

Define simply and clearly any difficult behavior. Keep a diary of what led up to the behavior and what immediately followed it. From this, see if there is a pattern. What are the triggers and consequences which might be keeping the behavior going? DON'T blame yourself but work at changing your responses.

Understanding the Child



To understand a child one needs full knowledge of the reasons for his development. Many of his traits are due to his trying to find his position in the family group, or seeking methods which bring recognition and which prove to be effective in the particular setting of his environment. Without

encouragement and guidance, the child fails time and again in finding socially accepted methods of dealing with others. Misbehavior and disturbance result.

Four main objectives can be discerned as motivating a child to misbehave. We must understand these goals before we can hope to change the child's behavior.

Most frequently, the child wants to attract attention.

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This particular desire prevails in younger children. In the family situation of today, children have little opportunity to be useful, to gain social recognition by contributing to the common goal. They, therefore, come to believe in the importance of receiving-gifts, affection, or at least attention. The toy which father brings home is less desirable as a tool of enjoyment than as a token of father's love. Devoid of attention, the child feels neglected. If he cannot obtain attention in a pleasant way, he turns to disagreeable ways and deliberately provokes scolding and punishment. That at



When there are tensions and anger rise in you or your child take five. Take five minutes to cool down and to ask yourself, "Why am I getting so angry?" Try to identify the real problem, and then find the solution. Always control your temper.

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least is attention; remaining unnoticed is worse. Not even to be punished is complete rejection; worst of all is to be ignored. Children who strive for attention must be taught that they can be useful-that social recognition means not receiving, but contributing.

The second possible objective of any disturbance is to demonstrate superiority and power. Children exposed to force learn to counteract with resistance. The more one demands of them, the less they conform. Children are very ingenious in frustrating

the most forceful scheming of their parents, and gain easy victories while their adversaries are bewildered and dumbfounded.

This hostility leads finally to the third objective, namely, to punish, to get even. Convinced that nobody likes him, the child gives up any attempt to please. The only compensation for his humiliation is his ability to hurt others as he is hurt. No sense of social responsibility impedes his desire to take for himself whatever seems gratifying. This aggressive behavior expresses complete social discouragement.

The fourth objective is evidenced in complete passivity.

It expresses a belief in personal inadequacy. It is an attempt to avoid situations where the anticipated personal deficiency would become obvious.

To comprehend malfunctions we must know which one of these four goals is behind them. Many believe they understand a certain behavior if they find a word adequate to describe it. But words don't explain qualities, they only describe them. The word laziness, for instance, does not explain a definite behavior; psychologically each example of laziness differs from others. One child is lazy in order to get attention-mother must sit near by to remind and help; otherwise, the homework won't be done. But laziness can mean superiority and

power; against all threats and punishments of parent or teacher, the child flatly refuses to work. Sometimes laziness is the worst revenge of mishandled child-punishing vain and over-ambitious parents. In many cases laziness means just the discouraged attitude of giving up. What is the sense of trying if one cannot hope to make the grade anyhow?

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Parents must learn to understand such tendencies-they must know why the child behaves as he does; against whom and what he directs his aggression or shortcomings. They should know more-although they rarely do. Parents should gather information about the general line of the child's thoughts and desires, about his conception of life and of himself, about his attempts and the conclusions he draws from his experiences.