



Positive Parenting

When your child is about 15 or 18 months old, you may get up in the morning and just starting saying “no,” because you know that is what you are going to be saying all day long. After all, you are trying to protect your child, protect your stuff and help your child learn. Some of this is inevitable, but not all of it.

There is a danger if we are not careful. If all we say is “no, no, no!” all day, even with the best of intentions, we are creating an atmosphere of negativity in the house. All your child will think is you are the one who says “no.” The worst thing that can happen is that your child will grow up completely inhibited, not daring to do new things,

always looking around to see who is there to say “no,” or, even worse, always doing the “no” thing, daring you to catch her. So what to do?

1. Boundaries: widen them.

Make sure when you say “no,” you absolutely mean it. For instance, you know for sure that the street is off limits. But how bad is it to touch

your new, clean table? If there are things around that your child shouldn’t get into, put them away. If the TV is on the ground or a table and your child can touch it, she will. So either put it out of reach or let your child play with it. Otherwise, you’ll just be playing the “no game” all night.

2. Balance “No” with “Yes”

Try to figure that for every time you say “no,” you owe ten “yeses.” That will have two effects.

First, you will have the opportunity to give praise that you might have missed before. For instance, if your child is playing quietly, you might be tempted to leave her alone. But you could also think of it as a time to get a “yes” in the bank to balance out a time when you might have to say “no” later on.

Second, you might be able to avoid saying “no.” For instance, if your child is pulling on an electric cord, instead of making a big deal of it and saying, “No! Cords are dangerous!” and owing ten “yeses,” you might just skip the “no” and simply distract her. You don’t have to make it a moral issue for her to learn every time. In her behavior later on, she will mostly imitate you anyway, no matter what you try to teach.

