



Helping parents put the pieces together.

Reduce Discipline Problems: Meeting the Needs of Your Young Child

Young children have a number of strong, but normal needs. Your child will feel bad, become upset and misbehave if any of these needs are not met. Not knowing how to meet your child's normal needs makes child rearing hard at times -- very hard.

Most adults can handle limited periods of stress and some frustration very well. Adults usually know and can say what is bothering them. Most children don't get these abilities until after they are six.

Raising a child will get much easier if you know the needs of your child and how to meet them. As a result, your child won't misbehave very much. You will then have more peace and more fun with your child.

Listed below are the most important needs of a young child, needs that if they are not met will cause your child to misbehave. Suggestions are given for what to do to meet each need.

Health

Children who feel sick or suffer minor pains often misbehave.

What to do

- ◆ Be sure that your child regularly has physical and dental care.
- ◆ Provide supportive care to your sick child. For example, encourage your child to drink liquids. Let your child stay home and rest rather than go to day care or preschool.
- ◆ Talk to a health care provider.
- ◆ Treat childhood injuries and give comfort.

Nutrition

Children get hungry. Remember children grow rapidly and need food to grow.

What to do

- ◆ Offer children the opportunity to eat good foods they like every two to three hours.
- ◆ Carry healthy snacks with you at all times.

Vigorous Play

Children need plenty of active play. If they don't have it, they become restless and act out.

What to do

- ◆ Let your child have active play several times each day.
- ◆ Running and jumping is fun and will use up their energy and get them tired.

Rest

A tired child will misbehave. *Note:* A child who is not tired will misbehave if you force them to rest.

What to do

- ◆ Notice when your child seems tired.
- ◆ Create a restful time in the morning and afternoon.
- ◆ Listen to music, lie down and look at a book together. (You need rest too!)

Love

If your child feels that he/she does not get enough loving from you each day, your youngster will misbehave.

What to do

- ◆ Give children lots of hugs, holding, and words of love from you everyday.
- ◆ Smile at them and tell them that you love them.

To Become More Cooperatively Independent

When you frequently tell your child what to do or not to do, your child will misbehave. You will create the terrible twos. This behavior can last throughout the adolescent years.

What to do

- ◆ Give your child choices, time to explore and decision making opportunities throughout the day, for example instead of "Get Dressed!" say "Would you like to wear your blue shirt or your red one?" Instead of "Drink your milk!" say "Do you want your milk in your blue cup or your red cup?"

Attention and Recognition

If your child feels ignored or unimportant, your child will misbehave. *Note:* If you only pay attention to your child when your child misbehaves, your youngster will learn to misbehave to get your attention.

What to do

- ◆ Participate and be actively interested in what your child does and says.
- ◆ Tell them you like the things they make and do.

Curiosity, Exploration and the Need To Know

Your young child is naturally interested in the fascinating world of people and things. Misbehavior happens when your child is not allowed to be actively interested in life.

Predictability

If the life you give your child changes a lot from day to day, your youngster will feel their life is unstable and become frightened.

If you behave hot tempered one time, loving the next, and then withdraw, your child will learn that you are emotionally unreliable. This can cause misbehavior.

Development of Good Values

Your child will misbehave if you or other members of the family act out and talk in harsh ways.

Many research studies make clear that the following child rearing belief is *not true*: “You will spoil your young child if you constantly fulfill the child’s needs.” *The opposite is true*. Cooperative independence, achievement, emotional well being and good behavior patterns develop if you fulfill the needs of your young child. *You will “spoil” your child and make child rearing difficult if you regularly fail to satisfy your child’s needs.*

The key to easier and better parenting is the relationship you create with your child. A child’s satisfaction, that is the result of your appropriate and consistent response to your youngster’s normal needs, makes child rearing enjoyable for your child and *for you*.

Written by Peter Ernest Haiman, Ph.D. Dr. Haiman was Chairman of a Department of Child Development and Early Childhood Education. He has helped parents rear children for 30 years. He is a childrearing consultant in private practice.

What to do

- ◆ Note your child's self-chosen interests.
- ◆ Provide other activities that build on those interests. For example, if your child likes to play with toy animals, get a book with pictures of animals. Ask if your child would like to visit the farm or the zoo.

Note: If you force your interests on your child, you will cause misbehavior and damage their motivation to learn.

What to do

- ◆ Your child needs to rely on you and to count on a familiar day-to-day life. Make routines flexible. For example, at bedtime let your child choose what to do first, have a story or brush teeth.
- ◆ Be as even tempered as possible with your child. This will reduce misbehavior when *your* life gets hard.

What to do

- ◆ Talk about the importance of sharing, cooperation, respect, taking turns, and teamwork.
- ◆ Practice these values.
- ◆ Point out the good behavior of your child, family members, and other children and adults.

If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again

If I had my child to raise over again
I'd finger paint more, and point the finger less.
I'd do less correcting, and more connecting.
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less, and know to care more.
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I'd run through more fields, and gaze at more stars.
I'd do more hugging, and less tugging.
I would be firm less often, and affirm much more.
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.
I'd teach less about the love of power,
And more about the power of love.

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