

What causes a child to misbehave?

There are probably as many answers to that question as there are children.

To say that one particular factor is the sole cause of misbehavior would be misguided and highly inaccurate. There are a number of biological, psychological, and environmental factors that work together to influence a child's potential for misbehavior. Here are some examples:

Biological Factors:	Psychological Factors:	Environmental Factors:
Temperament Genetics Chemical Imbalance Brain Disorder Developmental Disorder	Trauma Ineffective Coping Skills Psychological Disorders Low Self-Esteem	Diet/Nutrition Poor Role-Models Exposure to Violence Ineffective Parenting Media Influences Peer Pressure

Now that we have listed at some of the *influences* of misbehavior, let's look at the two biggest *motivations* of misbehavior: ATTENTION and POWER/CONTROL

Attention:

For many children, negative attention is better than no attention at all. If your child appears to be acting out with the purpose of gaining attention, then the solution is simple: GIVE YOUR CHILD MORE ATTENTION (but do so when he or she is behaving appropriately).

- * Acknowledge your child when he or she is being positive.
- * Get to know your child by spending more time talking and asking non-intrusive questions.
- * Devote a segment of time each day to spend quality time together.
- * Ignore behaviors that are meant to annoy - such as whining, mocking, complaining, begging, pouting, etc.

Power/Control:

Many negative behaviors are brought about by the need to exert power and/or control over others. Some of the more common behaviors of children motivated by power and control are: dawdling, picky eating, bossiness, always having to be "first," passive-aggressiveness, threatening, engaging in power struggles, etc. These children will typically respond better when given choices rather than demands. Choices allow children to "control" what happens.

Gaining insight into the influences and/or motivations of your child's misbehavior will certainly help you to better handle these behaviors as you are confronted with them. Start by minimizing the negative environmental factors in your child's life as much as you can. Next, consider having your child assessed for biological and/or psychological problems. Remember to keep the lines of communication open and take the time that is needed to care for yourself. Help is only a phone call or support group away!