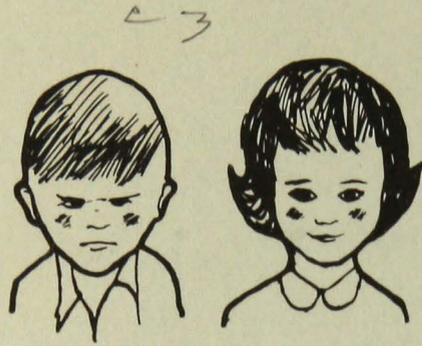
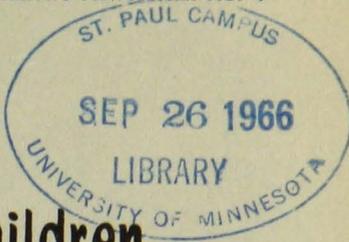


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# For Parents of young children

## Naughty Child or Annoying Behavior?

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Do you have a naughty child? Does your child's behavior occasionally annoy you? There is a difference between a naughty child and one who sometimes behaves in an annoying way.

If your child is thoroughly and hopelessly naughty, you probably spend much of your time trying to curb his naughtiness. But if your child, like most children, exhibits annoying behavior because he is **learning**, your efforts should be devoted to finding good ways of helping him learn.

### Child Misbehavior

By talking to other parents, you'll soon discover that your child has lots of company when it comes to misbehaving. One study attempted to find out just how much little children are alike in this respect. When 500 preschool children were tested, results showed that:

- ◇ 90 percent of the children wasted time at routines, a characteristic that reached its peak when the children were between 2 and 4 years old.
- ◇ 80 percent ignored requests, a most pronounced characteristic of children who were 2½ to 3 years old.
- ◇ 85 percent left tasks incomplete, especially children between 2 and 3½ years old.
- ◇ 75 percent wiggled a great deal while sitting, a common characteristic of the 2½- to 3½-year-old child.

What are some of the child-related situations that annoy you as a parent? Let's examine some common types of child misbehavior and try to decide what you can do to make these annoyances less troubling.



### Gets into Things

Two-year-old Susan makes a beeline for the kitchen cupboards as soon as the telephone rings. By the time her mother gets off the phone, Susan is opening a third box of cereal and shaking it onto the floor. Who must clean it up? Mother, of course.

More likely than not, Susan's real purpose is not to make a mess. She probably wants to explore the cupboard when she knows her mother can't stop her. Perhaps she has been stopped so many times in her attempts to explore that she takes advantage of such occasions.

Two-year-olds are curious about everything. They want to touch, look at, feel, and explore everything. And, by the time a child reaches 2, he has begun to develop a small degree of independence—he wants to do some things on his own. But when he tries, he makes mistakes.

As a parent, you should try to develop a positive approach to the problem of your child getting into things. "Child-proofing" the kitchen cupboards is one solution to a problem like Susan's. If you store pots and pans and other items your child can handle and play with without

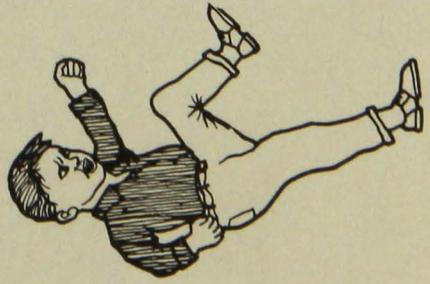
making a mess in the lower cupboards, there's no need to always say no.

### Has Temper Tantrums

Little Tommy bursts into tears because he can't fit a picture puzzle together. And he reacts the way most children do—he cries, screams, and throws himself on the floor. Tommy's hands are not yet skillful enough to do all the things he would like to do—he needs time to develop. Meanwhile, you can ease his displeasure by helping him with the puzzle, giving him a simpler puzzle, or getting him started on another activity.

Temper tantrums and explosive behavior of this kind usually subside as a child gains control over his body and surroundings. Most children show improvement by the time they are 3½ or 4 years old.

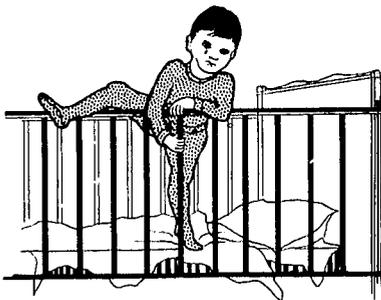
Of course, you cannot excuse all bad behavior in the hope it will pass. Sometimes it is hard to determine just what is normal and what is unusual behavior. A good rule is—whenever a behavior problem is prolonged or severe, you may assume that some phase of your child's development needs attention. Then focus your attention on the cause of the behavior problem rather than on the symptoms.



