



## Behavior Management Series–Issue #13

### Why Some Children Need to Please the Teacher all the Time

**Academic Possibilities:** Many children use academic success or accomplishment to get teacher recognition or validation. While this is not uncommon, the frequency, intensity and duration of this need for approval distinguishes the normal from the anxiety driven behavior.

**Environmental Possibilities:** Children who need to please all the time may come from homes where parenting styles exhibit inconsistent messages of love and validation. Such parents change their moods frequently, change the rules often, and show extreme inconsistency in showing love and affection. The child never learns a frame of reference. As a result, the child must constantly please the teacher, which is totally driven by the child's anxiety, to make sure that the teacher is never unhappy with the child. This obsessive need to please places the child in a preoccupied mode and limits available energy for other things.

**Intellectual Possibilities:** Same as Perceptual Possibilities

**Language Possibilities:** Same as Academic Possibilities

**Medical Possibilities:** Not Applicable

**Perceptual Possibilities:** Some children with perceptual deficits may misperceive or distort the meaning of facial expressions, verbal directives, comments and so on presented by the teacher. In doing so, the child may write a script that creates anxiety. In order to reduce this anxiety, the child tries to overly please the teacher.

**Psychological Possibilities:** The internal absence of feelings of validation, love, nurturance, caring, approval, significance etc. may all contribute to the need to constantly please the teacher. The teacher may want to keep in mind the timing, motive, and procedure used by the child to please. If the situation seems to be a logical effort then this may not be a problem. However, if the situation used to please the teacher seems illogical, poorly timed, impulsive and so on, then the motive should be of concern.

**Social Possibilities:** Not Applicable

## What To Do When This Happens

Normally, a child who seeks to please the teacher is usually a healthy direction for his energy. However, you need to determine whether or not the child is excessively needy. Refer to the frequency, intensity, and duration of the behavior to see if it may be neurotically motivated. If so, refer to the sections on topics involving Attention in this book.

## Why Some Children do not Participate in Classroom Activities

**Academic Possibilities:** Some children have great difficulty participating in things that they do not enjoy. As a matter of fact, they may have great difficulty participating in anything involving academics. Unfortunately, some children find academic exceptionally boring. Any academic independent or group assignment for these children will create total disinterest on their part, leading them to not even bother participating in class. However, other children who feel academically inadequate will also not participate due to fear of failure and embarrassment.

**Environmental Possibilities:** Some children will not participate in class because there are many problems at home. There may be a nasty divorce battle between the parents, possible neglect or abuse or simply just an disorganized and out of control household. In order to not deal with the pain of what is happening within the family, these children will simply keep to themselves. This lack of participation may sometimes generalized to school and social situations.

**Intellectual Possibilities:** For some children, their limited intelligence can hinder their involvement in class. In the same light, those children with very high intelligence (e.g.; gifted children) may also have great difficulty participating in school because they become rapidly bored in a classroom designed for average children. In both cases, the lack of interest will lead to not participating in classroom activities

**Language Possibilities:** When students have difficulty understanding a language, they can have a hard time with their class work. Because it can take them much longer to read a passage or understand a lecture, they can become rapidly frustrated and give up. This then leads them to never want to participate because of their fear of teasing and ridicule by the other kids. It is sager for them to just keep quiet, not participate, and hope that he is never called on in class.

**Medical Possibilities:** Some children with medical problems may not participate in classroom activities. For example a child with asthma may not want to get involved with things because he is having trouble breathing., A child in a wheel chair may not want to partake in an event because it is too such of a hassle to do so. Some children with disabilities may try to be invisible and not participate in order not to bring the spotlight to them.

**Perceptual Possibilities:** When children see the world differently from others, there can be a great frustration in trying to complete class work. Attempting to handle academic work but consistently not being able to succeed can become a serious problem for them. After a while, the frustrations can become overwhelming, thereby leading to decision to no longer try to become involved in classroom activities when all they lead to is failure.

