

Behaviour Management Rx.

“Prescription to Keep Behaviour on Track”

Here is some information you will find very useful.

Child Behaviour Management

The psychologist Dr Rudolf Dreikurs wrote extensively about behaviour to help parents (and teachers) improve their relationships with children at home (and in school). His positive non-punishing concepts of democratic and respectful parenting, and classroom behaviour management, are the hallmarks of his beliefs about raising happy, independent, and responsible children.

Basic Concepts for Positive Parenting:

Children are social beings,
All behaviours are goal-oriented,
A child's primary goal is to belong and feel significant,
A misbehaving child is a discouraged child,
Social interest, responsibility, and a desire to contribute,
A child is *equal* in value to an adult,
Mistakes are opportunities to learn,
Ensure a message of *love* gets through to children.

An Approach to Understanding Children:

Every child has his or her own individual way of being in the world. There are some children who are quiet and passive, while others are more extrovert and active. Some children prefer quiet activities and others like boisterous ones. Observing and accepting a child's personality can help a parent to interact in ways that fit with the child's preferences and character. This knowledge only comes from spending quantity time with a child.

Why Children Misbehave:

A child does not usually know exactly why they misbehave, rather they learn about the world by trial and error, and by observing role-models they have around them. As they behave, they get feedback on what they do. If the desired result is produced by misbehaviour, it may continue. As parents begin to learn how to understand a child's goals, it gives them clues on how to guide the child toward more positive behaviour. It must be remembered that a child has a desire to belong, and to find their place in their family and society. They continue with behaviours that result in being socially included, and abandon behaviours that exclude them from others.

Four Mistaken Goals of Misbehaviour:

1. ***Seeking undue Attention*** - All children desire and need attention, but children who need attention all the time will resort to behaviour to keep others busy with them or to get special treatment. Parents experiencing this misbehaviour will feel annoyed, irritated, worried, and guilty. The parent often responds by scolding or warnings but the child is only temporarily satisfied. *Remedy* – Ignore the misbehaviour, give the child attention (encouragement) when it is deserved but not being sought, and use logical consequences (rather than reward and punishment).

2. *Seeking undue Power* - For certain children a mistaken goal is to be the *boss*, that is, to be in charge. By this behaviour they are showing they are *in control* or that others *can't make them* do anything they don't want to do. Parents feel angry, challenged, threatened, defeated, provoked, and defeated, and will often get into a power struggle with the child. If the parent *gives in*, the child wins and stops the behaviour, until the next power struggle! *Remedy* – Avoid the power struggle, use appropriate humor, admit your own powerlessness, listen to the child, offer some choices, and negotiate reasonable limits (of time and action).

3. *Seeking Revenge* - These children believe that they have been hurt by others or that they don't have any power. They think the only way to belong is to get back at others. Parents are hurt (physically or emotionally), and feel disappointment, disbelief, disgusted and rejected by their own child. *Remedy* – Don't show the child your anguish or retaliate, but be explicit about their good qualities that others like about them, and make incremental progress toward using encouragement when appropriate.

4. *Seeking to display Inadequacy* - A child can just give up at times and display helplessness in their behaviours. They wish to be left alone and want few expectations to satisfy. Parents want to give up, enable, and over-help, they feel helpless to do anything useful. This form of behaviour may be shown selectively i.e., only in certain tasks, like sport or homework. *Remedy* – Be clear about what you expect from the child, find activities in which they can be successful (with increasing difficulty), and reinforce the notion that not trying things means they will not know their potential. Encourage, encourage, encourage!

These four goals of misbehaviour give parents clues to redirect children to help them choose more positive ways to achieve the desire to belong. When we know that children are not consciously scheming to misbehave but that they have a *mistaken* goal, it reminds us to maintain a respectful and caring approach.

To identify the mistaken goal ask yourself:

1. When your child misbehaves how do you feel? (emotional response)
2. What do you most often do in response to the misbehaviour?
3. What does your child do in response?

Helpful Parenting Beliefs:

Remember that you cannot change anyone, *only yourself*. Improving a child's behaviour comes from changing your responses to their behaviours. Children have deeply held beliefs about if/how they belong, and it is from these perceptions that their feelings and actions flow. As a parent you also have feelings and thoughts, and as you get more aware of your emotions and values, and make changes to the way you respond, you will make a huge difference in influencing your child's positive behaviour choices.

A parent's role in shaping their child's behaviour is enormous. When you put in the thoughtful effort, the rewards for everyone will be satisfying and lifelong. Psychologically-balanced children are delight to themselves and society.

© 2011 Dr. John Barletta MAPS
Clinical Psychologist
Level 1, Suite 2
3 Days Rd, Grange 4051
☎ 3356 4400
john@johnbarletta.com
www.johnbarletta.com