

How to Manage Your Children's Misbehavior in Public

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Two primary themes were shared by readers this past week. When considering random acts of kindness, validated parents felt more confident in their parenting roles. Parents also stated that they felt

a sense of pride when others commented about how cute their child was or how cooperative their child was when socializing in public. Parents also confirmed that they felt overwhelmed when their child misbehaved in public. Due to the demands of managing a home and working outside the home, most parents have little time to reflect on life and the daily challenges of raising their children. At best, parents may have a passing moment to share their frustrations with a partner, a family member, or a friend. Parents typically share that they limit conflicts with their children by giving into their child's demands in public. Sadly, this response to their child only reinforces misbehaviors without boundaries or consequences. Children quickly learn that boundaries can be broken. Children can continually push

the limits to seek more privileges without appropriate consequences until their lives and their parents' responses are out of control.

Summarized below are five effective strategies for managing your children's misbehavior in grocery stores and other public places:

When in the car or preparing for an outing, explain the types of cooperative behavior you expect from you children. For example, you can tell them that they must only handle groceries that you have selected or they can select with your guidance. You and your children can agree if they can sit in the shopping cart or walk next to you in the store. For older children, you can describe how they can select fruits and vegetables on your shopping list, evaluate the quality of the produce, weigh each selection, and calculate and predict the cost of specific selections. This may sound like a lot of work on your part, but this activity can be a cooperative learning experience that reinforces every day problem-solving using real world math applications.

When discussing misbehavior, you and your children can agree to a logical consequence that will occur if they do not cooperate. For example, children may need to leave the store with you immediately when they choose to have excessive temper tantrums. This may seem like a punishment to you and not your children, however, all must regroup in excessive situations. The children will soon learn that they cannot participate in outings with you if they are not cooperative. Other logical consequences for minor

misbehaviors can include rewarding cooperative behaviors. You can inform your children that if they cooperate with you on an outing, you will have time to play a game with them once you unload groceries or unpack the car. The children will quickly learn that there is always time for more fun when the family cooperates and works together.

After you complete your shopping or outing, reflect with your children on what went right and how you can work more closely together for success. For example, you can comment on how cooperative your children were when keeping their hands to themselves even when they saw a food item at the store that they wanted but was not selected by you. You can also explain that they may not select specific food items the next time you shop because they chose to pull food items off the shelf that were not on your shopping list.

After you complete your shopping trip or outing, assure your children that you appreciate their cooperative behavior. If they have misbehaved, they can have another chance to cooperate and participate in selecting items during the next shopping trip. Limit the amount of discussion and consequences to simplify the communication and consequences. Your children will not hear you while they are misbehaving or when you are feeling overwhelmed and continue talking about the problem.

For next week's blog, email or comment to us on how you respond effectively to your children's misbehaviors. Keeping it simple and cherishing your children's cooperative behaviors can have long lasting effects to the family's overall harmony. Life is too short to

allow your children's misbehaviors to overcome your family's daily functioning and happiness.

Happy outings!

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