

Counseling News for October 2017

Hello St. Germaine Families!

Once again, we are off to a great new school year! September just flew by and now we are well into October and I am trying to get my first newsletter out. I welcome all of our new families to St. Germaine and would like to take a moment to introduce myself. I am Katie Sheridan; “Miss Katie” at school, I am the school counselor. Every month, sometimes every other month, you will receive a Counseling Newsletter with helpful information regarding children. Let’s face it parenting is both rewarding and hard work. My goal is to provide you with some tools that can ease the way!

THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING LIMITS FOR YOUR CHILD

Rules are a natural part of life, and having guidelines helps kids learn how to manage in different situations. Rules provide the framework for children to understand what is expected of them at home, with friends, and at school. While parents know that this kind of structure is important, it’s often challenging to establish and maintain rules at home.

Parents may refrain from doing so because they feel guilty, they don’t want to fight the battles that may ensue when kids object or they don’t want to deal with a younger child’s tantrums. But children need boundaries and limits to feel safe and secure. Despite what a child might say, guardrails are good for them. By setting limits, parents teach kids important skills that will help them succeed in all areas of life.

Rules teach children self-discipline and help them learn how to make healthy choices. It’s doubtful that you will get children to admit that they like rules, but you might get them to acknowledge that it’s helpful to know what’s expected of them and how they can ultimately get what they want. At the end of the day, this is about teaching kids what they need to do to succeed and achieve their desired goals.

The challenge is knowing how to set and maintain limits. Here are some suggestions to do just that:

Keep it simple. Having too many rules is confusing for all involved. Too many rules makes it hard to enforce them. Instead, choose five key rules that need to be followed. These can change, especially as the child grows. Encourage your child to participate in the rule creation, which can increase a child’s commitment to doing what’s expected.

Be clear, concise, and positive. Rules with tons of layers and too many details is near impossible for a child to follow. State the rule clearly, and frame it in a positive way. Rather than say, “Don’t throw your toys,” frame it as “Toys are to be played with and cared for.” Using positive language encourages learning and shows children what you want them to do. Negative language can feel punishing and does not encourage change.

Be consistent. Routines help establish expectations. The more children learn about the consequences (both positive and negative) of their actions, the more they understand the impact of their behaviors and the more secure they feel by having that understanding. If they throw a toy and then lose the opportunity to play with that toy, they will ultimately learn not to throw the toy anymore. If a teen is abusing his phone privileges, say, by using apps that he's not supposed to use or having the phone on after it's supposed to be shut off, and he loses his phone, he'll learn to follow the established rules. Conversely, if he's using the phone appropriately, he may learn that he has more access to it.

Be logical. The punishment must fit the crime. If a rule gets broken, and let's face it, it will, be careful not to overreact! Make sure that any loss of privilege that might result from breaking a rule is made clear when that rule is introduced. Additionally, check in with yourself to be sure that the limit is manageable. Will you really take the phone away for a week, or will that be challenging if you need to reach your child after school? Rules and limits only work if you follow through.

Reinforce, reinforce, reinforce. When you see your child engaging in a behavior that you wish to encourage, say something! The more positive reinforcement you provide when you "catch" your child doing something good, the more likely your child is to do it again. So don't just point out missteps kids make, but instead reinforce all the good things they're doing.

Have a great October!
Miss Katie