

What do Children Want?

Boundaries

Susan Peabody

I have learned the hard way that what children want and what they need can be very different. I have also learned that sometimes what children want is hidden and only comes out when they get honest with themselves with you.

I had this experience with my son regarding boundaries. Children need boundaries. However, they also want them.

Years ago, I set a boundary with my son. In other words, I said “no.” He got angry and ranted and raved. I just looked at him. He left the room. He came back in a few minutes and said, “Mom, I like it when you win.”

I think what he was telling me was that he felt safe secure when I set boundaries—something that was as important to him as love. Maybe it was a form of love and I just did not know that at the time, because setting a boundary was something I rarely did.

My mother never set boundaries and I remember not feeling loved. All my friends had to be home from school at a certain time and I did not. I remember thinking one day that my mom just didn’t care when I got home—or maybe she did not even want me to come home. Eventually, I never did.

Today, I am able to set boundaries but it is still difficult because I am an adult child/codependent. However, I make a conscious choice to set boundaries with my adult son and, as a result, our relationship has improved. He continues to tell me in hindsight that he is happy when I set boundaries and stand up for myself.

Not only has my relationship with my son improved, he is also learning to set boundaries with me. He has asked me for some “space” to heal and to turn to his Higher Power. He said, “Mom, I want to grow up.” I am very proud of him.