

THE PARENTING EDUCATION PROGRAM

UNDERSTANDING THE GOALS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Human behavior is very complex. Sometimes it seems as though it is very predictable, while at other times it (behavior) seems quite mysterious. This is especially true for children's behavior. For many parents, dealing with their children's behavior is a constant frustrating struggle. Developing an understanding of the purposes of children's behavior can be the first step in reducing the frustration and tension many parents feel in trying to deal with behavioral problems. Children's behavior is purposeful. This means there is a reason for it. This is intended to be a hopeful message. Once the reason or purpose for the behavior is discovered and understood, knowing what to do about it is much simpler.

Since children's behavior is purposeful, there is an intended goal for the behavior. Just as parents often do not understand the goal of their children's behavior, children do not necessarily understand the goal of their own behavior. Many parents spend a great deal of time questioning their children about the reasons for their behavior. This can be particularly frustrating with younger children. Young children do not have the insight or cognitive ability to understand or reason out why they behave in a certain way.

Most of the time when young children don't answer those "WHY" questions about their behavior, it is because they are not capable of answering. They simply do not know. This is not intended to put the child at fault or imply that they are stupid. To understand the goals of behavior requires knowledge about behavior, the ability to compare it to past experience, the ability to reason things out and use

insight. Many very bright adults do not understand their own behavior either, simply because they need more knowledge about behavior.

The knowledge presented in this study guide will fill in the gaps to understanding much about children's behavior.

Dr. Rudolph Dreikurs has developed a very practical and helpful way to look at the goals of human behavior. Don Dinkmeyer and Gary D. McKay have expanded Dr. Dreikurs work to include both positive and negative approaches to these goals. The four main goals of human behavior are based on the need for CONTACT, POWER, PROTECTION, and WITHDRAWAL.

Contact comes out of our basic human need to belong. In our need to belong we attempt to make contact with other people. The contact may be physical or emotional. For infants this need for contact is critical for their survival and it is expressed in their need to be held. Contact is also made in many other ways including touching, talking, attention, and recognition. Both children and adults want to be recognized by others and regarded with respect and affection.

Power enables us to have influence or control over situations and our lives. Children need to develop their power and learn how to use it in a positive manner. Power is developed through learning, and knowledge is power. Learning is how we become capable and powerful.

Protection is necessary for survival. We must protect ourselves from both physical or psychological threats or attacks. As a society we have developed systems to defend us. A very advanced form of self protection is contributing to the advancement of others. As we contribute to others they are less likely to attack us out of their desperation.

Withdrawal can be seen as a need to temporarily remove ourselves from contact with others. We may withdraw from psychological or physical danger. We may also withdraw as a need to balance out our need to contact others. Sometimes children need contact and at other times they need to withdraw and regroup or center.

With each of the basic goals of behavior, contact, power, protection, and withdrawal, there are both positive and negative approaches to fulfilling the need. When a child is seeking contact, they may attempt to get it in a positive or a negative manner. The manner in which the child attempts to reach their goal is usually dependent upon whether the child is encouraged or discouraged. An encouraged child is inspired and hopeful of succeeding in getting their need or basic goal met through positive behavior. A discouraged child is lacking in confidence and hopes that they can succeed in getting their needs or basic goals met, and they then attempt to reach them through negative behavior.

Positive behavior is appropriate behavior and what parents usually want from their children. Negative behavior or misbehavior is what parents are attempting to teach their children not to use. This parenting program supports the belief that children are not good or bad and should not be labeled in that way. Labeling children as good or bad can be damaging to their self-esteem and does not help to correct the behavior. Children are either encouraged or discouraged and that affects their method of behavior. Rather than label the child, it is more effective to address the child's behavior. It is also more effective to look at a child's behavior as being either positive or negative rather than good or bad.

The encouraged child usually behaves in a positive manner. They use a positive method or goal for meeting their needs. There is a

positive behavior goal for each of the needs addressed earlier as shown below.

NEED

GOAL OF POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

Contact

Recognition

Power

Independence

Protection

Assertiveness, Forgiveness

Withdrawal

Centering

The positive goal of recognition is an attempt to satisfy the need for contact. The positive goal of independence is an attempt to satisfy the need for power. The positive goal of assertiveness or forgiveness is an attempt to satisfy the need for protection. The positive goal of centering is an attempt to satisfy the need for withdrawal.

The discouraged child often behaves in a negative manner. They use a negative method or misbehavior to meet their needs. There is a misbehavior goal for each of the needs addressed earlier as shown below.

<u>NEED</u>	<u>GOAL OF MISBEHAVIOR</u>
Contact	Undue Attention-Seeking
Power	Rebellion
Protection	Revenge
Withdrawal	Avoidance

The negative goal or misbehavior of undue attention-seeking is an attempt to satisfy the need for contact. The misbehavior of rebellion is an attempt to satisfy the need for power. The misbehavior of revenge is an attempt to satisfy the need for protection. The misbehavior of avoidance is an attempt to satisfy the need for withdrawal.

