

# Better Parenting: What Should I Do When My Child Misbehaves? Part 2 - For REVENGE, For HELPLESSNESS

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In **Part 1** we learned that kids, like adults, need to feel accepted and that they belong. If they become discouraged they misbehave for attention, power, revenge or act helpless.

Last time the focus was on attention and power. Our kids know what pushes our buttons and how to get us to react. Let's turn the tables and not react the way they expect. We want them to get their needs met in a better way... We will now focus on when our kids use **revenge** and **acts of helplessness** to be accepted:

## REVENGE

Ramona has been saving money from her allowance for a watch for over five months. She is surprised to see the watch she wants is on sale. She is \$8.00 short. She took a ten dollar bill out of her mother's purse and bought the watch she wanted. That night her mother discovered that she was short ten dollars. When Ramona showed her mom the new watch, her mom screamed at Ramona, "Where did you get the money for that watch?" Ramona said, "Chill out, I know why you're yelling at me, I'll pay back the money I took, so you don't have to yell about it." Mom was hurt and angry and took the watch from Ramona and said, "I am returning the



watch and keeping the money for your punishment for stealing from me." Ramona screamed back, "I hate you, I wish you were dead."

### Clues to Ramona's goal:

1. Mom felt *hurt* and *disrespected* and wanted to *get back* at Ramona.
2. Mom tried to *hurt* Ramona by taking her watch and keeping the money.
3. Ramona wanted to hurt mom back by telling her she hates her and wished her dead.

**Mom knows that Ramona's goal is to get revenge.**

### What could mom do instead?

1. It can be very difficult in the heat of the moment, but **before** mom reacts she could tell Ramona that she is too angry to talk to her right then. **Next**, mom could tell Ramona to go to her room until they both can calm down and give Ramona **a time, that day or the next day** when she will talk to her and tell her what she is going to do about the money that was taken from

her purse.

2. Mom can refuse to argue saying, "I love you too much to argue with you."
3. Mom then has time to calm down, talk with someone and decide what she will do before she talks to Ramona.
4. When mom talks to Ramona

she can say, "Help me understand what's going on."

5. Changing a cycle of revenge takes time. But Ramona won't have a battle if mom doesn't join in. This will give them both time to calm down and think.

6. Kids will never handle a situation better than the parent. Mom needs to guide Ramona on ways they can build trust and respect together.

**OTHER THOUGHTS** If our parents got angry and yelled, the chances are high when we become stressed or upset we will do the same. It may not be easy to do, but we must separate ourselves and tell the child when we will let him or her know what we are going to do.

## ACTING HELPLESS

Winter term, Brian's fourth grade class is playing basketball in gym. Brian tells his mom, "Nobody wants me on their team." "I don't make baskets." "I can't hold the ball." Mom tried to teach Brian and shot hoops with him and asked his older brother to help also. Whenever he missed a basket or loses the ball he says, "I'll never be good at this." Mom doesn't know what else to do. She says, "Maybe basketball is not your game Brian." "I'll talk to your gym teacher." "You don't have to play if you

don't want to."

### Clues to Brian's goal:

1. Mom feels *hopeless* and *helpless*. After doing everything she could think of to help, she's ready to give up on Brian playing basketball.

2. Mom *gives up*. She agrees with Brian that he can't play basketball.

3. Brian got mom's permission to fail. He is *not likely to improve* at basketball.

**Mom knows that Brian's goal is helplessness. Brian said, "I can't" and mom agreed**

### What could mom do instead?

1. Mom could **refuse to give up** on Brian. She might say, "I know you can learn to shoot and dribble. That's why you're playing in school, so you can learn how."

2. Mom could be careful **not to pity** Brian. If Brian thinks mom feels sorry for him he will feel sorry for himself too.

3. Mom could **encourage** Brian as he learns to play basketball. If Brian says something like I only made one basket and missed all the rest. She could say so you can make a basket! You are learning!"

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