



## When to say “No” When to say “Yes”

As parents, we’re wired to indulge our children. Saying yes to their every want is easy. But we all know parenting isn’t always easy! Our kids won’t grow up well, unless they have some limits and learn to take responsibility for themselves. Here are some tips to help you make the transition from yes to no:

- Focus on your overall parenting goal: raising successful, competent kids. You cannot do this if you’re never setting limits and always saying yes.
- Recognize that we live in a yes culture. Our culture promotes indulging yourself, doing what’s easy, and instant gratification. To stop overindulging your kids, be prepared to go against the popular culture.
- Know that parenting is not a popularity contest. Your job is to be the parent, not your child’s best friend. When you say “yes” too often, you make it easier for your child to like you, but you may be dodging your responsibilities. When you start to say “no”, your child will get upset, but you’ll teach your child valuable lessons.
- Remember the goal of balancing the amount of times you say yes and the amount of times you say no. You don’t want to refuse everything

your child asks for, but you also don’t want to give in every time. Find a balance. Work on making your “yes” more about creative ways to assert your values and boundaries in a positive way.

- Download a list of the *40 Developmental Assets* ([www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets](http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets).) These 40 assets are what all kids need to succeed. Kids need both support and limits to grow up well.

There are specific things you can do depending on your child’s age. Here are some suggestions:

### For parents with children ages birth to 5

- Set clear, simple limits. Young children are more likely to follow the rules when they understand them, when adults are sensitive to their feelings, and when adults notice when they change their



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behavior for the better.

- Don't expect kids to understand the rules right away. Keep repeating them. Be positive as you restate them. Be patient as your child learns the appropriate ways you want them to act.

### **For parents with children ages 6–9**

- Recognize that kids will act out when they're stressed or you're stressed. Take time to calm down and strategize about what you really want from your kids (such as helping them grow up well) rather than what you immediately want from them (such as becoming quiet).

### **For parents with children ages 10–15**

- Young teenagers are quick to point out how your rules aren't like other families' rules. (They always find the families that have few or no rules.) Be firm. Explain that your family is different. Emphasize how you want your kids to grow up well.
- Listen to what your kids want—and why. Really listen. That doesn't mean you say yes right away, but you may be able to help them get what they want by helping them set goals and take steps

toward meeting their goals.

- Young teenagers are heavily influenced by the herd (other young teenagers). They'll claim that "they'll die" or "be outcast forever" if they don't have a cell phone or some other latest gadget. Don't be quick to give in—even when they pressure you. Set standards for what you believe is best for your child.

### **For parents with children ages 16–18**

- By this age, teenagers will pressure you to loosen the reigns and give them more privileges. Think carefully about which rules you can loosen and which need to remain firm.
- Support your teenager, but be careful that they don't manipulate you to take over their homework, school projects, or household chores. (They can be experts at that.)

Give them help but just enough to get them to do their part.

- Notice when your teenagers do the right thing. Praise them. Tell them that you're proud of them. Positive feedback also gives young people information about which behaviors are appropriate and which are not.

There are many resources available to you to help you with your growing children. NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. is just one of them. Our Jason Surks Memorial Prevention Resource Center contains many brochures and videos on this topic. Interested? Call us today at 732-254-3344.

*Source: Some information for this article was obtained from ParentFurther, published by Search Institute <http://www.search-institute.org/>*



## Are they off to college?

It's that time. After many years of helping your son or daughter deal with simple subtractions, basic geography, which sports or instruments to play, taking care of their needs, their first crush and a complete array of medical matters, they are ready to leave you. The nest is about to empty. Your kids are heading off to college. You are probably feeling a mix of pride, relief, sadness and more than a little worry. Because now, after years of tending and relative control over this person you are wondering about their wellbeing and what you can do to ensure it.

Let's start with communications. Most of us have cell phones; we all know how to use email or to text; and, there is always Facebook and tweets to stay in touch. But when we say communication, we don't just mean talking to your college-bound youth. We encourage you to listen. Be there to talk uneasy freshmen through possible anxiety and loneliness in their new worlds. Even though college provides a protective environment, the stresses of taking control of their lives, maybe for the first time, can rattle young people. They're unaccustomed to managing money and paying bills, keeping their own schedules, taking care of their stuff. Fending for themselves,

even with dorm feedings, and tackling some serious sedentary study, many young people balloon in weight, gaining a documented six to 15 pounds and starting lifelong bad habits.

Feeling blue can go beyond a sometime challenge to a major concern in young people, and they and their schools report that mental health issues, especially depression, are big. Let's not forget that many serious mental disorders show up first at this point before affecting adults for the rest of their lives. Let students know their school has teachers and counselors willing to listen and possibly point them to professional help. Especially if depression runs in the family or your child has had episodes earlier in life, listen for clues of sleeplessness or excessive sleeping, changes in appetite, or a loss of interest in exercise, studies or friends.

There are fine materials available on teen depression and, yes, suicide, which triples in incidence in older teens and is six times more prevalent among college-aged males than females.

Remember that your child is an adult, by some standards. We are sure that and you've probably already provided them with ample warnings since middle school. But as they head out the door,

you might shout out some familiar reminders: Sexually transmitted diseases are preventable! Drugs and alcohol can be a fatal combination!

Did you know that college students drink more than their peers who are not in school, and binge drinking peaks between the ages of 21 and 23. The rate of illegal drug use among college students is holding steady at about 20 percent.

Each fall, 15 million students enroll in college. Sadly, about one third of first-year students fail to enroll for their second year, often due to alcohol or other drug use. According to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the first six weeks of the semester are particularly critical to a first-year student's academic success. The binge drinking that occurs during these initial weeks of college often sets the pace for the rest of the year.

The rigor of college classes can be daunting, but often the most challenging problems students face in their first year are social or emotional. If students are happy and comfortable in their new environment, studies show, they are more likely to do well in class. Most students deal with at least one major

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disappointment or setback their first semester: rejection by a student organization, a failed test or marked-up term paper, heartbreak, fights with friends or homesickness.

Show you care when you talk to your son or daughter. He or she is maturing, and college will bring more freedom. Be direct when discussing drinking at school and talking about safety, money, responsibility, life skills and academics. Along with expectations, it is important to discuss consequences. Students have a responsibility to their campus-community. Show your interest by continuing the dialog once he or she is on campus. You need to draw the line, but understand your son or daughter is growing up. Most of all, believe in your own power to help them avoid trouble:

- Be a role model.
- Be factual and straightforward.
- Information is always the best defense.
- Avoid scare tactics.
- Correct misperceptions.

The basic message is: it is important to communicate with your son or daughter often. You do not need to cover every topic in one conversation. Lecturing will get you nowhere — providing information is the key.

Remember. Just because they may have moved away and will start college soon does not mean they are out of your life and out of reach. Just like you were there for them when they were growing up, continue to be there now. Keep the communication lines open, all the time, every time.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit, community-based health organization providing prevention, education, information and referral services to county residents, businesses, schools, faith-based organizations, municipal alliances, and social service agencies since 1980.

NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc., 152 Tices Lane, East Brunswick, NJ 08816  
732-254-3344  
[www.ncadd-middlesex.org](http://www.ncadd-middlesex.org)

