

Notes: Behavior Management

Two Kingdom Principles:

1. LOVE comes first
2. God always shows the way.

Do you go into the classroom to teach the material or to teach the child?

It helps to see a behavior challenge as an opportunity. Basically, misbehavior tells us that the child lacks the skills or means to problem-solve.

"Your understanding does not change the limits on behavior. It just helps children to become better able to accept the limits." – Dr. Becky Bailey

Why Might a Child Misbehave?

1. Physical needs:

Illness, allergies, sleepiness, hunger, too hot, too cold, sitting still too long.

2. Environmental or scheduling factors:

- Not knowing the rules
- Teacher is late to class or is preoccupied when children are entering
- Classroom (or furniture) is too large or too small
- Activities and toys are not age-appropriate

3. Attention or emotion needs:

- "An empty emotional tank" (Ross Campbell)
- How do you know this might be the reason for the misbehavior?
You are annoyed.
- Try to ignore the behavior as it happens, but give attention at other times.

4. Need for leadership opportunities

- How do you know this might be the reason for the misbehavior?
You are angry; the child is oppositional; there's a "power play."
- Teach skills by giving leadership opportunities and acceptable choices.

5. Need for relational skills

- How do you know this might be the reason for the misbehavior?
Someone or something is getting hurt (emotionally or physically)
- Teach the victim to speak up.
- Follow this procedure described by Dr. Becky Bailey in *Conscious Discipline*

For the aggressor, say:

Motive: You wanted _____, so you _____.

Need: You didn't know the words to say (or what else to do). (see Luke 23:34)

Limit: You may not _____; _____-ing hurts.

Teach: When you want _____, say (or do) _____.

Practice: Say it now: _____. (child repeats)

6. Frustration

(Tantrums are frustration at not being able to control a situation.)

- How do you know this might be the reason for the misbehavior?
You are puzzled or frustrated by it.
- Empathize with upset children.
Reflect what you see and hear, what you sense the child feels.
Redirect the child.
Restrain if necessary.
Focus on safety.

There is a difference between internal motivation and external motivation. The goal of behavior management is to get the child to see the sense in making good behavior choices, to get the motivation to be intrinsic.

Strategies for Dealing with Misbehavior

The Five A's

- Assume the child has positive motives.
- Avoid humiliation, ridicule, impatience, anger.
- Avoid asking, "Why did you do that?" (It shuts down discussion, and often children can't explain why.) Instead, ask, "What happened?"
- Accept this opportunity to teach children the skills to problem-solve.
- Allow or impose consequences.

Natural Consequences

Use only when the consequence will not harm the child.

(For example, a library book left out in the rain when the child was told to bring it in. The librarian will set the consequence.)

Offer empathy. (Instead of saying, "I told you that would happen.")

Problem-solve. (What will you do now? And help the child work it out.)

Imposed Consequences

Logically related to the event or structured around safety.

Remove the material.

Or remove the privilege.

Or remove the child from the situation (time-out).

A general rule of thumb for time-out is to give as many minutes as match the child's age in years. In other words, two minutes for a two-year-old, five minutes for a five-year-old, and so on.

Some behaviors may require long-term training. Agree with the child that you will both work to help him or her get control of the specific behavior. Let the child know that you have confidence that they can control themselves. Let them know you're supporting them and will help them work it out. You may want to work out a secret signal just between the two of you so that when you see the challenging behavior beginning to happen, you give a reminder signal – a pat on your head, a tug on your ear, etc.

Use humor if possible. Ask them to "rewind" or "flip the switch" or "reset." Come up with a system of letting the child know he or she is progressing and point out the good behavior, even giving small rewards along the way. (Rewards are not bribes. Bribes are something given to get a person to do wrong. Rewards are given for good work. You get a reward when you get a paycheck or earn vacation time.)

"When people sin, you should forgive and comfort them, so they won't give up in despair. You should make them sure of your love for them." 2 Corinthians 2:7, CEV