

Review the descriptions below. Check the box near the name of the description if it describes someone like you. After considering the different descriptions, reflect on the strengths you bring to limit setting and on the areas you might improve.

☐ The Parent-Friend

Donna has been a single parent for about two years. She and her daughter, Caitlyn, became close after the divorce. There was no secret they did not share, including all the trauma of the breakup. Caitlyn is now 12-years-old and has started spending time with older friends, including some boys. She is not coming home on time, nor does she let Donna know where she is. Because she and Caitlyn have been so close, Donna is having trouble setting limits with her daughter and giving her consequences.

☐ The Parent-Boss

When Jim was a child, his parents were strict and let him know when he broke the rules. He always “paid for it.” There was also a lot of yelling when he got into trouble. Now, when his own children irritate him or break the rules, he quickly becomes angry, sometimes coming down too heavily or being too quick to give a consequence. Later, he’s often sorry because his relationships with his son and daughter suffer. He’s been told that it would be a good idea to “loosen up” on his kids. He agrees, but it doesn’t come naturally.

☐ Parents at War

Thomas and Maria have different parenting styles. Maria is strict and Thomas is easygoing. They haven’t learned how to work as a team and blend their two styles. Because they don’t always agree, they sometimes do things that weaken each other. For example, Thomas will say it’s okay to do something that Maria has said no to, or Maria will step in when Thomas is dealing with the kids, making him look and feel ineffective. The kids tend to use their parents’ differences to their own advantage.

☐ The Unavailable Parent

Danette is a single mother. She has three children ranging in age from 5 to 15. Danette goes to school during the day and works on weekends, as well as several evenings each week. The oldest child, Sherry, takes care of the other kids when Danette isn’t at home. Often, when Danette gets home, Sherry complains that the other kids won’t follow the rules. When Sherry complains, Danette gets frustrated, withdraws, and goes to bed for some much-needed rest.

☐ Parent/Stepparent

Karen and Sam recently married. Karen has two sons (7 and 9), and Sam has one daughter (12). They all live together. Karen’s sons accept the limits Karen sets, but they argue and do not observe the limits Sam sets. Sam and Karen often argue about this situation. For the past couple of months, Sam has been unsure of what role to take when setting limits with the boys. He is aware that certain limits must be set, even if Karen is not at home, but he hesitates in order to avoid a fight.

Limit-Setting Strengths and Areas to Improve

What strengths do you bring to limit setting?

What would you like to do more effectively with setting limits?

If setting limits is difficult for you, what gets in the way of you setting limits and following through?

What support would help you set limits more effectively in your family?