Sometimes it is difficult to determine the goal of children's behavior. It is helpful for parents to practice determining the goals of both positive and negative behavior or misbehavior. One key is for parents to examine their own feelings about the behavior. The typical types of feelings associated with positive behavior are closeness, admiration, love and respect. To look more closely at how this works, let's examine how each behavior is linked to the child's belief, the parent's feeling, and the child's response. Then we can look at some actions that parents can take regarding the behavior.

The encouraged child makes contact and gets recognition by being cooperative and helping out. The parent usually feels close to the child. The child has a belief that they can get recognition by helping out, that they belong by cooperating, and that they enjoy human contact. Parents can support this behavior and these beliefs by

encouraging cooperation and acknowledging what the child does to help out.

The encouraged child asserts their power through their independence by acting responsibly, being self-motivated and learning. The parent usually feels pride or admiration. The child has a belief that they can influence what happens to them and that they are responsible for their life. Parents can encourage this by giving responsibilities and encouraging the child.

The encouraged child, needing to protect themselves, does so by being assertive. They interact with others in a positive manner while standing up for themselves, and they can forgive others. The parent feels love for the child. They can reinforce the behavior by expressing their own positive feelings and being assertive. They can also be forgiving in their own relationships and model that attribute for their child.

The encouraged child, needing to withdraw, believes that there are times when they need to be alone. They withdraw by centering themselves and resume contact with others when they are ready. The parent usually feels respect and can encourage the child by respecting their wishes to be alone and not pressuring them.

Positive behavior can be reinforced and the children need to be complimented on their good behavior. It is not enough for parents to simply be satisfied with children's positive behavior. That behavior needs to be recognized and the child needs to be acknowledged and praised for their positive behavior. Parents need to be looking for their child to do positive things and then give them lots of praise and attention. This reinforces the child's positive behavior, encourages them, and brings more closeness and warmth in the relationship between the parent and child.

Misbehavior needs to be redirected in a positive manner. When the same types of misbehavior continue constantly, parents need to look at the goal of the misbehavior and react in a different way. Again, one clue to determining the goal of the misbehavior is the parent's feeling. It is then helpful to understand the child's belief and to know some different actions parents can take to redirect the behavior. The parents usual feeling about the misbehavior is irritation, anger, hurt, and helplessness.

The discouraged child who is attempting to make contact does so through the misbehavior or undue attention-seeking. The parent usually feels irritated. Often the child has the belief that they only belong when they are noticed and that the world should revolve around them. The child finds ways to keep people busy paying them attention but in inappropriate ways. They tend to pester others, constantly ask questions, constantly clown around, or be forgetful, helpless or lazy. When parents show their irritation, the child will stop temporarily and then start up again. Parents can respond differently, by ignoring the irritating behavior or by removing themselves from the child. The child no longer gets their goal; the parent's attention. Parents can redirect the child's behavior by giving them their full attention at unexpected times and showing them how to belong by helping out and cooperating. The child learns to get their need for contact met by cooperating and helping out, and not by irritating the parent.

The child who is misbehaving by rebelling is attempting to assert their power over their parents. The child has the belief that they only count or belong when they are in control or when they are winning rather than cooperating. The parent usually feels angry in these situations. The child will try to get parents to give in or will win by engaging the parents in a fight. Parents mistakenly get caught in a power struggle with the child and the child escalates the behavior in order to win.

Parents can respond differently by neither fighting nor giving in. Again the parent can take action to settle the situation by removing themselves from the conflict. The fight cannot continue if one person quits fighting or leaves the scene. It is important to understand what the power struggle is about in order to resolve the situation and then teach the child to behave differently. Once things have cooled down, parent and child can talk about solutions and come to an agreement about how they will behave in the future. A later study guide will address dealing with these problems in more detail.

The discouraged child who feels a need to protect themselves may do so through revenge. The child tries to protect themselves by hurting others and getting even. This is especially common after a power struggle in which the child feels they have lost. Parents usually feel very hurt when these behaviors occur. They can react differently by withdrawing from this highly emotional and sometimes physical situation. Although often difficult, it is important for parents to resist the temptation to hurt their child back. Once things have settled, parent and child can interact with each other more reasonably. Appropriate consequences for similar future behavior should be established. A later study guide will address the use of consequences for managing behavior. Avoidance is the discouraged child's method of trying to satisfy their need to withdraw. They have a belief that they are a failure, nothing should be expected from them, and they want to be left alone. The child becomes passive, refuses to try, and gives up. The parent often feels helpless in these situations. Parents can respond by being patient and accepting, and finding ways to encourage the child. The child can be encouraged by having the parents believe in them and give them tasks to do that they are very capable of succeeding at.

Using the information presented about the goals of human behavior, consider your own behavior as a child. Determine the ways in which you behaved in a positive and negative manner.

How did your parents respond? Did they respond in the same way or differently? Can you imagine the feelings they felt regarding your behavior?

Now think about your behavior as an adult. In what ways do you behave positively and negatively? What responses do you get from those around you? What are the costs and rewards of these behaviors? Are there any of your behaviors you would like to redirect? Think about ways you can re-parent yourself and encourage yourself to change these behaviors.

