



Understand Your Child's Goals

Many parents are struggling with understanding why their children act as they do. During the pandemic, children have been isolated from friends and many of the activities they are accustomed to. They are spending more time on social media, which can lead to depression and lack of self-esteem. It's important for parents to understand their child's goal of behavior so they can help them deal with the challenges they are facing.

Contact/Belonging—

Out of our desire to belong, each of us develops the goal of making contact, physical or emotional, with other human beings. Contact with Mom and Dad helps growing children develop a sense of belonging in the family. The self-esteem and courage that grow out of this belonging make it possible for the child to make positive contact outside the family also.

Power—

Each of us wants to influence our environment and gain at least a measure of control. We would like things to go our way; we want the power to make that happen. It is through learning that we become able to do this. As parents, we want to empower our children to develop their talents and skills and become competent individuals who contribute to the common good.

Protection—

To survive and thrive we must be able to protect ourselves, our families and our nation. Our instinct to repel attacks, whether physical or psychological, has led to the development of elaborate systems of justice and defense. Children will also look for ways to protect themselves from physical harm or threats to their self-esteem. They often strike out in ways that are unproductive and even harmful. Parents can help children learn responsible methods of protection.

Withdrawal—

Time-outs are essential and refreshing in any sport. Just as a child seeks contact, at other times they need to withdraw, regroup, center. Withdrawal is a kind of counter-balancing act to the goal of belonging. Our early survival instinct has taught us to withdraw from danger.

Challenge—

A teens' desire to challenge themselves—to test their skill and courage against an obstacle—is one way they measure how well they are doing on their journey from dependence to independence. It is a natural part of growing up. But, when your teen is challenging themselves in ways that are unhealthy or dangerous, parents need to step in to determine why they feel this is necessary.

Understanding which goals your children are trying to achieve through their behavior can help you direct their actions in a positive way. So the next time you wonder why your children are acting the way they are, stop and try to identify the goal of their behavior. You can use this as a learning opportunity to teach your children positive ways of achieving their goal.

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