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What Your Child Wants You to Know

By Craig Miller

Guide me with love but allow me to make decisions without criticizing or making fun of what I decide. Don't be afraid to be firm with me by setting boundaries since it makes me feel more secure and loved. During my early years I must rely on you to stop me from creating bad habits. When I make a mistake don't make me feel smaller than I am because it only makes me misbehave. And don't correct me in front of people if you can help it since I'll take much more notice if you talk quietly with me in private. It upsets my sense of values if you make me feel that my mistakes are sins. When I say things like, "I hate you," don't be too upset with me because it isn't you I hate but your power to crush my spirit. Since I need to learn from my mistakes, don't always protect me from the consequences of my mistakes. Please don't nag me because it makes me protect myself by appearing deaf. Remember not to make quick promises because it breaks my heart when your promises are broken. Be patient with me when I cannot explain myself as well as I would like because it is hard to find the right words at my age. Don't tax my honesty too much because I am easily frightened into telling lies. When you are inconsistent you completely confuse me and make me lose faith in you. If you put me off when I ask questions you will find that I will stop asking you and I will seek my information elsewhere. Don't tell me my fears are silly. My fears are extremely real to me and you will reassure me if you talk to me about my fears. Please don't be critical of my ideas or stop me from expressing my feelings about how much I hurt. It's okay to apologize to me. An honest apology makes me feel surprisingly warm toward you. I love to hear how much you love me and what a good job I have done. Don't forget how quickly I am growing up. It must be very difficult for you to keep pace with me, but please try. Lastly, don't forget to take time to tuck me in at night, ask me about my day, and show that you are interested in what I say by taking time out of your busy schedule to just sit and listen.

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