



11 Proven Ways to Eliminate Bad Behavior

(...and setting more limits is not
one of them.)

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MEGHAN BARLOW
AND ASSOCIATES

We often talk about our kids this way...

"He just loses it! Randomly, for NO reason."

"We ask him to do something SIMPLE, something he SHOULD be able to, and he can't even do THAT."

"Everything sets her off."

"We've LITERALLY tried everything and *nothing* works."

"I talk to her about her feelings, but it makes no difference."

"He hits his little sister, even though I've explained that's a no-no. You know, *Gentle hands*."

"We've given time outs, tried to send him to his room, taken his toys away. He doesn't care about any of that! And I can't reward that behavior."

How do I know if my child's behavior is normal?

Normal

- Why are you asking the question?
 - Diagnosis? Health or development issue?
 - Looking for additional sources of support?
 - Fear?
 - Others are critical or questioning?

When you notice:

Patterns of 'bad' behavior

Expectations are unmet predictably

Same problems over and over again

Child's struggle in one area creates limitations in other areas

Self-esteem is taking a hit

Safety issues

Home is just not a happy place

So, I think I've decided my child is really struggling.



Now what?

What do you need to know?

1. How to think about
your child's behavior.
(This will determine what
you do about it!)



2. What to actually do
about your child's
behavior when it *is* a
problem.

You are on the same team with your child.





Ultimately, what we want in the end is a
relationship with our child.
(as opposed to no relationship)

- For *no* reason
- *Should* be able to
- *Everything*
- *Feelings*
- I tried to *tell* him...
- Attention-seeking

Your mindset is so important!

What are you thinking
when your child
appears 'bad'? (Again...)





11 proven ways to eliminate bad behavior?

Just kidding, you only need to know 1.

Kids do well if they can!

- Thank you Dr. Ross Greene! (See resources slide)
- Persistent bad behavior is a sign that the **demands of your child's environment** exceed his/her **ability to meet expectations**.

Expectations
exceed
child's skills

Unsolved
problem
getting in
child's way

BAD
BEHAVIO
R





Preschoolers: They're so adorable, right?!

Preschoolers: Perfect portrait of executive function contradiction

Executive Function

- Understands what is right
- Very basic planning and reasoning
- Considers doing, has intentions

Executive Dysfunction

- Can not follow through
- Need for immediate gratification
- Very poor impulse control and responses

So, if you **can** do it, why would you *instead* **choose** to scream, cry, throw a tantrum, destroy something, take a time out?

You wouldn't.

KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN.
(not if they want to.)

Your child is not choosing
their 'bad' behavior over
compliance.

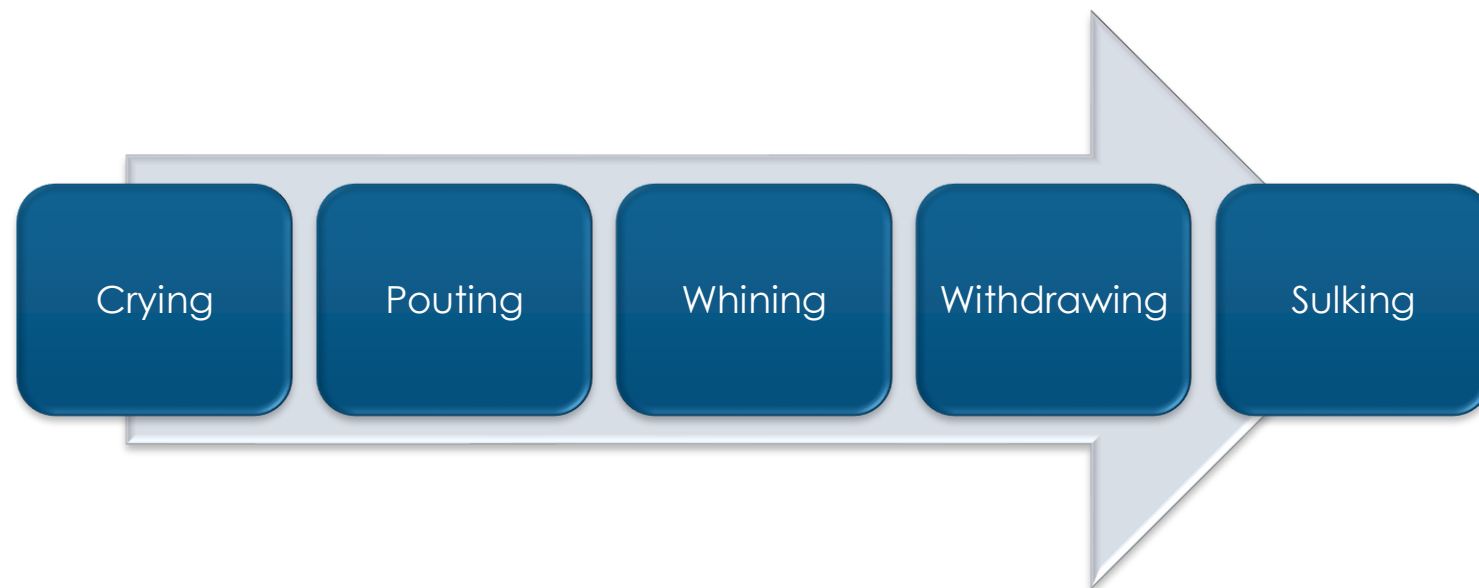
Are you a lucky or unlucky parent?

