



# ELTERN POST

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**Der Kinderschutzbund**  
Landesverband Bayern

## „I'M REALLY REACHING MY LIMITS...”

**Dealing with borderline situations:  
Information and tips to support children**

*Dear parents, guardians and families*

Raising children is a challenging but fulfilling task. As we accompany our children on their journey into adulthood, we repeatedly encounter situations that can push us to our limits as caregivers.

We want to help you understand your child better, react appropriately and build a trusting relationship. In this way, you can help your children to overcome borderline situations and grow into resilient, self-confident people.

In this post for parents, we therefore discuss various borderline situations with children and give you practical tips on how to deal with them.

*Your team from the Kinderschutzbund  
Landesverband Bayern*



# BORDERLINE SITUATIONS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

Children can present us with various challenges in everyday life, and unusual and repetitive situations in particular push us to our limits time and again. In such moments, we sometimes feel overwhelmed and desperate, especially when the usual methods don't seem to work. Limits are reached at different times for each person, for example when a child kicks and punches, but also when a child repeatedly spills their glass.

This makes it all the more important to develop strategies for dealing with borderline situations in a profitable way so that everyone involved is aware of their sensitivities and needs. But how?

It is important to recognize these borderline situations and understand why they are so challenging for us. This self-reflection is the first step in dealing with these situations. In borderline situations, we can also learn important things about the child's behavior and possible feelings and needs. It is therefore important to observe the child and thus recognize, for example, in which situations the challenging behaviour occurs and what feelings the child shows.

By consciously perceiving and understanding these borderline situations, we can develop successful solution strategies. It is important that we perceive everyone involved - ourselves and

our children - with their feelings and needs. Because only if we understand the causes can we find good ways of dealing with these situations together.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR FEELINGS

Our feelings not only show those around us how we are feeling, they also influence how we react to certain situations. As situations and feelings are stored together in our brain, it is normal for us to show similar behavior in future situations and thus experience the associated feeling again, even if we are not aware of it.





Children experience the four basic emotions from an early age: joy, fear, anger and sadness. They do not understand these feelings from the outset and must first get to know them. It is the responsibility of caregivers to support children in discovering their feelings, naming them and helping them to process them.

It is important that all feelings have their justification. Even if we as adults sometimes find anger particularly stressful, it is an important basic emotion and helps us to maintain our boundaries, for example. The task of us adults is to develop suitable strategies together with the child in order to deal with anger appropriately.

In this respect, one basic rule applies: all feelings are important and right. By helping our children to understand and accept their feelings, we support them in finding healthy ways to deal with their emotions.



## RULES AND LIMITS

Rules are important because they help us all to live together peacefully by giving us orientation and security. They apply to everyone and are therefore intended to ensure a form of equality. Rules also help us to find our way in different situations and often save us time and energy.

Rules are also useful for children to help them find their way in life. How these rules are created is crucial. There are two possibilities:

1. Adults make rules based on their own experiences, often to protect the children.
2. Rules are created and discussed together with the children.

To ensure that children understand and accept the rules, it is important to define and discuss them with them. Rules that we adults consider to be very important should also be discussed with the children so that they understand the meaning and purpose and are better able to comply with the rules.

It is important not to have too many rules, as this can often overwhelm children. Therefore, think together with your children about what rules you have in everyday life and check whether all the rules are necessary and sensible. To ensure that the children remember the rules in everyday life, you can make them child-friendly, for example by painting or writing on a poster with family rules and hanging it up in a clearly visible place.



# TIPS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

## Allowing and expressing feelings

It is important that children learn to understand and talk about their feelings. This does not happen on its own - it is a process that they go through in the course of their development. Young children in particular need help from us, their caregivers. We should be sensitive to what the children are feeling and express their feelings in simple words.

Pictorial representations can help children to express their own feelings. Children can use picture cards to show how they felt in a certain situation. They also learn over time to distinguish their feelings more precisely, for example the difference between sadness and thoughtfulness. The picture cards can be creatively designed together with the children according to your joint ideas, e.g. painted, with photos, as an emotional cube, etc.

## Children books

Sometimes children do not feel properly understood in difficult situations and find it difficult to find the right words to express their feelings. Books for children can help them to feel understood because the stories tell similar problems and show possible solutions. They also often find the right words in the books to express their own feelings.

Together with your children, you can choose books that fit the current challenges and read them together. This not only



helps the children to learn how to deal with conflicts, but also allows them to discuss difficult everyday situations together in a relaxed atmosphere.

## Our children's book tips on the subject of "feelings":

- Gefühle – So geht es mir → *Felicity Brooks*
- Heute bin ich → *Mies van Hout*
- In meinem kleinen Herzen → *Jo Witek*
- Das Farbenmonster → *Anna Llenas*



## Our children's book tips on the topic of "Borderline situations and anger":

- Wie ist das mit dem Ärger? → [Dagmar Geisler](#)
- Wohin mit meiner Wut? → [Dagmar Geisler](#)
- Wenn Lisa wütend ist → [Heinz Janisch & Manuela Olten](#)
- Heute hab ich Wut im Bauch → [Anna Böhm & Tim Warnes](#)

## Reinforcement principle

When children display challenging behavior and borderline situations arise, we adults often react in a stressed, annoyed or even angry manner. This is often followed by consequences or punishments, but this does not usually have a lasting effect on the children's behavior. It is better to focus on positive behavior rather than negative behavior.

The reinforcement principle enables children to learn that certain behaviors are praised. As a result, they tend to show this behavior more often in future situations. To ensure that children do not feel under pressure, it is important to work only with positive reinforcers.

This means, for example, that you create a weekly plan together and draw a happy smiley face on the plan for each day on which your child has not, for example, pinched or used expressions. However, on days when children display the challenging behavior, simply leave the box blank. Negative consequences, such as drawing a sad smiley, will only make children feel like they can't meet expectations, and that has a demotivating effect.



Although we do our best, there are sometimes challenging situations where it is difficult to get through to our children or where we adults don't have the resources to support them appropriately. This is normal and okay and you don't have to deal with these issues alone. Don't hesitate to seek the help of external experts and get support.





# HELP OFFERS

## Literature and helpful websites for adults:

- Meine Grenze ist dein Halt → [Nora Imlau](#)
- Grenzen, Nähe, Respekt – Auf dem Weg zur kompetenten Eltern-Kind-Beziehung → [Jesper Juul](#)
- Bayerischer Erziehungsrategeber: Regeln und Grenzen  
→ <https://www.baer.bayern.de/erziehung-medien/erziehung/kommunikation-kooperation/regeln-grenzen/>
- Bayerischer Erziehungsrategeber: Grenzüberschreitungen  
→ <https://www.baer.bayern.de/erziehung-medien/erziehung/kommunikation-kooperation/grenzueberschreitungen/>

## Courses, contact points and advice centers:

- Nummer gegen Kummer Elterntelefon → [0800 111 0 550](tel:08001110550)
- Step-Beratungstelefon → [0211 81 97 10 81](tel:021181971081)
- 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/informationen-interessierte-fampa-bayern/fuer-familien-fampa-bayern.html>



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