

SEVEN 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 BE RESPECTED BY OTHER PEOPLE.

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

- Deferment to the person who has power
- Politeness
- Obeying

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

Respect is:

- Trusting in the ability of another
- Interest in the point of view of another (other than your own)
- Ability to recognize and own your part of the problem
- Recognizing and accepting that others have feelings that are different from your own

2. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE NEEDS.

Your needs are as important as others' needs. This is an important one for trans and cis women as well as AFAB gender variant people who are generally socialized to believe that the way to be a "good" person (wife, mother, employee, etc) is to put everyone else's needs before their own.

3. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK (NOT DEMAND) THAT OTHERS RESPOND TO YOUR NEEDS.

When it comes to 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 another parent, guardian or family

member to get them a glass of water- that's OK! It's now the responsibility of the other person whom they asked 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.

Love DOES NOT equal obligation. If my child asks to play with them, instead of saying, "I would but I have to fold the laundry" you can 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" they may be.

6. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS IF YOU DO NOT VIOLATE THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS.

Children or parents can be angry, but they cannot hit one another. Children and parents can feel disappointed, but they cannot call each other 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.