



Milestones Learning Center Family Minutes

A resource from our family to yours

September 2023

Behaviors: The Good, The Bad, and The Why



As a parent, you will see your child develop emotions and cope with situations time and time again. Some responses are expected, if not predictable. Others will make you question what you do and say. Still, you will want to work to decode your child's responses in order to guide them in strengthening some skills and what to not repeat.

So Many Emotions

We all react to situations with emotion. If your child is comfortable, well rested, and confident, their reaction could be more level, predictable and appropriate. When your child is anxious, fatigued or overwhelmed, their ability to regulate themselves is hindered. Children who have not been able to fully develop appropriate emotional responses or who experience extended amounts of fatigue or stress can develop responses that are no longer just brief emotional

reactions but instead a "behavior". Behavioral psychology suggests that behaviors are influenced by a person's environment; meaning the people and things around them in their lives.

A behavior is something that can be both positive or negative. When the behavior is not desirable, it can take real work by parents to modify themselves, the environment, and their child to develop what they want and expect from their child.

What Influences A Child's Behavior?

Parents

The greatest influence is you, the parents. This explains the old

adage, "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree". Are you an easily excitable person? Do you have to remind yourself to think before you speak? Have you been told you need to try new things or not take things so seriously? Although your child might not respond just like you, your response does influence how they interpret a situation or how they interact with others.

Schedules

Parents often forget that children do not have the stamina to attend school all day and then extend themselves to social or physical events in the evening. As a parent we may have work obligations, social connections and hopes to see our children experience everything possible. Yet at what cost? When is it all too much?

Not all children can manage a full schedule. When children become overwhelmed they express their stress in ways parents at times may not understand. Crying for no reason, whining, arguing, refusing to participate, fighting with siblings intentionally, refusing to eat, not keeping to a routine, or getting in trouble at school.

Emotions

Anxious	Fearful
Loving	Angry
Awed	Happy
	Surprise
	Sad

Continued



WHY?

Why Are You Acting This Way?

Parents often find themselves asking their children this question. Getting to the root cause can be challenging. Often parents see only what is on the surface but a child's behavior can tell you a lot about them. Try looking at the situation from their point of view; a path is not always clear.

What a child says is not always a literal explanation. Here's an example: A child says "I don't like going to soccer". However, they may indeed love soccer but don't want to go because it is scheduled too early. They see their parents getting frustrated trying to get everyone ready and to the field on time. In their mind, if they don't go mom and dad will not get mad.

The parents then take what their child says literally and come to the conclusion that their child does not like soccer. When the child asks about enrolling for a new season, the parent reminds their child of this. "Remember, I don't put you in soccer because you don't like it." This repeated several times will influence the child's opinion about soccer until they too believe they do not like soccer. In reality, they just did not like to see their parents frustrated.

This is the same with a child who is acting out with a friend. Parents might come to the conclusion that the friend is not a good influence because every time the children play together they fight. What the parents might not see is that they only get together on Friday nights after their game. By this time, the children are tired and have spent too much time being socially engaged. The result is children who argue and fight because they do not know how to express the feeling of fatigue they are experiencing.

Modifying Behavior

Changing courses is never easy. When a behavior develops it often will not go away overnight. Parents will need to take note of everything that is going on when their child displays an unwanted behavior. They will need to be prepared to change the environment and their response to their child if they hope to see a change. It is also important to keep in mind that not all responses are changeable.

Children have to be at certain social and emotional stages to control their emotions. If a behavior develops that has a negative impact on the child's ability to learn, remain safe, or cause harm to others, a parent may need reach out for help from those professionally trained in child development.

FAMILY BOOK

A wonderful book to help children recognize their emotions and to help parents in talking about emotion is: *The Color Monster* by Anna Llenas.

This book is a wonderful introduction to all the feelings a person can have and that it is ok to have them.

<https://www.amazon.com/Color-Monster-Story-About-Emotions/dp/0316450057>



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