norm and you will have to decide how to best handle it. Sometimes parents don't know right away what to do or what rule to enforce. That's okay. Sometimes parents need time to discuss with each other or consult with others before making a decision. This also models the decision making process for kids and teaches them to sit with uncertainty until there is a clear decision. Once parents have discussed, consulted and weighed the various factors they should be clear with their child.

Make sure to know what your red lines are before making it a rule and trying to enforce it. As children grow they will respect adults who are consistent with their rules and values.

Feel free to send in any **parenting questions** you may have to parenting@ouisrael.org (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).

Michal Silverstein has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.