

# The Goals of Misbehavior

Child's Faulty Belief	Child's Goal *	Parent's Feeling and Reaction	Child's Response To Parent's Attempts At Correction	Alternatives For Parents
I belong only when I am being noticed or served.	Attention	Feeling: Annoyed  Reaction: Tendency to remind and coax	Temporarily stops misbehavior. Later resumes same behavior or disturbs in another way.	Ignore misbehavior when possible. Give attention for positive behavior when child is not making a bid for it. Avoid undue service.. Realize that reminding, punishing, rewarding, coaxing, and service are undue attention.
I belong only when I am in control or am boss, or when I am proving no one can boss me!	Power	Feeling: Angry, provoked; as if one's authority is threatened.  Reaction: Tendency to fight or give in.	Active- or passive-aggressive misbehavior is intensified, or child submits with "defiant" compliance."	Withdraw from conflict. Help child see how to use power constructively by appealing for child's help and enlisting cooperation. Realize that fighting or giving in only increases child's desire for power.
I belong only by hurting others as I feel hurt. I cannot be loved.	Revenge	Feeling: Deeply hurt  Reaction: Tendency to retaliate and get even.	Seeks further revenge by intensifying misbehavior or choosing another weapon.	Avoid feeling hurt. Avoid punishments and retaliation. Build trusting relationship; convince child that she or he is loved.
I belong only By convincing others not to expect anything from me. I am unable: I am helpless.	Display of Inadequacy	Feeling: Despair, hopelessness; "I give up"  Reaction: Tendency to agree with child that nothing can be done.	Passively responds or fails to respond to whatever is done. Shows no improvement.	Stop all criticism. Encourage any positive attempt, no matter how small; focus on assets. Above all, don't be hooked into pity, and don't give up.

To determine your child's goal, you must check your feelings *and* the child's response to your attempts to correct him or her. Goal identification is simplified by observing:

- Your own feelings and reaction to the child's misbehavior
- The child's response to your attempts at correction.

By considering your situation in terms of the chart, you will be able to identify the goal of the misbehavior.

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