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# Misbehaviors and Their Causes 1

**T**eaching is tough. Today's classrooms are populated with students exhibiting a wide variety of disruptive behaviors. Some examples follow. You may think of others.

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Shouting out              | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. Stealing                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Passing notes             | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. Hitting                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Cheating                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 25. Sleeping                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Making threats            | <input type="checkbox"/> 26. Teasing                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Committing violent acts   | <input type="checkbox"/> 27. Playing pranks               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Swearing                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 28. Insulting                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Talking back, sassing     | <input type="checkbox"/> 29. Displaying negative attitude |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Wandering out of seat     | <input type="checkbox"/> 30. Outbursts of anger           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Throwing things           | <input type="checkbox"/> 31. Indifference                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Skipping school          | <input type="checkbox"/> 32. Clowning                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Defying authority        | <input type="checkbox"/> 33. Arguing                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Hyperactivity            | <input type="checkbox"/> 34. Talking                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Not following directions | <input type="checkbox"/> 35. Borrowing without asking     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Crying                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 36. Showing bad manners          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Interrupting             | <input type="checkbox"/> 37. Being sarcastic              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Complaining constantly   | <input type="checkbox"/> 38. Being inattentive            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Lying                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 39. Dressing inappropriately     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Being late               | <input type="checkbox"/> 40. Daydreaming                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Throwing temper tantrums | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Chewing gum              | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21. Being disrespectful      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 22. Not completing work      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |

That is quite a list, right? It is almost overwhelming when you consider that a teacher might have several students misbehaving in the same class. No wonder it is tough to teach sometimes. (Good thing we have many highly dedicated teachers in the United States.)

Because we will need it later to customize a Smart Discipline plan for you, please list five behaviors that disrupt your class most frequently.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Next, list the three most difficult behaviors for you to handle. They may be the same or different from those you listed above.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## CAUSES OF MISBEHAVIORS

When I conduct workshops around the country, a question frequently asked is, “Why do you think there are so many more problems with behavior in school today compared with the way it was 20 or 30 years ago?” If I turn the question around and ask the workshop group what they think, there is a general consensus that two conditions are primarily to blame:

1. The breakup of the family
2. The lack of parental involvement and support in and for the schools

Undeniably, these two conditions have dramatically changed over the years, and most certainly, behavior in the schools has been adversely affected.

But there are many other maladies that affect behavior and should also be taken into account.

This, too, is quite a list. All kinds of things can cause a child to act out in the classroom. It is important to know this so that we do not take a child’s misbehavior personally. If we take it personally, we will tend to respond emotionally rather than logically. Responding emotionally usually only makes the situation worse (more about this later). We need to be aware that on any given day any student might act out in reaction to a personal problem and that we cannot fix all of his or her problems.

- |                                 |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Low self-esteem        | _____ 16. Fetal alcohol syndrome      |
| _____ 2. Drug abuse             | _____ 17. Underachievement syndrome   |
| _____ 3. ADD and ADHD           | _____ 18. Poverty                     |
| _____ 4. Dysfunctional families | _____ 19. Attachment disorder         |
| _____ 5. Childhood depression   | _____ 20. Sociopathology              |
| _____ 6. Child abuse            | _____ 21. Prejudice                   |
| _____ 7. Sexual abuse           | _____ 22. Anxiety                     |
| _____ 8. Oppositional disorder  | _____ 23. Eating disorders            |
| _____ 9. Alcoholism             | _____ 24. Dyslexia                    |
| _____ 10. Gangs                 | _____ 25. Negative peer pressure      |
| _____ 11. Family violence       | _____ 26. Steroid abuse               |
| _____ 12. Personality conflicts | _____ 27. Loss of hope                |
| _____ 13. Puberty               | _____ 28. Television sex and violence |
| _____ 14. Verbal abuse          | _____ 29. Negative role models        |
| _____ 15. Community violence    | _____ Other: _____                    |



A list of 5 or 10 behaviors is a manageable number.

The good news is this: We can gain a student's cooperation anyway! In the next chapter, though, we will look at the usual ways we use to correct behavior. We will also explore their drawbacks.



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As much as we would like to think our students will "just say no," sometimes they do not. Consequently, moods and behaviors in the classroom are adversely affected.