

When Kids Don't Follow The Rules



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Natalie Bacon

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When Kids Don't Follow The Rules

Hi there. Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life* podcast. My name is Natalie Bacon, and I'm an advanced certified mindfulness life coach as well as a wife and mom. If you're here to do the inner work and grow, I can help. Let's get started.

Hello my friend. Welcome to the podcast. I am recording this episode in my new office. We are all settled into our new home. We did a local move in Charleston. I have to tell you I love where we're living. I love the neighborhood. I love that we are a few hundred feet from a pool and dog run. I love that we have a fenced-in backyard. I love that there is such amazing lighting and natural light in our home. I just love all of it.

When I think those thoughts, it feels so amazing. So wherever you live, find things about the location, the actual home, anything that's easy for your brain to feel good about. Practice thinking thoughts that feel really good to you. I'm telling you. You can change where you live, but you can't change it immediately today.

So what you can do, if you want to change where you live, which is totally available to you, but in the meantime is get really good at practicing liking where you're already at and changing it from a place of abundance. So if and when we move from here, it won't be because I hate this place or it's not good enough. Instead, it's this place served our family so well. I love this place and the chapter here is complete.

Okay? Not at all what we're talking about today, but it is on my mind as I look out my window and I see homes and trees and the sun and the clouds. I'm just feeling really good about where we're living. It's really fun.

So let's dive into today's topic. I want to talk with you about when kids don't follow the rules. So I'm offering you my thoughts on how to approach the topic of kids not following the rules. Not from the standpoint that there is one right way to do it, but from the position that I've coached thousands of women on this, and it continues to come up.

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So I wanted to provide a free resource here for you to know not only what it's like to get coached in Grow You, but for you to maybe see how I think about it and how I teach concepts of mindfulness that can really help with kids not following the rules.

The way that I think about it is very different from a lot of experts because a lot of experts will just focus on the actions. Your actions as the mom and their actions as the child. What I do with all of my teachings and coaching is go inward first and that drives the action. So we're going to look at mindset and feelings, and then from there the actions follow naturally.

So I'm going to offer you my thoughts on this. Take them for what they're worth. If they feel good to you and like you want to try them, then try them. I don't know about you but typically with multiple children in the family, you may even have different rules and expectations for each child.

So approach to this episode with the mindset that you're just looking for that one piece of information, that one thought, that one idea that could help you with one of your kids, okay. Not that you have to do all of this or that all of this is the only right way. It's just a way for you to think about things a little bit differently in hopes that some of it will actually help you.

I want to start off with thinking about the family as having roles. I like the analogy to work. So if you work or you've ever worked, you know that there are roles for everyone at work. I want you to think about the same being true at home. So when you go into work, you have expectations. You have a boss. You have peers. They have different roles and maybe similar and maybe different expectations and maybe a different boss.

For the system have the business to run successfully, everyone has to be kind of doing their role. You don't get hired just to work at a company and then show up to work and everyone's just sitting around guessing at what to do. That's typically not how things work. You can imagine that if a company didn't have roles and responsibilities and expectations for employees, it would be really messy and unclear and frustrating and confusing.

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So I love that analogy because I like to think of the home and a family very similar insofar as everyone has their roles at home. For purposes of today, I just want to break it up between parents and kids. Okay. I teach a little bit more on this in terms of taking care of the home and groceries and bills and all of that, but we're not gonna talk about that today.

Today, I just want you to think about the role of you as the mom and any other person in the home that you are co-parenting with as well as your kids and what roles each of you have in the household. Again, kind of having that analogy to work in mind.

So I like to think of parents having a few roles that include setting the expectations for the household and upholding those expectations. You may hear other people calling them rules or boundaries. Talking about the same thing here. So you're setting the rules, you're setting the boundaries, and you're upholding them, meaning you're following through with those rules, with those boundaries, with those expectations. Okay. That's the first role of the parent.

The second role is to respect, to connect, and to validate the feelings of the child. So I think about these roles as sort of yin and yang. On the one hand, we have the part of parenting where we are setting expectations that sometimes the kids will test and not want to follow through with. On the other hand, we are connecting with them, respecting them, loving them, validating them. That's really two of the main roles that parents have.

Kids, they also have two roles, to follow the expectations and rules of the household and to feel their feelings. Okay. Now, you might be thinking why is that a role for the child? Well, as you know if you have kids, kids are often throwing tantrums, getting mad, getting upset. They're feeling big feelings, and there's no point in time where they reach in the future, as adults, where feeling feelings is complete. They don't graduate from feeling disappointed or from feeling frustrated.

So if we expect that one of their roles in the household is to get really good at feeling their feelings then we can help them build that skill, which is

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going to serve them forever. If you think about everything that I teach with mindfulness, it's all focusing on your thoughts and your feelings. That drives how you act and show up in the world.

So if we can help our kids think in a certain way and know that they can feel any emotion, just imagine how well we're equipping them for adulthood. Because it doesn't matter what their circumstances. If they know how to think and feel, they could handle anything.

