

Want to Know More About Children's Misbehaviour?

There are basically four different types of misbehaviour that children can show from time to time. How we as their parents react, will play a big part in how often these behaviours will be repeated. Which of these behaviours do your children exhibit? What reaction do you have when your children behave this way?

1. Attention Seeking behaviours: These include whingeing and whining, being silly and interrupting. Children who behave this way are saying "Pay attention to me!" Do these behaviours annoy you? Children can be satisfied even with negative attention from us. How can you handle your emotions so that your response is not scolding but disciplined? Even a deep breath before responding can help!

2. Needy behaviours: These include laziness, forgetfulness and untidiness. Children who behave this way are saying "Help me - I can't do it!" When parents respond to these behaviours by repeatedly doing things for their children, reminding them, and tidying up for them, kids soon learn to become helpless. We need to remember to support our children, not rescue them. In what ways can you offer support to your children so that they are accomplishing things for themselves?

3. Revenge Seeking behaviours: These include lashing out physically and saying hurtful things. Children who behave this way are saying "I'm going to hurt you and get back at you!" Parents can often feel hurt or angry at their child's retaliatory behaviour. How can you handle your emotions when dealing with this type of misbehaviour? What can you say to yourself to keep yourself composed and to prevent yourself from reacting impulsively? Once again a deep breath may help by briefly giving you time to think through how you will respond. How can you help your children deal with their emotions too? Acknowledging their feelings and sticking to a set consequence can be helpful. "I understand that you are feeling cross. You can have your toy back when the timer goes off."

4. Power Seeking behaviours: These include arguing, temper tantrums and stubbornness. Children who behave this way are saying "You can't make me!" They want to have some power and control. If you respond by making the child do whatever it is, it is likely you will end up with even more defiance on your hands. The answer is simple. Rather than controlling can you offer some choice? This then gives some power to the child and the argument often dissipates. For example if a child is arguing about doing a chore can you offer them choice about when the chore is done?

Do your children have favourite ways to push your buttons? How do you choose to respond? If necessary, what can you do differently to change any patterns?

These coaching questions can be very helpful in raising your awareness about current patterns of behaviour in your family. When we raise our awareness of our part in family relationships we can choose to change patterns of behaviour that may have become habit. Picture a mobile. If we move one part then the rest wobbles too. Just like a mobile, when we adjust how we respond to our children's behaviour our children's reactions can also change!

And of course a great way to lessen inappropriate behaviour is to notice the good. The more attention we give to our children's positive behaviour the more of that we will see! What positive behaviour can you notice your children doing today? And how can you show them that you appreciate this behaviour?

If you would like to find out even more about handling difficult behaviours consider coming along to one of our workshops, such as Testing and Tantrums, or consider some individual parent-coaching tailored just for you!