

Understanding Young Children and Their Behavior

Children want to belong, to fit in, and to be accepted. In the book "Parenting Young Children" by STEP Publishers, it states that in order to meet these goals children form beliefs and patterns of behavior. As parents, we can influence their beliefs and help them form positive patterns of behavior. We can help turn misbehavior into **positive** behavior.

Children misbehave to get attention, gain power, get revenge or display inadequacy. We can take some basic steps when our children use one of the goals of misbehavior:

- **Attention:** If possible, ignore misbehavior that seeks attention. Choose not to be annoyed. Avoid giving attention when the child is asking for it and give positive attention when your child is not expecting it.
- **Power:** Refuse to fight or give in. Do not let yourself become angry. If possible let our child experience the consequences of the misbehavior.
- **Revenge:** Changing the cycle of revenge is not easy. It takes time. Do not try to get even; instead, work to build trust and mutual respect.
- **Display Inadequacy:** A child who displays inadequacy is discouraged. Do not give up on this child. Avoid criticism. Find areas of strength to encourage.

To turn misbehavior into positive behavior think about the following:

- A child who wants attention sends the message: "I want to be part of things. I want to be **involved.**" Encourage your child to help and join in.
- A child who seeks power might be saying "Please give me choices so I can learn to be responsible and **independent**"
- Children who seek revenge often want **fairness**. Their message is, "I want things to be fair, please help me learn to cooperate."
- Children who display inadequacy are seeking to **be capable**. They want to succeed and trust themselves. They are saying "Don't give up on me"

Remember: We do not cause our children to misbehave. They choose the way they behave. However, the way we respond influences their behavior. By our words and actions we are telling children we won't support their misbehavior but we will support and accept positive behavior.



Smart Beginnings for Parents! Effective parenting strategies for tackling the unique challenges of parenting young children.

Fall seminar series begins Sept. 22nd at Bonsack Baptist Weekday Early Education Center. 7 Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:00 & it only costs \$10 for the whole series! Childcare is available. Call 540-777-4211 or email lynn@uwrv.org for more info.