

A WORD FROM THE AUTHORS

Sharing a cup of steaming coffee and talking about the power of caring, responsive, protective relationships are two of our favorite ways to lower stress and stimulate feel-good support for parents, grandparents and everyone who cares for a child. So we encourage you to join us for coffee and conversation guided by this Love and Limits discussion guide. We hope you come away feeling inspired and empowered through exchanging ideas as you explore some key chapters of our book.

We also hope this discussion guide motivates you to open your mind and heart to the power of unconditional love, empathy, mutual respect and trust, as well as optimum health, learning and behavior. Disciplining with love and limits is an amazing force for good, full of twists and turns, peaks and valleys. And it is a lifelong journey that you uniquely make every single day of your life when you become a parent. An awesome responsibility that deserves as much time and care as possible, love and limits will do more to keep the next generation safe than any force on earth!

This discussion guide is organized according to five chapters of the book; the “Big Discovery” in each chapter serves as the overarching theme of the discussion.

As you answer the questions in each section, dissect and reflect about how these discoveries are personal to your own journey of disciplining with love and limits with your child. And please spread the Big Five Discoveries here. Talk about them with your neighbors, at your office, with your own parents, friends and on social media. Let everyone know what you now know: love and limits save lives by helping to prevent the toxic stress that leads to the most urgent public health crises—screen addiction, bullying, obesity, depression, drug addiction, anxiety, heart disease, suicide, and more.

FIVE BIG DISCOVERIES

- Every child feels more secure and less anxious when he or she is taught routines, rules and limits.
- It’s all about brains, balance and buffers: science’s newest miracle drug is a consistent, supportive, responsive relationship with a caring adult.
- The easiest way to parent causes the most toxic stress.
- What we have too much of is judgment, blame, and shame of parents. What we have too little of is encouragement, support, and caring.
- Parenting ‘prescriptions’ need to be immediately accessible when we need to know how to respond to a situation because parenting is healthcare.

Thanks for joining the conversation!

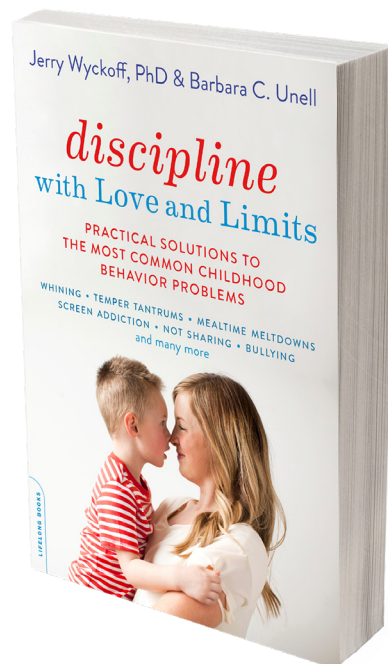
 

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

**DISCIPLINE WITH
LOVE AND LIMITS**

**Jerry L. Wyckoff, PhD
& Barbara C. Unell**



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INTRODUCTION: WHY IS PARENTING SO STRESSFUL?

BIG DISCOVERY: every child feels more secure and less anxious when he or she is taught routines, rules and limits.

1. Living by impulse, unsure of expectations makes life unpredictable for a child. When life is more predictable, is it less stressful?
2. When life is less stressful, is a child more or less anxious and depressed? Why?
3. Describe the stunning effects of a child being less anxious and depressed.
4. Discuss an example in your own life of someone whose brain has a lower level of executive functioning and self-regulation, causing him to be more likely to engage in risky behaviors, and need ways to self-medicate through overeating or abusing drugs.
5. With greater executive functioning and self-regulation, a child can delay gratification, tolerate frustration, adjust when things don't go his way, and control his anger because he has learned coping and problem-solving skills, and developed resilience, and emotional strength. Discuss how these skills affect health, learning, and behavior.
6. Without self-regulation, a child has frequent tantrums, makes unreasonable demands, has poor judgment, and is anxious and fearful. Discuss the importance of teaching a child how to self-regulate and express emotions without hurting someone else.
7. So many positive outcomes result from a caring, nurturing relationship with a responsive adult. How does this happen? Discuss some screen-free play ideas.

CHAPTER 1: HOW A HEALTHY MIND S.E.T.® PREVENTS TOXIC STRESS

BIG DISCOVERY: it's all about brains, balance and buffers: science's newest miracle drug is a supportive, responsive relationship with a caring adult.

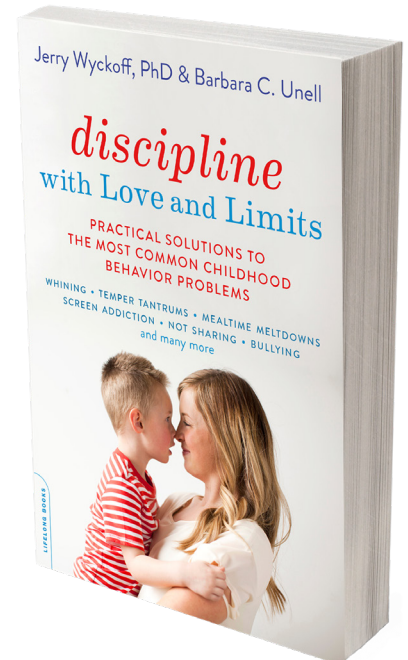
1. How does self-talk affect how you discipline your child?
2. Who can use Mind S.E.T.® to help to teach a child acceptable behavior?
3. Describe a situation in which you felt frightened and could feel the cortisol and adrenaline start to flood your brain and body. What was it like to try to problem-solve at that moment?
4. What is so important about preventing and reducing the effects of toxic stress?
5. Do you know children who can't concentrate, sit still, or follow directions? What ways do they show that they cannot control their emotions?
6. Share ways that supportive relationships and rich learning experiences, such as reading with children, and imaginative, building and outdoor play, for example, can —quite literally— affect the chemistry around children's genes and generate positive epigenetic signatures that activate genetic potential?
7. How does setting limits and routines mitigate stress so it doesn't become toxic?

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CHAPTER 2: HOW UNHEALTHY DISCIPLINE CREATES TOXIC STRESS

BIG DISCOVERY: the easiest way to parent causes the most toxic stress.

1. Does punishment change behavior? What does it accomplish?
2. How is 'giving in' when a child wants something similar to a strategy that gamblers use?
3. What happens with 'bribing' and 'giving in' that causes more stress, not less, for a parent?
4. What makes 'bribing' a strategy that is harmful to children in the long-term?
5. What do shouting and threatening a child teach him?
6. Toxic stress results when adrenaline and cortisol levels are high—when a child doesn't have consistent, caring adult support and is unsure of the expectations. She constantly feels the need to fight or flee from the threat or presence of danger, or the fear and panic of not knowing what to do. How does withdrawing love from a child and insulting or swearing at her cause this, too?
7. Without a caring adult providing consistent rules, routines, and expectations, the child lives by impulse, never knowing if the parent will give in, bribe, punish, etc. What's so bad about that?
8. What does the American Academy of Pediatrics say about effective ways to discipline and not to discipline?
9. What messages does spanking a child send him about how to treat others?

NOTE: CHAPTER 3, "HOW TO USE THIS BOOK", IS NOT INCLUDED IN THIS GUIDE.

CHAPTER 4: ENCOURAGING REMINDERS

BIG DISCOVERY: what we have too much of is judgment, blame, and shame of parents. What we have too little of is encouragement, support and caring.

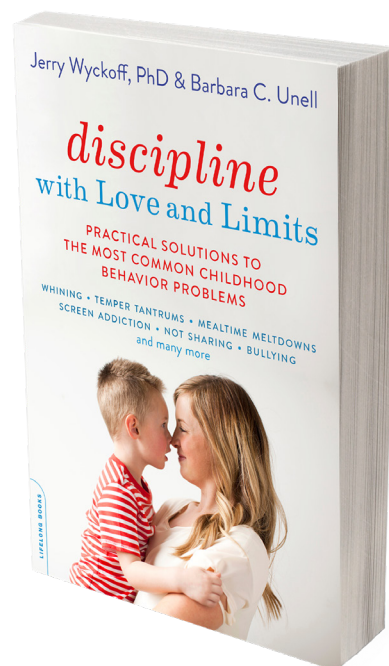
1. We not only need caring, supportive, and protective adults in childhood but also in adulthood. What do you want to happen when you tell someone you need help?
2. We see the tragic effects when children are toxic to each other on social media. What are the effects of the toxic culture of parenting blame, judgment, and shame on social media?
3. What Encouraging Reminders help you feel the same support that you want to provide for children, without blame, judgment, and shame for sharing parenting struggles?
4. What can help you be more encouraging to other parents, so they are more likely to get help when they are unable to cope?
5. What does it mean to you to be respectful, responsible, resilient, and resourceful?
6. What are the most meaningful Encouraging Reminders?
7. Which of these Encouraging Reminders will you share with family and friends?
8. Is it a good idea to discipline—teach—each of your children in different ways?
9. What Encouraging Reminder do you want to add to your own positive self-talk?

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CHAPTER 5: TEACHING TOOLS THAT BUILD EMOTIONALLY STRONG CHILDREN

BIG DISCOVERY: parenting 'prescriptions' need to be immediately accessible when we need to know how to respond to a situation because parenting is healthcare

1. How does **'Beat the Clock'** build a positive relationship between an adult and a child?
2. In what ways is **'Calm Time'** a Teaching Tool that helps a child learn the healthy habit of taking care of himself?
3. Discuss how setting **'Rules'** teaches a child that schoolwork is important when he **'Won't Do Homework.'**
4. When a child refuses to put his phone away at family meals, how can an adult use **'Grandma's Rule'** to solve the problem of **'Screen Addiction,'** practice social skills, and learn self-control?
5. Describe how using 'Empathy' can teach a child to be patient and tolerate frustration to solve the problem of **'Wanting His Own Way.'**
6. Share ways that **'Redirecting'** can prevent a child from hurting herself and others.
7. When is it best to use the three steps of a **'Reprimand'**—command, reason, replacement behavior—instead of only saying 'Stop' to a child?

ONE MORE BIG DISCOVERY...

Pediatric primary healthcare providers, other medical and behavioral health professionals, as well as teachers, are being called to action to integrate evidence-based parenting advice into their work every day. Ask them your questions, show them this book. Turn to them for caring, support and protection—they are using these same proven tools, too—our book and its pediatric online companion, BehaviorChecker.org, so you know you are getting advice that is proven, practical and personal. In addition, our online course, *Parenting is Healthcare*®, is educating healthcare professionals to accomplish our mission of preventing and reversing the effects of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences.

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