Good parenting means being responsive to
the hand you've been dealt.

-Dr. Ross W. Greene

What does your hand look like?

Why are parents of children with THESE behaviors lucky?



- Kids with these behaviors are likely to elicit empathy from their parents, caregivers and teachers
- Luckiest way of communicating is *using your words*

Unlucky children of unlucky parents (unlucky human beings)

Behaviors happen on a spectrum
Will often get worse as a child
gets older (demands increase)



Why?

- Time outs
- Consequences
- Revocation of rewards
- Detentions
- Suspensions
- Expulsion
- Thrown to ground by adults
- Placed in locked facilities

Did you know...

15 states in the US permit corporal punishment in school,
and an additional 7 do not reference it in state laws

Over 110,000 students are being paddled
each school year in these states

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/corporal-punishment-in-us-schools.html?override=web>

Hmm...

Over 1 school year in the US...

- 3.5 million students received an in-school suspension
- 3.45 million students were suspended out-of-school
- 130,000 students were expelled
- 250,000 students were referred to law enforcement
- 64,000 students were arrested at school
- 166,000 students were on the receiving end of corporal punishment
- 270,000 students were placed in restraints and locked- or blocked-door seclusion

*According to the most recent data available (2012-2013)

<https://www.livesinthebalance.org/public-awareness>

Doing well is preferable to not doing well.

Doing well is **intrinsically motivating**

30 minutes of video game time is **extrinsically motivating**

If a child was struggling to read, would you punish her? No! You'd teach skills.

**Rewards and consequences don't teach skills or solve problems*

Dangers of rewards and punishments for kids who are not behaving?



Solving problems and teaching skills eliminates bad behavior because the problem no longer gets in the way

Rewards and punishments may *appear* to eliminate the behavior temporarily.
It will return because the **problem has not been solved.**

It's all the same



So you must understand...

Is my child's hitting a problem?

My child's preschool teacher told me my child is biting. Is biting normal?

At what age do tantrums start to become abnormal? Because all kids have tantrums right??

My kid is just testing limits, right? Can you help me figure out if this is a problem?

What about my child, he's just REALLY independent and gets super frustrated if I don't let him do things by himself. That's normal right?

Technical vs. Adaptive

- What kind of culture do you want at home?
- What kind of school/academic culture do you want for your child?
- How much time do you have right now?
- This is real life!!

So does this apply to ALL kids?

Rewards and punishments do work for some kids

Some kids can easily solve many of their own problems

A lot of kids encounter problems and then use the skills they have to solve them.

- Temporary behavior

- Short term problems

- Multi-child families

- Poor parenting?!

Help?! I don't know where to start?

