

EBOOK SERIES

Your Family Constitution

**DON'T SETTLE
FOR CHAOS**

www.yourfamilyconstitution.com



Scott Gale

DON'T SETTLE FOR CHAOS

HOW TO CREATE EFFECTIVE BOUNDARIES FOR A STRONGER, HEALTHIER FAMILY

"As adults, we must ask more of our children than they know how to ask of themselves. What can we do to foster their open-hearted hopefulness, engage their need to collaborate, be an incentive to utilize their natural competency and compassion... show them ways they can connect, reach out, weave themselves into the web of relationships that is called community."

—DONNA MARKOVA

Getting a newspaper that lies 20 feet outside the front door should be about as time-consuming as it is strenuous. It requires virtually no physical effort and only about ten seconds of time. So, why should this simple task cause tension and erode the delicate relationship between parent and child?

In a small suburb of Los Angeles, Brian is "Super-Dad." He works hard to keep his family healthy and content. He wants nothing more than to see his two boys, Todd and Andy, grow up to be responsible and productive adults.

To teach his children about responsibility, he started asking his kids to get the newspaper each morning, but not formally tasking either one with the job. A couple of weeks in, his attempts to instill responsibility began to crater under the weight of unclear expectations.

On a typical morning, Brian would ask Todd to get the newspaper. Todd would respond with an immediate attempt to excuse himself from duty, citing that he got the paper yesterday or recently performed some unrelated chore around the house. When Brian then turned to Andy, he would also plead his case, claiming that he had retrieved the paper three times in a row this week, as opposed to Todd's one, even though Todd's effort was more recent.

The intensity and outcome of each day's "discussion" would depend on the delicate balance between Brian's resolve and each boy's determination to remain glued to the television. On some days, Brian would hold firm until he saw results, on other days he would concede. The fact that Brian, Todd and Andy spent several minutes debating a ten second task didn't matter ... this was about principle.

If you have kids, you understand how lines in the sand get drawn over trivial issues. You know the fiery potential of each small request that requires a child to detach from a television program or video game, even if for only ten seconds. Every request that may cause boredom, discomfort or inconvenience gets immediately challenged and rejected, putting the onus on Mom and Dad to stand their ground or quietly withdraw their demand.

Like Brian, most parents want to raise good kids who reflect their values; but they must juggle this ideal among competing career needs and personal pursuits. In the end, it's not hard to see why so many parents struggle. Without the right tools, family life can be a thankless series of battles separated by isolated moments of contentment.

If you relate to Brian's plight, you need the right tools. Follow these tips to create effective boundaries and inspire cooperative behavior in your *household*.

Lean on the 3 C's, Clarity, Consistency and Commitment, when setting and enforcing boundaries.

In the midst of today's busy lifestyle, practicing the 3 C's at home is daunting task. It requires real effort by parents to figure out what is important to them, decide which behaviors require concrete structure, and enforce the rules even when they cause inconvenience.

What many parents don't realize is how much more satisfying and enjoyable family life can be after the initial investment of time and effort required to establish the 3 C's. Once children know that boundaries are firm, with real and predictable consequences tied to them, the practice of testing those boundaries becomes frustrating for the child. As living within the rules becomes routine, the tension surrounding those "sore spots" fades away.

Listen and understand. Don't jump to conclusions. Recurring stress in any relationship causes defensiveness. Human tendency is to hear words under such tense circumstances, then interpret them to support their existing defensive stance. In other words, true listening stops and word-twisting inadvertently becomes the norm.

Kids are especially prone to such behavior, but it is harder for them to recognize this. Therefore, the burden is put on parents to break the cycle and actively listen; to ask questions and ensure understanding; to make amends before emotional barriers become too high.

This is especially important when setting boundaries and resolving important issues. Any miscommunication or lack of understanding can lead to “band-aid” solutions that may temporarily ease the pain, but never truly fix the problem.

Focus on cleaning up a few big issues, rather than fixing all the small ones. The old adage “Rome wasn’t built in a day” has never been so true. Trying to fix all family problems in one fell swoop is essentially conceding defeat. In order to make sustainable improvement, families must identify the biggest sources of tension and fix those first. Once the biggies are out of the way, emotions subside, healthier routines develop, and families can refocus their efforts on the next wave of problems slated for repair.

Plan fun activities that everyone in the family can enjoy together. As the world turns and people evolve, sometimes family members forget how to enjoy each other’s company. They grow bored with favorite shared activities and never replace them. Once this happens, laughs are harder to come by and bonds become more strained.

Find activities to share as a family unit. When out shopping (i.e. shoes at a sporting goods store), keep your eyes peeled for fun games (i.e. bocce set) and bring them home to enjoy with your loved ones. Worst case, it bombs and you’re out a few bucks. Best case, you find a shared pastime which you can play enthusiastically until you find the next one.

Focus on improvement ... not perfection. If life were about perfection, we’d all be doomed to bitter failure. Don’t expect it from yourself or those around you. Doing so will lead to certain disappointment. Make a commitment to gradually improve. Establish the family infrastructure (i.e. 3 C’s) and communication patterns to start the ball rolling uphill. Then enjoy the continued progress you see in yourself and those around you.

Parenting today is hard ... no one will argue with that. That’s why it’s more important than ever before for parents to be thoughtful, prepared and resourceful. Use these suggestions to enjoy the parenting experience to the fullest, while effectively teaching life’s many lessons and raising well-balanced kids.

Don’t get caught spending five minutes to solve a ten second problem. Instead, invest the time up front and solve such issues before they become problems.

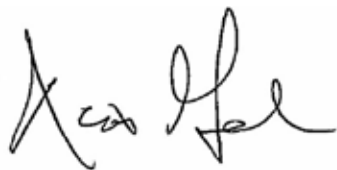
Thank you for your interest in *Your Family Constitution* Ebooks. If you enjoyed this Ebook and would like to read more, please visit www.yourfamilyconstitution.com to learn about the book, *Your Family Constitution; A Modern Approach To Family Values and Household Structure*, as well as related tools and services to make parenting easier and more rewarding.

Inside *Your Family Constitution*™ you'll learn...

- The four most overlooked signs that your household is becoming “out of control”...and a step-by-step process for correcting problems and appreciating family time.
- How to determine which important traits you most want to pass on to your children...and how to effectively transfer those qualities in a fun and meaningful way.
- How to assess your emotional availability to your family...and how to make adjustments to ensure you have the time for what matters. An in-depth look at the 3C's (clarity, consistency and commitment) that every family needs to run smoothly.
- Inside tips on how to understand what motivates your kids....and how to use this information to find “win-win” solutions that really work.
- Ten fun and healthy activities that your family members can enjoy together...that don't need to be plugged in.
- The keys to anticipating “big kid” and teenage issues....and a method to solve challenges before they become topics of concern.
- Common symptoms of entitlement in today's youth culture....and how to teach your child the difference between “learn” and “deserve” before it's too late.

Thank you again for taking interest in *Your Family Constitution*.

Sincerely,



Your Family Constitution

“Enjoy Parenting to the Fullest and Raise Great Kids”