

## Establishing and Maintaining Family Rules

Parenting is a fulltime job for a mother and a father. When death, separation, or divorce takes one parent out of the picture, what's a single parent to do? David and Lisa Frisbie in *Raising Great Kids on Your Own* offer some suggestions.

1. **Set boundaries.** Identify your expectations. Clearly tell them what your standards are for language, cleanliness, household chores, and other behaviors. Create a chart that list expectations and responsibilities and include rewards for meeting the expectations.

Rewards don't have to be monetary. Extra time with you, playing a favorite game, or watching TV can serve just as well.

2. **Monitor the progress.** Don't be surprised that you have to remind the children of their responsibilities. Children often lose track of time and need to be reminded. Also remember that a child often needs to be shown how to accomplish the task successfully. Complete the task once or twice together.

Trust but verify. If homework is to be done before using the computer, make sure you see the completed homework. This practice demonstrates to the children that you are interested in the quality of their work.

3. **Enforce the boundaries.** If a boundary was important enough to establish, then it is important enough to enforce. Talk with the child and explain your expectations and the consequences for not following the boundaries. If the boundary is not observed, enact the consequences. Even as you enforce the consequences, remind the child of your love.

3. **Stay patient** Remember you probably didn't stay within the boundaries all the time either. As appropriate, share times when you stepped outside the boundaries and the consequences you experienced help you become a better person.

4. **Keep saying, "I love you."** Children can never hear, "I love you", too often. We all appreciate affirmation. With all the changes and challenges your children are growing through, they need to hear about your love for them daily.

Parenting is filled with challenges and joys. The journey is a joyful one if you focus on the hugs, homemade cards, dandelion bouquets, and other expressions of love from your children. Single parents throughout time have reared children who are well adjusted and productive adults. With God's help, you can too.