CHILD'S		
MISBEHAVIOR	PARENTS BEHAVIOR	PAY-OFF
Undue	Reminding, Nagging	Undue
Attention	Scolding	Attention
Rebellion	Gets angry & gives in	Power
Rebellion	Gets angry & fights	Power
Revenge	Punishes & hurts back	Justifies behavior
Avoidance	Gives up	Avoidance

The chart on the previous page is taken from Active Parenting, by Dr. Michael Popkin. It clarifies some of the pay-offs children get from their misbehavior.

STUDY QUESTION - STUDY GUIDE SEVEN

UNDERSTANDING THE GOALS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

1. When we say that children's behavior is purposeful, we mean:
 - a) it is very unusual
 - b) it is immature
 - c) there is a reason for it
 - d) they cannot control it

2. When young children don't answer those WHY questions about their behavior:
 - a) it is because they are being stubborn
 - b) they should be punished
 - c) it is because they are not capable of answering
 - d) parents should insist that they do answer

3. To understand _____ requires knowledge about behavior, the ability to compare it to past experience, the ability to reason things out and insight.
 - a) children
 - b) consequences
 - c) the goals of behavior
 - d) what children are capable of doing

4. Many very bright adults do not understand behavior, simply because they:
- a) need more knowledge about behavior
 - b) are stupid
 - c) lack cognitive ability
 - d) all of these
5. Approaches to behavioral goals can be:
- a) only positive
 - b) only negative
 - c) neither positive or negative
 - d) both positive or negative
6. The four main goals of human behavior are based on the need for contact, power, protection and _____.
- a) withdrawal
 - b) assistance
 - c) purpose
 - d) reason
7. Contact is one of our basic human _____
- a) desires
 - b) needs to belong
 - c) weakness

- d) strengths
-
- 8. Both children and adults want to be recognized by others and regarded:
 - a) with respect and affection
 - b) with fear and respect
 - c) with admiration and fear
 - d) with criticism and respect
-
- 9. _____ enables us to have influence or control over situations and our lives.
 - a) protection
 - b) control
 - c) power
 - d) contact
-
- 10. _____ is how we become capable and powerful.
 - a) power
 - b) learning
 - c) being demanding
 - d) having rights
-
- 11. Protection is:
 - a) being physically powerful
 - b) necessary for survival

- c) a human weakness
 - d) how we gain respect
12. _____ can be seen as a need to temporarily remove ourselves from contact with others.
- a) control
 - b) power
 - c) protection
 - d) withdrawal
13. The manner in which the child attempts to reach their goals is usually dependent upon whether the child is:
- a) encouraged or discouraged
 - b) happy or sad
 - c) good or bad
 - d) feeling high or low self-esteem
14. An encouraged child is inspired and hopeful of succeeding in getting their basic goal met through:
- a) negative behavior
 - b) misbehaving
 - c) positive behavior
 - d) encouragement
15. A discouraged child is lacking in confidence and hope that they can succeed in getting their basic goal met and attempts to reach it through:
- a) negative behavior
 - b) positive behavior

- c) encouragement
 - d) protection
16. Labeling children as good or bad can be damaging to their self-esteem:
- a) but is effective
 - b) and it does not help to correct the behavior
 - c) and helps children to learn to behave correctly
 - d) and encourages children to be bad
17. The encouraged child usually behaves:
- a) negatively
 - b) positively
 - c) by misbehaving
 - d) in a resentful manner
18. The positive goal of _____ is an attempt to satisfy the need for contact.
- a) power
 - b) centering
 - c) recognition
 - d) independence

19. The positive goal of independence is an attempt to satisfy the need for _____.
- a) power
 - b) centering
 - c) recognition
 - d) protection
20. The misbehavior of _____ is an attempt to satisfy the need for protection through a negative approach.
- a) power
 - b) contact
 - c) revenge
 - d) rebellion
21. The misbehavior of avoidance is an attempt to satisfy the need for:
- a) control
 - b) contact
 - c) withdrawal
 - d) power
22. The encouraged child makes contact and gets recognition by:
- a) acting irresponsibly
 - b) seeking undue attention
 - c) being cooperative and helping out
 - d) being assertive
23. When an encouraged child asserts their power by acting responsibly and being self-motivated, the parent usually feels:
- a) irritated
 - b) close

28. Parents can avoid a power struggle with their children and respond differently by:
- a) leaving or being angry
 - b) either fighting or giving up
 - c) neither fighting nor giving up
 - d) forcing the child to go to their room
29. When children attempt to protect themselves through revenge with their parents, it is important for parents to resist:
- a) talking to their child
 - b) giving up
 - c) being hurt
 - d) the temptation to hurt their child back.
30. The discouraged and avoiding child believes they are a failure and parents can encourage them by believing in them and:
- a) doing things for them
 - b) simply leaving them alone
 - c) giving them tasks they are very capable of succeeding at
 - d) giving them very challenging tasks to do