

MY CHILD MISBEHAVES AT SCHOOL

Alexandra (Sandy) Rogers, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist
CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE
18000 Yorba Linda Blvd., Ste. 204
Yorba Linda, CA 92886
Phone Number: (714) 646-8095
<http://www.sandyrogersphd.com>

MY CHILD BEHAVES WELL AT HOME BUT ACTS UP AT SCHOOL

If this is something new for your child - speak with the child and speak with the teacher. Try to establish if it is primarily a social problem or something related to the educational process. Find out if new kids came into the classroom to affect the social balance. Find out if a favorite friend moved away and the child feels isolated. Find out if the material taught is suddenly too hard or too easy. Find out if your youngster is using drugs or drinking alcohol.

A YOUNGSTER WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

A youngster with communication problems, learning disabilities, or social disabilities may do well in the protected environment of the home but become easily overwhelmed and frustrated at school and other places where there are complex social interactions. If they are in a classroom where instruction is below their capability, they may be chronically bored. If they are in a class which is too difficult, they might be frustrated. Schools are especially sensitive to the needs of special needs students, however your youngster may not have been identified as special needs child before. Speak to the school about special testing to identify any achievement lags and underlying learning difficulties.

EXPLAIN YOUR EXPECTATIONS REGARDING SCHOOL CONDUCT AND GOOD MANNERS

Let your youngster know, in very simple language that you expect them to follow the rules at school. Make sure that your child understands the school rules. Find out what the rules are and talk about them at home. Explain the rules. Use lots of examples. Explain about staying in the seat, "on your bottom", unless the teacher tells you to get up. Explain, and practice at home, about how to ask permission to go to the bathroom, sharpen a pencil etc. Explain and demonstrate about space between people, arm's length when standing in line or crowding around the teacher. Explain and practice waiting for a pause in conversation to start speaking. Explain and expect your young one to say "Please" and "Thank you". Practice all those things at home. Explain to your child that following these rules is "Good Manners".

THE SCHOOLS CALLS YOU OFTEN TO PICK UP YOUR CHILD FROM SCHOOL

Try the suggestions in the paragraph above. Give it at least two weeks for your young one to figure out how to change their behavior at school. If that does not work, try consequences. The consequences at home, for school related behaviors will require daily communication with the teacher and following up at home with discussions and setting up consequences for good behavior at school and lapses in good behavior. If it seems like a lot of work, do it anyhow. If it works, it will be worth every minute of your time.

CONSEQUENCES

When setting up consequences, start with the positive ones for good reports from school. Keep track of the child's progress on a calendar, which the child can view easily. Decide with the child, what the rewards should be - whether to use point system or stars. How the accumulated positives can be exchanged for toys or other special treats. The negative consequences can be having points take away or pictures of clouds. When it comes to rewards, only stars can be exchanged for toys or money.

With older kids, the consequences have to be something that they care about. For example, you would not give a timeout to a child in his room, if he prefers to be by himself. That would not be punishment for that child. Your children will go through phases where their phone, computer, IPOD, bike, car is the most important thing in their life.

Make the punishment fit the misbehavior if it was a serious infraction of your rules.

Post the rules on the refrigerator after you make sure that all the adults in the house agree to them. This way your children cannot claim ignorance.

If the misbehavior was horrendous and you feel really upset or really mad, give yourself a cooling off period. Do not mention the behavior even if it takes you a week to cool off. The child will sense that something is up and will worry. They will also know what they did wrong and will worry that you found out. Let them worry. You take that time to strategize, on how you will handle the situation and what punishment is fitting. By then you will have gotten over the impulse to send them to a monastery in China, or to your grandparents' farm, or to a private school which you may not afford.

NEVER GO BACK ON PUNISHMENT LENGTH OR SEVERITY

Once you decide on a punishment stick to it. Do not change it because it is inconvenient to you, or the school or your other family members. That is why you want to think about punishments, you want them to be a lesson for your young ones. Not something that will create a friction for everyone else in the family.

ARE YOUR CHILDREN STRESSING YOU OUT?

Read the handout on [Stress Management](#).

IF THE TIPS DO NOT WORK FOR YOU, SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP