7 universal personal rights

These 7 values are a foundation for being able to set healthy boundaries in relationships (with adults or children).

1) **you have the right to respect from other people**.

In the past, respect has meant many things, such as:

deferment to the person who has power

politeness

obeying

These are NOT respect. Respect is acknowledging and honoring that other people have needs and feelings that differ from yours.

2) **You have the right to have needs. Your needs are as important as others' needs.**

This is an important one for women, who are socialized to believe that the way to be a "good" person (wife, mother, employee, etc) is to put everyone's needs first.

3) **You have the right to ask (not demand) that other's respond to your needs. Others have that right as well.**

In parenting, it is important to allow children to ASK for ANYTHING. Statements like "you know better than to ask for that" are invalidating and destructive. It is a child's job to ask, and the parent's job to set a boundary when asked. Telling your children not to ask is making them responsible for setting your boundaries.

In addition, children have the right to ask as many people as they need to, in order to get their needs met. For example, your child asks you to get them a glass of water and you are busy. You tell them "get it yourself" and then they go ask their dad to get them a glass of water- that's OK! It's then Dad's job to set a boundary and get the water or not.

4) **You have the right to choose whether or not you respond to others' needs and expectations. Others have that right as well.**

Love DOES NOT equal obligation.

If my son asks me to play legos with him, instead of saying, "I would but I have to fold the laundry" I say, “I don't want to right now."

The problem with “I would but..." is that it gives your child the message that the only time you don't meet their needs is when you CAN'T. When in fact, sometimes, you don't want to. Modeling this boundary for them is a powerful way to teach them this value.

5) **You have the right to have all of your feelings, no matter how "negative".**

6) **You have the right to express your feelings if you do not violate the rights of others**.

Children can be angry, but they can't hit you.

They can be disappointed, but they can't call you names.

Parents can be overwhelmed but cannot criticize their children

Parents can be resentful but can't shame their children.

7) **You have the right to show your abilities, enjoy your accomplishments, and take pride in yourself.**

Up until the age of 4 or 5, children are praised and applauded for much of what they do and say. We take pride in our children and their unique abilities. At 4 or 5, however, children begin to get the message that they should "quiet" their own pride, and stop "celebrating". Saying things like, "don't brag" or "don't be a show off" are ways that children are taught not to celebrate themselves.

If your child is expressing pride, and it makes you uncomfortable, you might work with them on their presentation, but be sure to avoid sending a spoken or unspoken message that pride is negative.