

# YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR



*Lesson Material on Care of  
the Preschool Child  
No. 8*



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## YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

### **What is back of your child's behavior from day to day?**

Your child is constantly attempting to make and keep himself contented and happy. In other words, his conduct is the result of his attempt to adjust himself and his desires satisfactorily to the world in which he finds himself. He wants very much to do certain things which please him, and usually he does them, though you may say, "No, sonny, don't touch it—it will break!" or his father cries out, "Lay off that, son! You're making too much noise!" Your child obeys or disobeys according to the strength of his urge to do, the amount of force used to prevent him from doing, or the attractiveness of something else offered that will be more fun or that arouses a stronger desire.

### **What makes the child want to do the things he does?**

Your child has deep within him as a part of his very existence certain desires. These make it as natural for him to want to do the things he does as it is for him to breathe. He has five main desires:

1. Desire for food, drink, and bodily comfort.
2. Desire for new experiences.
3. Desire for power and for exhibiting it.
4. Desire for recognition of his own individuality.
5. Desire for bodily safety and security, also for certainty that the persons whom he loves approve of him and love him.

### **How can you influence your child's behavior?**

You can influence your child's behavior by helping him to have a normal outlet for his desires. If you will keep these desires clearly in mind you can figure out your child's conduct. You will more easily understand why he acts as he does. Because you understand, you can sympathize with him and help him in his attempt to find expression for his wants in a way that will make him a helpful, happy little person in the home. You must realize that you can neither change these desires nor prevent their expression. Your child was born with them; he can not help having them, and he can not get rid of them. Every person carries them all through life. Whether your child is shown how to give outlet to them in ways that will make him both happy and "good" or whether he will find satisfaction in being "naughty" depends very largely upon the guidance and training you give him in the first six years or so of his life.

**What general principles can you follow in dealing with behavior problems?**

Always have in mind the child's main desires, and figure out his behavior from them. Make this analysis with your mind, not with your feelings alone.

Try for a week or so to take a little time every evening to think back over your child's behavior during the day and decide what fundamental desire was back of any new or unexpected action on his part. Consider also whether your disposal of the affair was the best possible, and whether you will try a new way the next time.

Do not suppress your child except at a time of emergency. A common emergency occurs when you have to grab the child and hold him to prevent his running in front of an on-coming car. Another is the necessity of hushing him in a crowd of quiet grown-ups.

**Problems.**

1. What main desire is expressed by these acts?
  - a.* Snatching candy from an easily reached dish.
  - b.* Pulling open the kitchen-cupboard drawers.
  - c.* Refusing to be undressed at night.
  - d.* Showing off.
  - e.* Making up after being naughty.
2. What could you do to get satisfactory behavior in place of the acts listed in problem 1? For example, should you stop at putting candy dishes out of reach, or should you perhaps also consider making some change in your child's diet so that he will not crave candy?

**Reference.**

Child Management. United States Children's Bureau Publication No. 143. Washington, 1925.

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