**When the Winds of misbehavior threaten your class what can you do?**

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Don’t let behavioral struggles exhaust and frustrate you. Get to the true sources of kids’ misbehavior—specifically kids experiencing a divorce. A deeper understanding of these kids will give you a breath of fresh air and equip you to redirect misconduct.

**Basic facts about children who misbehave**

* They will try to get attention in the ways that have worked before
* Many children aren’t trying to be uncooperative – they are hurting
* Children are merely reacting to the situations they have been placed. They may be living in the limbic system and only have the set of skills to access that have been given to them in the past such as name calling, yelling, etc.
* They may appear to be disrespectful
* Some feel like they have been placed in the role of parent to younger siblings
* Causes for their reactions  
  1. Safety issues  
  2. Confusion  
  3. Lack of boundaries  
  4. Chaos   
  5. Fear of the unknown  
  6. Nervous energy  
  7. Fear of pain  
  8. Nutritional issues  
  9. Lack of sleep

**Rethinking the issue of challenging children**

* James 4:1-2
* Develop a new set of skills
* Change the mind-set
* Learn to accommodate

**What hasn’t worked**

* Firmness: “Just be firm – they’ll straighten up.”
* Time outs
* Rewarding their good behavior  
  1. Rewards are based on adult’s judgment  
  2. Thinking skills are affected  
  3. If they fail at the beginning of the class, why try
* Praising children  
  1. Generic praise doesn’t work as it comes across as judgmental  
  2. They think if they act “bad” enough they will get attention

**What to do – tips that work**

* Safety is a must – Safekeeper talk
* Control: Who is in control, you or the child
* Rehearsing and practice to reinforce structure and rules
* Use the child’s name
* Help child make a commitment
* Using an assertive voice – not a harsh voice nor a wimpy voice
* Things to say and ways to frame comments
* Mistakes from the past in conversing with children  
  1. I’m sorry you can’t \_\_\_\_\_  
  2. I need for you to \_\_\_\_\_  
  3. I want you to \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Describe a child’s action instead of praising a child.   
  1. If a child has challenging behaviors many times they can’t handle praise.   
  2. When praised they may set out to prove you wrong so it is best to merely describe what the child did.   
  3. If you feel you need to tag the action, say, “That was helpful.”   
  4. Please don’t say, “Good job.” Or “Good boy”. That is your judgment coming through.

**Explanation for three types of challenging behaviors**

* Whirlwind – cover up for intense pain  
  Nervous energy  
  Fear of feelings  
  Nutritional issues  
  Lack of sleep
* Disruptive – operating from the lower level of the brain  
  Their power has been taken away  
  Set boundaries and make them known  
  Hold the child accountable
* Aggressive   
  Provide schedules and stick to the posted schedule  
  Speak clearly and in short phrases  
  Don’t be critical of their behavior/actions but set firm limits  
  Outbursts usually stem from the feeling of un-safeness – help them feel safe   
  Make sure there is plenty of space in your environment to accommodate all

**Reminders of techniques that work**

* Preventive measure work best – know in advance what you want the kids to do
* Use of choices
* Set clear boundaries
* Apply empathy and teach the children to use empathy
* Remember the power of the role of mirror neurons
* Does every infraction need to be addressed?

**Closure**

* Stay connected to God
* Stay connected to each other
* Stay connected to the child and the single parent
* The church becomes the “village” for the child of divorce

Resources

<http://blog.dc4k.org/?board=disruptive-childrenand-what-to-do> Disruptive Children and What to Do

<http://blog.dc4k.org/?board=dealing-with-noncompliant-children> Dealing with Noncompliant Children

<http://blog.dc4k.org/?board=what-do-you-dowith-the-whirlwind-kids> What Do You Do with the Whirlwind Kids

<http://divorceministry4kids.com> Has many articles by Linda Ranson Jacobs and Wayne Stocks about children of divorce