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Introduction

Sometimes Children Misbehave

A Story About Josh

Marcia's 4-year-old son, Josh, was watching a video on TV. She asked him to put his toys away in the toy box because he had finished playing with them. Josh looked as if he hadn't heard his mother speaking to him. Marcia walked over to him and said in a sterner tone of voice, "Josh, I said put away your toys."

Again, Josh didn't budge. Irritated, Marcia stated firmly, "Josh, you cannot watch this video until you've put away your toys in the box. If you don't put them away right now, I'm going to turn off the video."

Josh stood up and walked over to the mess he had made with his toys, and started picking them up and putting them away.

A Story About Eric

Karen's 4-year-old son, Eric, was watching a video on TV. She asked him to put his toys away in the toy box because he had finished playing with them. Eric looked as if he had not heard his mother speaking to him. Karen walked over to him and said, in a sterner tone of voice, "Eric, I said put away your toys." Again, Eric did not budge. Irritated, Karen stated firmly, "Eric, you cannot watch this video until you've put away your

toys in the box. If you don't put them away right now, I'm going to turn off the video."

Eric still did not budge. Karen walked over to the video and turned it off. Eric turned to her and screamed, "That's my favorite video!"

Karen replied, "You can't watch it until you've put your toys away, young man."

Eric then stood up and walked over to his toys. He proceeded to pick them up and throw them all over the den.

"For throwing your toys all over the place, you get time-out!" exclaimed Karen.

Eric didn't move. Hands on his hips and with a menacing look on his face, Eric stood his ground.

Karen grabbed his hand, marched him to his room, and shut the door.

Eric sat on his bed, seething and plotting his revenge.

Sometimes Reprimands Work and Sometimes They Don't

Most young children have their bouts of noncompliance. Consequences, losses of privileges and time-outs can often help but they do not always work. When they don't, it can be very hard for a parent to stay calm.

How This Book Can Help

The purpose of this book is to help with those times when you are trying to get your child to cooperate and your child does not want to listen.

The book begins with a little story. It is a story about a morning in the life of a 4-year-old girl, Sara, and her mother, Susan. Sara doesn't listen well, and her mother gets increasingly upset. In fact, the morning goes so poorly that it drives Susan to tears.

If you see yourself or your family in any part of the story, then read on. The book offers strategies to deal more effectively with those times when *your* young child won't listen. It will explain why consequences and penalties can sometimes provoke your child to become even more disobedient and it will explain why your child's disobedience can sometimes provoke you to become even angrier. It describes the negative cycle that can develop, in which your child's misbehavior can provoke a punitive response on your part, which can provoke your child to further misbehave, prompting you to punish, yet again, and so on and so forth cycling the two of you into further and further misery.

The book goes on to explain how to get out of a negative cycle and move into a positive cycle, in which your child will listen to you and, in so doing, will prompt you to respond in more warm and loving ways.

The formula that prompts this change often includes a positive proactive parenting strategy. This strategy is described in detail. Finally, the strategy is

applied to Sara and Susan, with a very good result. Sara learns good behavior, which makes her mother proud.

A Difficult Morning with Sara

It is 5:27 a.m. at the Chernaf residence.

Susan, a young mother of two, is sleeping soundly while her husband, Roy, is brushing his teeth in the bathroom down the hall. Susan begins to feel a discomfort on her arm, which causes her to wake up. Turning over, she sees 4-year-old Sara standing at the edge of the bed poking her in the arm.

“Mommy, Mommy! Get up. Time to get up. It’s morning,” Sara demands.

“Oh, Sara, please let Mommy sleep a little longer. Why don’t you come into bed and cuddle with me for a few minutes. It’s still early sweetheart.” Susan closes her eyes and immediately starts to feel the poking again.

“Mommy, I want you to get up. Daddy’s up. Mommy, get up!”

“Sara, please let me sleep. Either lie down with me or go into the den and watch TV,” Susan pleads.

“Get up, Mommy, get up!”

“Sara, please!”

Roy comes in from the bathroom. Sizing up the situation, he takes Sara into the den and puts a video on for her. Roy then returns to the bathroom to finish getting ready for work.

Types of Parental Reactions

Negative Parental Reactions

When children misbehave, parents often respond with a time-out or a loss of a privilege. But it is hard for parents not to become angry when their children misbehave, and, as a result, the consequence is often delivered angrily. Research has shown that angry punishments seem to create more resistant and oppositional children, more difficult adolescents, and more troubled adults.

Time-outs and losses of privileges have their place in the proper discipline of a child. However, they can often make a child feel very hurt and angry, especially when they are given in anger. And, when a child feels hurt and angry, she's likely to misbehave.

How Hurt Feelings Contribute to Misbehavior

It's Hard to Use Good Judgment

Let's examine how a child's hurt and angry feelings may prompt her to misbehave. First, the pain of having been punished may upset her so much that she can't think clearly. When any of us is anxious and upset, it is hard to concentrate and focus. This is so for a child, as well. When she's upset, it may be hard for her to focus on doing what her parent just told her to do, so she

However, *thinking* positive thoughts, reminding yourself that your son or daughter is still a child, and making promises to be patient, don't always work. This is because when your child misbehaves there is often an automatic, visceral reaction that compels most parents to get angry and lose their temper. It's plain hard to stay calm when a child teases her baby brother, whines about breakfast and fusses about what to wear to nursery school.

Feeling Positive Thoughts

It is easier to be more patient with your child when you really, genuinely *feel* patient, not when you tell yourself "I *should* be patient." You really will be less angry with your child when your child actually *acts* positively and *does* positive things. It's easier for you to think positive when you *feel* positive, and when your child behaves well, you will *feel* positive. When you *feel* positive, you'll act positive, and your child will likely be inspired by your positive behavior to act more positively as well, and so on and so forth. Therein lies the beginning of the positive cycle.

Motivating Your Child to Help You Feel Positive

This is where motivating your child to be compliant and to behave properly comes into play, even if it means manipulating your child, so to speak, with rewards. With the incentive of a reward, your child is inclined to put more effort into thinking through a situation in order to be able to perform the positive behaviors that will yield the reward. Then if you can see with your eyes