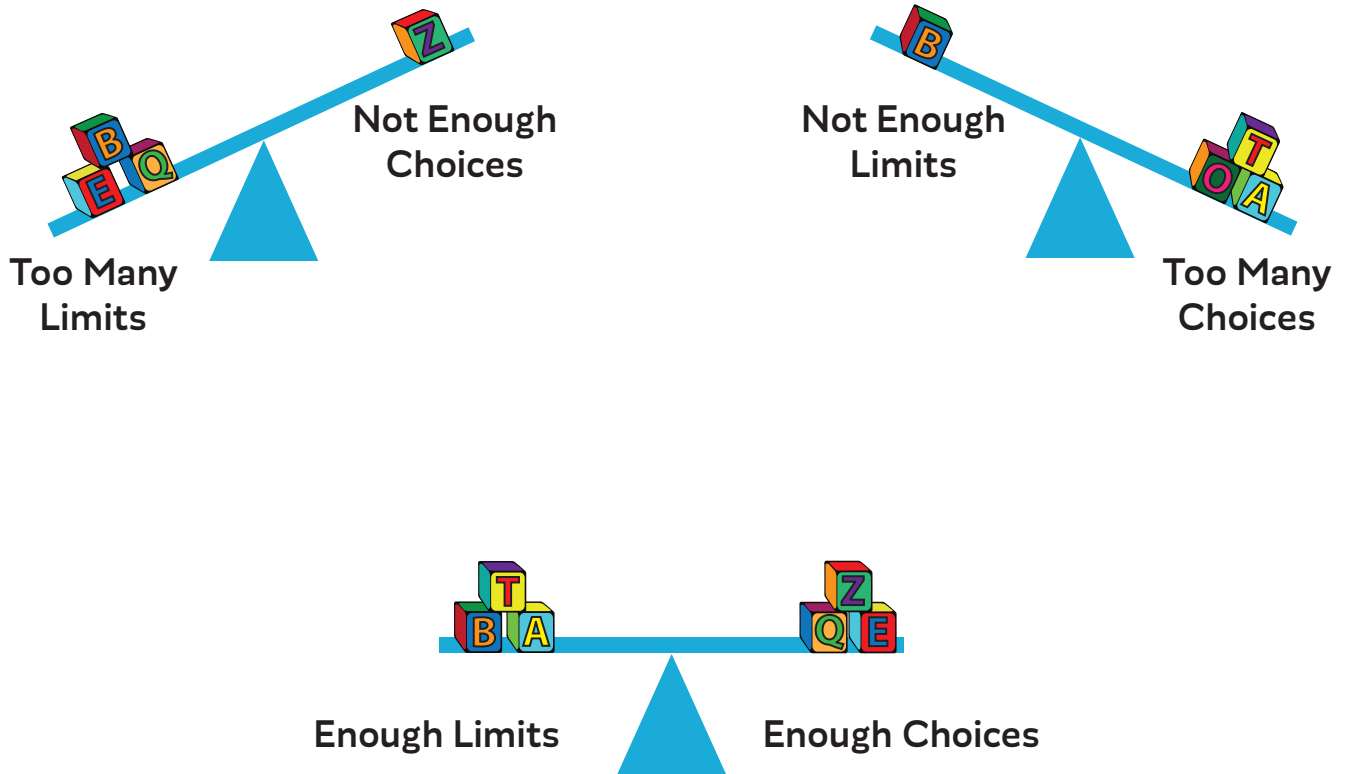


Balanced Guidance using Limits and Choices



Limits help me feel safe because I know you are in charge and taking care of me. Giving me choices builds my confidence, allows me to make some decisions for myself, and helps me cooperate.

Balanced Guidance using Limits and Choices

Setting limits and providing appropriate choices can be challenging. Sometimes caregivers do not set limits because they feel the limits might be difficult for their child. However, we know that when children have consistent and appropriate limits, they feel less anxious and more relaxed. Sometimes caregivers set a lot of limits because they want their child to be well behaved and follow rules. However, we know that children learn more about what is okay when they can make age-appropriate choices that are within acceptable boundaries or limits. When children are given appropriate choices and consistent limits, they feel more secure because life becomes more predictable and they know what to expect. Limits keep your child comfortable and safe, and choices increase cooperation and confidence.

It may be helpful to think of the correct balance of choices and limits for your child. As your child grows older, you can build your child's confidence by giving your child more choices with appropriate boundaries. For example, when it is time to get dressed, you can allow your child to make a choice about what shirt to wear, the red shirt or the green shirt. Giving acceptable choices makes it easier for your child to follow and accept everyday routines and limits. This makes dressing, mealtime, bathtime, bedtime, and transitions easier for you and your child, and builds cooperation and confidence that helps children feel competent. Many times, it is helpful to both set a limit and give a choice at the same time. For example, "I know it is hard to stop what you are doing, but we need to leave now. Why don't you pick a toy that you like to take with you."

This way of providing balanced guidance helps children learn to set their own limits and make appropriate choices as they grow older.

