



ELTERN POST

ISSUE
03/2026



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Der Kinderschutzbund
Landesverband Bayern

SETTING BOUNDARIES

How parents can set boundaries
in a loving yet firm way

Dear parents, guardians and families,

Children need boundaries.

They provide security and guidance, and help children navigate everyday life.

At the same time, setting boundaries can often be exhausting: children react with anger, protest or tears, and we adults sometimes find ourselves pushed to our limits.

The important thing is that boundaries should be set with love.

Children don't need lots of rules, but clear, understandable and reliable boundaries.

*Your team at Kinderschutzbundes
Landesverband Bayern*



WHY ARE BOUNDARIES IMPORTANT?

Boundaries help children:

- To feel safe and secure
- To learn the rules of living together
- To be considerate of others
- To better understand their own needs and feelings
- To develop self-control

Children don't test boundaries to annoy adults. It's how they learn how their world works.

LESS RULES – MORE CLARITY

Too many rules can overwhelm children.

So ask yourself:

- Which rules are really important?
- Which boundaries are there for safety?
- Which rules help with our daily family life?

Clear and simple rules are more helpful than lots of prohibitions.





SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH LOVE

Children find it easier to accept boundaries when adults remain calm and clear.

It helps to:

- Use short, simple sentences
- Make clear statements rather than engaging in long discussions
- Use positive phrasing wherever possible (“Please walk slowly” instead of “Don’t run!”)
- Offer choices (You can cycle to school wearing a helmet or walk without a helmet)
- Two permissions instead of one prohibition!
- Eye contact and a calm tone of voice
- Showing understanding for the child’s feelings

For example:

“I can see you’re angry. Stop, that hurts Kilian when you hit him. You’re allowed to be angry. You can tell him that you’re angry.”



Another option:

“You can tell him what’s upsetting you, or stamp your foot firmly on the floor, or come to me and ask for help.”

Children are allowed to be angry or sad. Feelings are allowed, but hurtful behaviour is not.

CONSEQUENCES RATHER THAN PUNISHMENTS

Children learn best through clear consequences:

Examples:

- If you spill water, you help mop it up.
- If you don’t tidy away your toys, you might not be able to find them later.
- If you hurt someone else, you’ll need help making amends.

Consequences should be calm, fair and appropriate to the situation – not humiliating or hurtful!





CHILDREN NEED GUIDANCE

Boundaries can trigger strong emotions. Children first need to learn how to deal with frustration, anger and disappointment. To do this, they need adults to guide them.

The following can be helpful:

- Name the feelings (“You look as though you’re disappointed.”)
- Looking for a solution together (“Please don’t throw the ball at the garage door anymore, it’s very loud for the neighbours” – “What could you do instead?”, “Where else can you throw the ball where it’s quieter?”)
- Staying calm, even when it’s difficult
- Notice small steps of progress and be sure to praise and acknowledge them!



IN CONCLUSION

Parents are allowed to reach their limits too.

Nobody can stay patient all the time. Family life can be exhausting at times, and that’s perfectly normal. The important thing isn’t to do everything perfectly, but to keep talking to one another.

If a situation becomes a constant source of stress, it’s perfectly fine to seek support.

Nobody has to cope with everything on their own!

HILFSANGEBOTE

Buchempfehlung:

- Gefühle – So geht es mir
→ *Felicity Brooks*
- Heute bin ich
→ *Mies van Hout*
- Meine Grenzen sind dein Halt
→ *Nora Imlau*
- Grenzen, Nähe, Respekt – Auf dem Weg zur kompetenten Eltern-Kind-Beziehung
→ *Jesper Juul*

Internetlinks:

- Bayerischer Erziehungsratgeber: Regeln und Grenzen
→ <https://www.baer.bayern.de/erziehung/alltag-mit-kindern/freiraeume-grenzen/>
- Bayerischer Erziehungsratgeber: Grenzüberschreitungen
→ <https://www.baer.bayern.de/erziehung/alltag-mit-kindern/freiraeume-grenzen/>





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- Step-Beratungstelefon → 0211 81 97 10 81
- Online-Familienberatung der Caritas
→ <https://www.caritas.de/hilfeundberatung/onlineberatung/eltern-familie/start>
- bke-Elternberatung (online)
→ <https://eltern.bke-beratung.de/views/home/index.html>
- Starke Eltern - Starke Kinder-Elternkurse
→ <https://sesk.de/kurs-suche/>
- Familienpat*innen
→ <https://www.familienpaten-bayern.de/informationeninteressierte-fampa-bayern/fuer-familien-fampa-bayern.html>



Kontakt

Der Kinderschutzbund
Landesverband Bayern e.V.
Goethestr. 17

80336 München
Tel.: 089 92 00 89 19
E-Mail: elternbildung@kinderschutzbund-bayern.de

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Dieser Elternbrief wurde im Rahmen des Projekts
"Interkulturelle Elternbildung" entwickelt.



Gefördert durch

Bayerisches Staatsministerium des
Innern, für Sport und Integration