

Guiding My Children Responsibly Without Imposing Rules

Editor's Pick. Written by Sue Elvis.

We don't make rules in our family, so how do my children know what is right and what is wrong, if they aren't guided by clearly stated limits? Do I believe my own quiet example of appropriate behaviour is all that is needed in order to influence my children? Perhaps I stand back, hands-off, and let my children behave as they choose?

I decide to ponder a few ideas with my children, in an attempt to find the answers to these questions.

"Should I correct you if I feel your behaviour is wrong?" I ask.

"Oh yes," replies my second daughter Imogen. "Children need guidance from their parents. You can't just let us do whatever we want. We'd grow up to be very self-centred. And we wouldn't know what constitutes appropriate behaviour when it comes to relating to people."

"Should we have rules so you all know what is acceptable and what is not, or is there another way?"

"Rules aren't the answer. They can be broken, and parents and children end up fighting over them, in a power struggle. I like how you do things better."

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