

## Parenting for the Noughties

The good news about inappropriate actions taken by a child is that all behaviour is meaningful and is goal-oriented. If your child is misbehaving, he or she is likely to have one of four goals in mind: Attention Seeking, Power, Revenge or Escape by Withdrawal. Let's briefly examine both the attacking and defending behaviours for each of these goals so that you can better determine what is motivating your child to misbehave.

If your child likes to act the nuisance, to make mischief and to clown around or presents themselves as the smartie pants (often at the embarrassment of the parent), then the goal is *Attention Seeking*. On the defensive side, your child is likely to be anxious, fearful, shy and tearful. Laziness and untidiness may also be an issue as the self-indulging child seeks help. Eating problems may also be an indication.

On the other hand, if your child turns into a rebel, gives you backchat and cheek, won't take 'no' for an answer and disobeys you at all cost, the goal here is one of *Power*. Watch out for temper tantrums and bossiness, as well as bullying behaviour. On the other side of the coin he or she might display stubbornness and a refusal to co-operate, turn into a dawdler or become just plain forgetful.

The third goal of misbehaviour is one of *Revenge*. Stealing, viciousness, destructiveness, cruelty, violence, brutality, delinquent behaviour and bed-wetting all point in this direction. Defending behaviours on the other hand include moodiness, sullenness, passive hatred and a refusal to participate.

Last but not least is *Escape by Withdrawal*. A child who fits in by this means will display babyish behaviour, won't mix well, and will tend to engage in solitary activities, using fantasy as a means of escape. If your child comes across as being incapable, stupid, inferior or hopeless, then this is how they have chosen to fit in.

So, how do you pinpoint the goal of your child's misbehaviour? The best way is to ask yourself how you feel about the misbehaviour. If you feel slightly annoyed, rest assured your child is looking for attention. On the other hand if you feel personally challenged, your child is out to get power. Revenge is indicated if you feel deeply hurt, whereas if you feel like throwing your hands up in despair and giving up, your child wants to escape by withdrawal.

When you respond, start becoming aware of how your child has reacted to your correction. An attention seeking child will temporarily stop the behaviour, whereas the child with power on the agenda will keep it up. If there is a change to a more violent way of behaving, revenge is on the cards but if he or she passively puts up with any form of punishment, you are facing escape by withdrawal.

Consider this platinum rule: *If you want to change the behaviour of another, change your own behaviour first.* You may have noticed that children act up while their parents react, so to break this cycle you must learn to go against your first impulse. Your first impulse is what the child wants and expects.

If your child is seeking attention, make sure that he or she doesn't receive any more attention for the misbehaviour. Only reinforce positive behaviours.

For the power hungry child, refuse to enter the boxing arena. Don't even think about picking up the boxing gloves! Your child doesn't care who wins or loses. He or she is only interested in the importance of power. Just walk away and suggest that you cannot possibly hope to change him or her.

In the case of revenge, recognise that *nobody hurts who doesn't feel hurt*. Listen carefully and reflect how they feel and make sure to speak to them in their language, using their words.

If your child believes that escaping by withdrawal is the only option for him or her, hang in there and keep focusing on the positive. Offer encouragement and highlight his or her strengths.

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) is a wonderful tapping technique you can use on yourself to quickly dissolve any negative emotions that arise when dealing with your child's misbehaviour. For more information on EFT, visit [www.peoplerich.com](http://www.peoplerich.com)  
Once you have dealt with your own emotions, you will be in a much better position to think rationally and to thus *respond* to your child on a much healthier level. In time you will rediscover the joys of parenting!

Please send us an email at [caroline@peoplerich.com](mailto:caroline@peoplerich.com) if you would like more information.

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