

# No Such Thing As a Bad Kid

Key Principles and Techniques for Working  
with Troubled Children and Youth

The DVD & Video Series  
Part III

Key Concepts for Preventing  
Problem Behavior & Building  
Self-Esteem in Troubled  
Children and Youth



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# Behavior Management: Understanding, Prevention, and Principles

“The best way to deal with misbehavior is to prevent it.”

Tips for being proactive:

View misbehavior as a message: “*Something is wrong. I need help.*” Try to *respond* instead of *react* to difficult behaviors. In other words, don’t say or do anything to a child or youth that you wouldn’t want said or done to yourself.

Use your observing ego (e.g. “It’s an injury and it will heal.”)

Parents and professionals truly understand their kids from a number of perspectives including: psychological, social, neurological, and physical, etc. In other words: *assess* well and create *user friendly* environments that are in sync with the needs of the children and youth.

Practice *pattern identification*. Note if a child or group act out in a predictable manner (i.e. at the same time each day, over the same issues, etc.). Once a pattern is identified, investigate your (or the setting’s) role in contributing to the problem(s). What can you change, modify or practice? How can you make the environment more *user-friendly*? Next, seek out the youth’s input.

Use *consequences* instead of punishment. A consequence is *related* to an inappropriate behavior, a punishment is not.

In general, the sooner a consequence follows a misbehavior the more effective it will be.

Issue consequences that have a *high probability* of being accepted.

Establish a limit setting progression. In other words, everyone should know exactly what happens if a youth refuses to accept a limit.

Use *best possible* interventions but advocate for resources to enhance the treatment climate.

# Proactive Considerations: Assessment Form

Factors that can influence behavior:

5 = We are very strong in this area

1 = An area of considerable weakness

1. The youth are properly supervised. There is a system in place (e.g. a person who is accountable for making sure the adults are properly situated) to insure that adults maintain good sight lines to all of the children\_\_\_.
2. There are established "routines" on weekdays and weekends concerning: meals, homework, chores, showers, bedtimes, etc\_\_\_.
3. The environment is clean and orderly\_\_\_
4. Information about the day is presented to the youth as early as possible. ("This is the plan for the day.") *Key:* Avoid surprises. At times, it's helpful to post a calendar of events or a daily "*What's Happening*" sheet. Of course, there are certain events, such as visits or evocative appointments that we only tell kids about a day or so in advance\_\_\_.
5. There are ample recreational supplies and activities\_\_\_.
6. House rules and those regarding discipline are clearly outlined, and are *fair, logical, and consistently* applied. It is often helpful to post or write down key rules. Establishing rules around food intake, phone usage, autonomy, dress, etc. often reduce problematic acting out\_\_\_.
7. Considerable effort is devoted to *teaching* and *practicing* "good" behavior (i.e. following the rules). Use role-plays, modeling, games, quizzes, self-talk and direct communication to repetitively teach expected behavior (i.e. good choices). Positively reinforce good decisions\_\_\_.
8. Power is not misused. Troubled kids are hypersensitive to misuses of power. For instance, yelling at - or asking - at-risk youth to do things without saying "*please*" and "*thank you*" will increase the probability for inappropriate behavior\_\_\_.
9. Kids are warned before upcoming transitions: "*Lucy, in five minutes we'll be eating dinner.*" "*Hey guys, in ten minutes we'll be leaving for school.*" \_\_\_
10. Transitions to and from activities are conducted appropriately. *Key:* The more troubled and/or unsafe a youth or group appear, the greater the need for an orderly and well-managed transition\_\_\_.
11. The children's personal hygiene and self-grooming are strongly supervised and encouraged\_\_\_.

12. The lighting is adjusted as the day winds down\_\_\_.
13. The time-out areas are in less stimulating locations and are properly supervised\_\_\_.
14. The phones are located in places that are conducive to supervision\_\_\_.
15. Communication systems are clear and flowing between the youth and his/her entire team of caretakers:\_\_\_

- School (i.e. teachers, guidance, etc)
- Therapist
- Social worker
- Case worker
- Biological parent(s)
- Other key individuals in the kid's life
- THE CHILD (e.g. Create a "What's Happening" sheet)

Key: Create *interlocking partnerships* between all of the above. Try and establish consistent meeting times, and/or devise communication procedures that will enhance collaboration efforts, such as a homework log that gets passed between school and home.

In the home, it is often helpful to have "set" meeting times.

DO NOT ALLOW "splitting" to occur. All professionals working with a youth and/or group must stay "on the same page."

16. Parents and Professionals use and promote humor. (Avoid sarcasm!)\_\_\_
  17. Personal issues are explored and anticipated\_\_\_.
  18. Adults resist using negative adjectives when addressing kids, such as calling them obnoxious, lazy, provocative, etc. Instead, professionals should describe the behavior and how it makes them feel. Adults should look for the underlying reasons *why* kids act inappropriately\_\_\_.
  19. Parents and professionals should receive adequate, ongoing support. Regular opportunities should exist for respite and relaxation - even if it's just a few hours one night a week\_\_\_.
  20. Requests to troubled youth are often delivered in a sequential manner\_\_\_.
- Good:                                 *"John, please pick up the clothes under your bed and put them in the hamper. Afterwards, I'd like you to vacuum the floor. Thanks."*
- Less Effective:                         *"John, go in and clean your room."*
21. Troubled kids feel like losers. Create and/or modify activities so that youth all have the opportunity to enjoy multiple successes! Display and trumpet positive accomplishments (i.e., transitional objects)\_\_\_.
  22. Consistently maintain personal boundaries. Be clear as professionals what *is* and what *isn't* appropriate to relate to troubled youth\_\_\_.

# Activities & Self Esteem Building



To help kids with low self esteem,  
provide tasks and activities that offer a:



## Universal Opportunity for Individual Success

### Examples:

- Modify or devise sporting endeavors that facilitate success, such as a softball game with no striking out
- Academic tasks they understand and can accomplish
- Physical fitness pursuits (e.g. create a chart for walking/running)
- Art work that is doable; music & dance
- Special chores and/or work opportunities
- Games, often of chance, they can all win
- Helping or mentoring younger kids or those less fortunate



*Every kid needs his/her own  
special niche!*



= *Trumpet Success*

# Self-Esteem Building Options

- Games (board, video, bingo, etc.)
- World records, contests
- Professional & amateur sports
- Special events (food drives, car washes, bottle-collecting, walk-a-thons)
- Karaoke & music (concerts, kazoo bands, shows, music videos, lip-syncing, etc.)
- Employment opportunities (Key: cultivate relationships with local employers)
- Volunteering (w/handicapped, elderly, younger kids, animals, etc.)
- Sports (bowling, karate, roller-skating, soccer, etc.)
- Fitness (create fitness charts, aerobics, jogging/walking, meditation, rope and obstacle courses, etc.)
- Hobbies (art, theater, music, crafts, pottery, card and/or coin collecting, carpentry, photography, magic, etc.)
- Animals (pets, therapeutic horse-back riding, fish, etc.)
- Home repair jobs (painting, landscaping, repairing, etc.)
- Religious endeavors