Of course, as parents and leaders in this family unit in the in the home, we want to be the best example of that, of feeling our feelings, right? Doesn't mean that we are perfect. It certainly doesn't mean that we don't experience negative emotion. It means that we experience negative emotion, and we attribute it to what we're thinking. We don't emotionally blame anyone. We can process our feelings without acting out on anyone in a way that isn't something that we want to have in the household.

So this is a good time to mention and reiterate the difference between actions and feelings. So a child's role, part of a child's role, in the family household is to feel any feeling that they want to feel. That does not mean that any action that they want to take is okay. So they can be really sad and upset that screen time is over, but they cannot throw the iPad at their sister.

Okay, do you see the difference there? The difference is in the action. Not all actions are okay in the household. That's where you as the parent have the expectations and the rules, but all feelings are okay. So we want to teach our children how to feel feelings without acting in a way that sort of breaks one of our rules, violates one of the boundaries, throws the iPad across the room and hits the sister.

Okay, so that's sort of the framework with which I want to teach you what to do when your kids don't follow the rules. From there, I want to introduce you to a request, a rule, and a consequence. So these are the three components that will make it so much easier for you to stay calm and stay regulated, regardless of what your kids choose to do.

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A request is you asking your child to do something. Okay. So an example of a request would be that you ask your kids to put their dishes in the dishwasher after dinner. There is no rule here because a rule is a request with a consequence. Okay? A rule is hey, if you don't put your dishes in the dishwasher, X, Y, Z happens. A request is hey, I'd like you to do something, but if you don't, it's not a problem.

It's kind of like us making requests of adults. We don't have rules for adults who are our peers, right? It's different with kids as well as employee's because you have a different level of kind of authority over your children and over employees.

But when you make a request, let's say you're married to your spouse. Let's say you request make a request for your husband to take out the trash. You say, "Hey honey, will you take out the trash?" He can take it out or he cannot take it out. Right? There's no consequence for him. He's not getting in trouble if he doesn't because we don't have that type of authority over him.

So it's important to see the difference here because a lot of what I coach on is totally solvable just by understanding a request, a rule, and a consequence. Let me give you an example that I get a lot. So someone will come to me, and they'll say, "Every day after school, it's a struggle. My child is supposed to do their homework before they have any screen time. They're always picking up the iPad, and it's just really frustrating. Can you help me? Tell me what to do."

Okay, so they will want help with the action. Tell me what to do. But really what's happening is the hardest part of that is the feeling of frustration, which is coming from their thinking. So what we want to do is take a look at what's going on here.

What's happening here is that more often than not, I think in all of my coaching, there is a request. Hey child after school I need you to do your homework before you have any screen time. That's the request. But there isn't a clearly communicated consequence to make it a rule.

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So the rule might be hey, you need to do your homework after school in order to get a half hour of screen time. If you don't do your homework after school and if you choose to do screen time first, you lose your screen time privileges for one day. Okay? That is an example of a clearly communicated outcome that you are going to follow through with.

The reason that this is just so powerful is because it takes away all of the frustration and kind of push-pull tug of war. It takes away the control as well. Because if you don't have a clear consequence and it's just a request, the expectations for everyone kind of get muddy.

You end up trying to control your child. You really want them to do the homework, but they're not doing the homework, but there's no way for you to hold them accountable because you haven't decided what that is ahead of time. You haven't clearly communicated it. You haven't put the expectation on yourself to uphold that expectation of them. So instead, you just want to control their actions.

So some of you may have heard of this. If you're in Grow You, you definitely have where I teach agency, and every single person has the ability to think, feel, and do whatever they want. So anyone can take the action that you're asking them to take. Anyone can also choose not to take that action.

Where we get into trouble is when we try to control our kids. So we can't like physically control their actions. But what we can do is have rules and expectations and boundaries in our household. So if you throw the iPad and you hit your sister, there is a consequence, and you can decide whatever rules you want. You can decide whatever expectations you want. You can decide whatever consequences you want.

The biggest problem that I see most of my clients, the moms I work with, coming to me with is they make a request, but there's no consequence. So it's not a rule. They're feeling really frustrated because they can't control their child.

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All of it can be cleared up if you just decide what's gonna be a request, in which case there is no consequence and you're not going to get upset about it because this is just another human deciding to use their agency in a way that they want. They don't want to put the dishes in the dishwasher. If there's no consequence, then it's totally fine, right? Because it's okay and we should expect for everyone to use agency how they want.

But if it's really important to you and it's really important to your household that you have a consequence for this request, then it becomes a rule. You still don't ever have to get really frustrated about it. You can communicate it from a place of love depending on the age of the child. If they're five versus 15, it's going to be a different conversation. But doing it from a really calm state is so powerful.

I think a lot of my clients are so surprised to hear that you can parent without the frustration and the anger and the yelling. Or on the other hand, the shutting down and the worrying. You do it by making these decisions ahead of time.

Now, that brings me to another mindset part of this where I think as parents, as moms, you want to be a mom who takes into consideration your child's requests of you and be flexible. Now, that's different than not upholding expectations. If you have an expectation that homework is done and then it's screentime, you don't want to change that in the moment.

So if your child is really upset, it's okay for them to be upset. Because remember, one of their roles is to feel their feelings. You can say to them, I know you're really upset. I can tell you're really sad and mad, and that's okay. You can be sad and mad. This is the rule that we have in our household. You will be able to use your screen again at this time. Okay?

That is going to take practice on your part, but it's totally available to you when you kind of understand this framework. The part where you want to be flexible is when they come to you with a request, and you may have a rule that doesn't allow for that. You want to respect them. You want to hear them out. You want to think of yourself like a boss in a company, and you

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have this employee coming to you who says, “Hey, I know we do it this way, but I think we should do it this other way and here's why.”

Now, if it's your five year old who says, “I think I should be able to ride my bike in the middle of that busy street.” You're probably not going to change the rule. But if it's your five year old who comes to who says, “Hey, I want to put some makeup on at home and play dress up instead of going outside on Saturday when we normally spend time outside.” You just want to check your reasons for having the rule. You want to like your reasons.

Now, if it's a rule that you like, like it's based in keeping your child safe like the traffic example, you're probably going to keep it. But if it's one where you really can't see why you wouldn't want to change it, give yourself permission to change it. I think sometimes as parents we think okay, I set the rule, so I have to keep it this way forever. That is not true. So you want to approach your child with respect, even if they're five. Okay. Definitely if they're 15 and an older child, but even when they're younger. You want to respect them and listen.

Another example that I want to touch on that comes up a lot in coaching is with older kids, and the example that I've coached on many, many times is an adult child who's typically over 18 who comes back home to stay at home. The expectation is that they are going to pay rent. You've said, “Hey, child, if you live here, you're going to need to pay rent.” Then the child does not pay rent.

Okay, so this is such a perfect example of understanding a request, a rule, and a consequence. So far all that we know is that a request was made. Hey child, you need to pay rent. What happens if the child doesn't pay rent? These are the questions that you need to ask yourself as the parent.

So remember part of your role, part of your responsibility in this household, in this family unit, is to uphold the expectations, is to follow through. Now you can decide actually, I don't want to have this as an expectation because it's not a big deal to me if my adult child doesn't pay rent. But what

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I most commonly see is only a request has been made, but there is no consequence. Then the parent is getting frustrated.

So what you want to do instead is take a step back and say okay do I even want this to be a rule? That child pays rent. If the answer is yes then what we need to do is come up with the consequence. Now, it's very easy to think about what happens normally if the child was renting somewhere else, and they didn't pay rent. They might get a few notices and then eventually, they're evicted.

You don't have to go that route as a parent. There are so many other options. You can give your child extended time. You can discount the rent. You can help them apartment search. You get to decide how involved you want to be and whether you even want this to be a rule. But if you are going to have a rule, you want to have that consequence clearly communicated.

So it'd be something like hey adult child. I know I've been asking you to pay rent, and I know you said you are working on it, but part of what my job is as your mom is to come up with ways for this family household to work in the best way that I know how to make it work. I'm not perfect at it, but one thing that I'm going to start doing is holding myself accountable to holding you accountable.

So what that looks like for rent is I am going to expect you to pay rent by 30 days from now. You'll get two additional asks from me, two additional notices. If you're not able to pay at least 50% rent by this date, then you will have to make other arrangements by this date. It's really helpful if you are clear. You don't want to approach it like hey, I really need you to do this and try to kind of control their agency.

You just want to stay in your role. Make it clear what the request, what the rule is, and what the consequence is, and then follow through. That will help you keep your calm so much because you've done your job. You've set the expectation, you've followed through, and your child gets to think, feel, and do whatever they won't. They may follow the rules. They may not.

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Then you'll enforce the consequences because that's part of your role. This can really change your life regardless of the age of your child.

One last thing that I want to mention that has really helped me kind of let go of this desire to control is not just respecting my child, not just seeing them as a separate human, but going a step further. Instead of thinking of my kids as an extension of me, I think about them as if they are individuals who have come through me. So they're not from me. They are people who have come through me. This helps me separate out myself from them in a way that just saying oh respect your kids doesn't.

When I really think of them, when I think of RJ as his own person who came through me instead of RJ is an extension of me, there's this mindset shift that really helps me feel more like a teacher, mentor, guide, someone who is there to help him grow and guide him instead of someone who is there to make sure he is a good reflection of me. Which is sort of kind of perfectionist and self-serving. I know that's never the intent, but we can get that way in our efforts to control our kids, particularly when we think oh this is for their benefit, and we don't explore our thoughts more.

So I offer that to you because it's helped me. All of this that I've included in this episode has helped me so much already personally. But really, it's helped so many of my clients inside Grow You, and I wanted to bring it to you here. Take with you what works and what sounds useful and then leave the rest, just like all of my thoughts on all of my episodes. All right, my friend. I will talk with you next week. Bye.

If you loved this podcast I invite you to check out Grow You my mindfulness community for moms where we do the inner work together. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching to learn more.