

SESSION 9

RULES AND CONSEQUENCES



RULE PLAN

The purpose of the rule plan is to make rules and consequences clearer and fairer to the child. It works as a contract and a reminder. The rule plan is used for battles that you cannot refuse to fight and dangerous behaviors that have not decreased. Before you start using a rule plan, you should examine whether you need to work more with the base or one of the other methods at the top of the pyramid.

Sample rule plan:

ZACK'S RULE PLAN

Rule: Zack has to be available on his cell when he is away from home in the evening.

If Zack follows the rule... he will get an extra hour of computer time.

If Zack breaks the rule... he will not be allowed to use the computer at all the following day.

Remember: The rule plan is most suitable for school-age children. However, it is always good for parents to think about how they can be clearer and fairer when they use rules for their children.

CHECKLIST FOR RULES ON THE RULE PLAN

- Only a few rules. State the rules you need to prioritize (1-3 rules depending on the age of the child). Having too many rules can create more conflict.
- State the rules carefully. The child must understand what he/she is supposed to do or not supposed to do in order to follow or break a rule. A rule like "Be on time" is too vague. "Ask for permission before you go out" is clearer. Write the rule on the rule plan (1 rule per rule plan).
- Positive terms. If possible, it is better to tell the child what he/she is supposed to do rather than what he/she is not supposed to do. When you have to state a rule in negative terms ("Do not hit others" for example), the rule should be augmented with behaviors the child can do instead. Make a list together with the child. For guidance, review the instructions for negatively stated tasks discussed in session 4.
- Supported by all adults. For a rule to work, all the adults in the home must be aware of the rule and support it. It is also important that everyone follows up on the rule in the same way.
- Supported by the child. The child needs to know what applies and, as far as possible, to participate in writing the rule plan. The ideal is if you are able to agree on a rule mutually with the child.



CONSEQUENCES IN THE RULE PLAN

Following a rule should pay off and breaking a rule should not pay off. Try to follow up as quickly as possible so that this becomes clear to the child. Remember to give a lot of positive attention when your child follows the rules and to keep calm when your child does not follow the rules. The consequence should be proportional to the seriousness of the problem and should never do more harm than good. If, for example, you ground your child for a long time, he/she may get so bored and frustrated that he/she argues and fights even more. Taking away privileges may seem harsh, but in practice non-stop nagging and yelling is usually worse for the child.

Positive consequences. When your child follows a rule, the consequence should be an extra benefit. Remember that this should be something the child likes. You might want to base this on surprises that the child previously enjoyed when you were playing the Snake game. Examples:

- Extra computer time
- More money on your child's pay-as-you-go SIM card
- An activity together with parent



Natural consequences. "Natural consequences" means the child must accept the consequences of his/her actions. It is best to use natural consequences as far as possible before you resort to taking away privileges. Examples:

- Try to set things right when you have done something wrong
- Pay for things you have destroyed
- Work out conflicts with other children or adults on your own

Taking away privileges. When there are no obvious natural consequences to use, you may need to work with taking away a privilege for a limited time. If the child breaks a rule, he/she loses a privilege. Remember to take away something the child wants, but which will not harm him/her if it is taken away. Examples:

- Less computer time
- Less time for video games
- Not being allowed to go to the mall with friends

HOMEWORK - SESSION 9

One-on-one time

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PIP/The Snake

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Pick your battles/emergency brake

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BEFORE SESSION 10

One-on-one time

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PIP/The Snake

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Pick your battles/emergency brake

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Rule plan

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