

Rules, like records, are meant to be broken

COMMENTARY

By Joe Shearer

They say there's no instruction manual for being a parent, no list of rules. So let's make ours. Rule No. 1: you gotta have rules.

Of course we have plenty of rules around our house. No screaming. Pick up your toys when you're done playing with them. No tormenting your siblings. No hitting, biting, scratching, pushing, or poking. Bedtime at 9 o'clock.

And as strict as I can be with the kids (and believe me, I'm a fascist dictator at times), I recognize there are moments when we need to throw the rules out the window.

Sometimes at the store Riley can get an extra two or three steps ahead, and then hide in the clothes racks. No, not always. But...sometimes.

How about rule number two? Let's go with "provide a good example."

Lately I've taken to playing with Jenna and her baby doll, grabbing its tiny hands and legs and drawing them to my mouth, teeth bared like an angry tiger.

"No!" she yells, pulling the baby tight. "Don't bite baby!"

"But I want to bite her," I say. And so the game goes, until Jenna calls my bluff and sticks baby's hand in my mouth, saying "Bite her," a wicked gleam in her eye.

There I am, in violation of Rule No. 2. And I'm not even mentioning the wrestling, flopping, frolicking, throwing and other general horseplay.

The most oft-broken rule in our house is no doubt "No snacks if you don't eat your dinner." As a child I was a slave to this rule; my mother enforced this rule with an iron fist.

We don't seem to have the will for that one, but we have taken recently to limiting them to a piece of fruit or optional leftovers. But other times it's ice cream or cake. Or both.

So, what's rule No. 3, then?

I'm going with, "Sometimes you just gotta break the rules."



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