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (Dr. Ross Greene)
Lives in the Balance (www.livesinthebalance.org)

3 Parts (The first two involve LISTENING, and none of them happen in the *heat of the moment*)

1. Empathy (Gathering information so we can understand)
2. Defining the problem (Adult's concern + child's concern)
3. Invitation (Brainstorming, child leads the way)

What's up?

First and most important: You must be solving the **right problem**

How do we figure out what that is?

Starts out with neutral observation of the expectation your child is having a hard time meeting.

Consider age, verbal expression, timing, etc.

What's up, cont'd...

"I've noticed you're having a hard time keeping your hands to yourself on the carpet during story time. What's up?"

Explore!

- "You're really thinking, aren't you?"
- "What part is too hard?"
- "Well, let's think about what we have to do, and maybe we can figure out which part is making it hard."




This is often the most difficult part.
But it's the most important

Your child is your only true source of information.

Resist the urge to think your child is telling 'stories.' There is usually a grain of truth somewhere. Refuting = missed opportunities

Most parents blow through this step too quickly.

The more specific the problem, the better. (drill down)



How in the world do I get my preschooler to tell me what's wrong? She just says "I don't know" or refuses to talk.

Don't underestimate your child!

Notice the difficulty in meeting the expectation, **not the behavior you see.**

Intrinsic motivation!

Once you are fairly certain your child's true concern has been identified (you have clarified and reflected back to your child, your child has affirmed that you've helped to identify the correct problem)...

...You are ready to express your concern to your child.

Adult concern

Are you clear on your actual concern? Is the expectation fair and reasonable?
Have you made sure the expectation is not based on fear or control?

Intrinsic motivation!

My job as a mom is to teach you not to hit
Vs.

I want to make sure you get to hear the stories so you don't miss your favorites

Invitation: Collaboration with your new teammate to come up with a plan for prevention

You're not trying to agree on a strategy to use when the *problem happens again*.

You're inviting your child to take the first turn at suggesting a solution that *addresses both concerns*.

You are allowed to point out obvious flaws in the suggestions, but *remain open minded*.

What expectations are you willing to compromise on? Why did you set the expectation in the first place?

YOU ARE NOT DOING ANY OF THIS IN *THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT*

Incorporate trouble-shooting into the plan

You're inviting your child to participate in the creation of a solution.

Odds are not huge that the first try will completely solve the problem

That's not a failure! Make a plan to come back to the table and discuss what worked and what didn't.

Did you try to solve the right problem?

Did the proposed solution address both concerns?

Did your child propose a solution that is realistic for her?

This is not a quick fix

“I’m the parent, he’s the child. I’m not compromising.”

“This is a slippery slope, I’m not letting him run the house. I set the rules, I shouldn’t have to compromise.”

“So, what are you saying? I should just let her do whatever she wants so everything stays calm?”

***If a compromise is involved,
you may find it in the way the
expectation is met.***

Your concerns are not being thrown out the window just because you are taking your child's into consideration

Skills

Fear and control - You can let them go!

Is flexibility bad?

It's not compromise if all concerns are addressed.

This process helps develop executive functioning, teaches skills

You'll see other problems improving as these skills strengthen.

How teachable are some skills at your child's age?

- Could you rearrange things in your house?
- Are there flexible options for meal times? (Odds are in your favor that your preschooler won't be carrying his pb&j around the dining room and playing with Legos by the time middle school rolls around. There's still hope for that family dinner!)
- Will serious bodily injury occur if sharing doesn't happen during every play date?
- What if you have to keep your children separate at times?

Resources

- **“I Have a Little Problem, Said The Bear”** By **Heinz Janisch**
- **The Executive FUNction book series by Bryan Smith**, particularly **My Day is Ruined: A Story Teaching Flexible Thinking** (most appropriate of the 3 book series for preschool age)
- **Raising Human Beings** by Ross Greene
- **The Adventures of Stretch More: Pick-Your-Path Stories for Solving Problems Together** by **Trina Epstein and Ross Greene**
- www.livesinthebalance.org - For all the ‘how to’s’ of Collaborative and Proactive Solutions