

Anthony C McHenry is an English, Portuguese and Spanish language tutor and freelance translator.



Why aren't parents able to say NO to their children?

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I am not familiar with many cultures; I can list just a few, to which I may add, having resided, or traveled to, extensively, in Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, and the US. Son to an American mother, boundaries at home were clearly set-NO meant NO, and that what that. Daring to argue ended up in being grounded, sure thing. **NO meant a limit imposition, and I accepted it out of respect, not fear.** Did I resent it at times? Of course, I did. A new pair of jeans or brand-new sneakers were everything I ever wanted as a preteenager. And I did get them, when the time was right, for mom. This was back in Uruguay where we lived back then. My friends went through the exact same, although their parents were genuinely Uruguayan. There used to be a crystal-clear set of priorities each and every family lived with.

I was 18 when I moved to São Paulo, Brazil where I currently reside. My eldest brother and his wife took me into their home. They taught me the most valuable lesson I could have learned which would guide me for the rest of my life: establishing limits in ways of a dogma, a mantra if you wish. My brother's wife used to tell me that children, subconsciously, beg to have a line drawn they know best not to cross. And once again, NO meant NO. I watched them closely as they raised their children. It inspired me to become such a parent once I had decided to have my own family, which I did. A few years later my children started to grow up, the word NO became part of our daily vocabulary, for their "tough luck." Videogames took a long time to arrive at home, much to their despair. I will never forget their disappointment for not getting gifts on Children's Day, a day Brazil's politicians decided to turn into a holiday to convince parents and relatives should be celebrated on October 12. No matter how hard I tried to reason with them, to no avail, that October 12 celebrates Columbus' arrival to the New Territories-The Americas, not a holiday instilled by members of congress to help boost toy sales.

Some decades later, all four now in their late thirties and early forties, not only admit I was right, but they also praise me for it. In their own words "Thanks dad for raising us the way you did."

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