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Children pass through many stages of physical, social, and emotional development. If a child cannot perform a physical activity, it's probably because his body has not developed sufficiently. And the same thing applies to his social and emotional situations. Having a tantrum merely shows that a child is facing a very frustrating problem. Your job as a parent is to locate the cause of the problem and help your child overcome it.

### Hates to Go to Bed



What about the little child who resists going to bed? Would it help you to know that about 60 percent of all children, particularly those between 2 and 4, do resist being put to bed? Why does your child dislike going to bed? Why does he often try to climb out of bed? Here are some possible reasons:

◇ **He may not be sleepy.** Check the actual amount of time your child sleeps in 24 hours. You may be expecting him to sleep too much. Then too, different children require different amounts of sleep.

◇ **He may have played too hard just before bedtime** and finds it difficult to settle down. (Try reading him a story rather than roughhousing with him before bedtime.)

◇ **There may be an unusual amount of noise in the house.** Wouldn't you get out of bed if you heard strange sounds in your house when usually it is quiet?

◇ **He may be asking for your attention.** If you have been unusually busy all day and have spent little time with your child, he may need some of your attention before he can go to sleep. Every child must learn to be by himself sometimes. And, if you give him a good amount of loving and a reasonable amount of company and attention each day, he should be content to be left alone several times a day.

### Talks All the Time

The mother of 4-year-old Mary says: "Oh, if only she would stop talking for just a few minutes so I could think what I'm trying to do."

Let's face it, most preschool children talk constantly. When a child learns new words, he tends to say them over and over. An accurate count of the talking of preschool children showed that 3-year-olds used 12,000 words in 1 day. Another count on a 4-year-old showed that he asked 397 questions in a single day!

Try to talk and read to your child as much as you can. Communicating with you will help to satisfy his need to talk and will aid him in learning to speak and understand words.

If your child talks to gain attention or feels he must talk louder and faster than anyone else, try to discover why he does these things. Then treat the cause of his problem, don't be satisfied just to hush him.

Maybe your child has a problem opposite the one we've just discussed—namely, he talks too little. The so-called slow talker is not necessarily a slow child. If your youngster's speech is seriously limited or clumsy when he has reached 2 or 3, the first thing to do is have a doctor check his hearing. If his hearing is normal, see that he starts spending a lot of time with other children—in a nursery school, for instance. Or, you may need to spend more time with your child helping him learn new words and giving him a chance to do the talking. If increased association with other children and increased time spent with you do not spur his talking, consult a qualified speech teacher who understands children well.

### Parents Grow Up Too

Keep in mind that as a parent you pass through developmental stages just as your child does. As your child grows, your parental expectations of him and your relationships with him will, of necessity, change many times.

And, too, remember that it is normal for your child to seem more annoying to you at certain times than he does at others. Examples of such times are during the winter months when your family is often indoors, when there is sickness in the family, or when you and your spouse are tired or busy.

Since your preschool children are bound to annoy you at times, it will be enlightening for you to decide whether:

- ◇ Your child is basically naughty.
- ◇ Your child's behavior simply is annoying to you.
- ◇ You react to your child in terms of your expectations or in the more realistic terms of your child's capabilities.

### References

- ◇ Catherine Chilman. "Is It a Problem or Just a Stage?" *Parent's Magazine*. November 1963.
- ◇ Dr. Benjamin Spock. *Baby and Child Care*. Pocket Books Incorporated. New York, New York.
- ◇ Dorothy Baruch. *How to Discipline Your Child*. Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 154. (25¢). Write to:  
Public Affairs Pamphlets  
22 East 38th Street  
New York, New York 10016

### Some Toy Ideas

Give your child some ordinary soda straws and a bowl of liquid detergent for blowing soap bubbles. Let him blow them in the kitchen or bathroom or out-of-doors.

Next time you're throwing things out, remember that children are fascinated with gadgets that move or turn. Save such items as an old light switch, an old-fashioned lock with keys, a clock that winds up, a faucet, or a flour sifter that your child might like as toys.

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