**Psychological Possibilities:** Some children will not participate in class certain because of depression and anxiety. When things are not going well for children, they will not have the energy to focus on what may be important. If they are worried or scared about various things in their lives, they will often not bother getting involved in classroom activities because they do not have the mental strength to do what everyone else is doing.

**Social Possibilities:** Some children are not involved in classroom activities because they are never chosen for anything. In a sense, they are viewed as outcasts by the other children. As hard as the teacher may try to integrate this child into the class, he just does not fit in. After a while, the child does not want to participate because it is either embarrassing or ego defeating. This leads to an attitude of never participating in what the classmates are doing.

## What To Do When This Happens

- Remember that a child who does not participate in classroom activities is behaving in this manner for some protective reason. Therefore, attempting to force him into a social situation will only create tremendous conflict, anxiety, and tension.
- Meet with the school psychologist to determine whether there are any extenuating circumstances for the lack of participation (i.e. home issues, trauma, previous academic failure).
- Understand that in order for a child to participate, he must feel comfortable in the classroom. At times, this may be like coaxing a frightened turtle out of its shell. If you move too fast, he will revert back inside.
- Confidence is a process that is built over a period of time. The child who does not participate needs a foundation of successful experiences as well as the appropriate social tools in order to be an active participant in the classroom.
- Meet with child on a one to one basis in a comfortable setting. Explain to the child that you are aware of the difficulty he has in both academic and/or social situations and that you want to help.
- Realize that a child who does not participate will need practical guidance which must be taught. It is not common sense for many children to know how to act openly in social situations. Confidence builds out from the center like a flower blooming. For instance, have this hesitant student be involved in small groups and then gradually, if appropriate, increase the size of the group. Initially, pick other students for his group whom you know are more sensitive.
- Have the group work on some simple goal oriented task that will ensure success. This will give the child the feeling of unity and group accomplishment.
- Provide the student with different types of small group activities so that he has the opportunity to work with all the members of his class. For instance, have the child work on a social studies project with one small group of children , and then work on a science project with a different small group.
- Keep in mind that you need to assign these groups and monitor the interactions to ensure protection and success.

Speak with the school psychologist about having the child join a small group for social skills. These types of controlled groups can help the child learn to interact and build skills in a safe and monitored environment to overcome hesitancy.

## Why Some Children Are Very Popular

**Academic:** Children's grades can often be directly related to their popularity. For some children, their outstanding school performance is something that the other children admire. The other students want to work on projects with them and even have them tutor them so that they too can do as well. This academic success can be a contributing factor to high popularity.

**Environmental:** Popularity can come from many sources, one being other older siblings. Some children are popular simply because they "have walked into it". If a child has a brother or sister who is popular in the school this child may also become popular simply because of family heritage. Another environmental reason for popularity could be the parents stressing self-confidence and self-esteem. Children who believe in themselves will have a greater chance of being popular. If this is reinforced at home, the chances of being popular dramatically rise.

**Intellectual:** Same motive as Academic.

**Language:** In certain cases, children who speak very well and can get their point across have the potential to be popular. The classic example is in student government. Children who can tell the other students what they plan to accomplish in an eloquent tone for their age may become popular because they gain a political office within the school.

**Medical:** Some students may be popular by virtue of their size or development. A boy may be popular because he is so much bigger than the other kids that he excels in sports.

**Perceptual:** Not applicable.

**Psychological:** Some children are popular because they believe in themselves. They have great inner strength for their age and enjoy being in the spotlight without infringing on the needs of others. Their confidence and feelings of security enable them to stand up and lead others. These qualities create popularity in the group.

**Social:** There are children who are involved in many social activities. Because of their constant involvement with many people, others get to know him. Based on their contact with so many different kids in different places (e.g.; little league, chess club, chorus, band, etc.), his or her popularity sky rockets.

## What To Do When This Happens

- While a student's popularity, in most cases, will not present a concern for teachers, there may be times when popular children do not balance between school work and social life. In these cases the child may be overly invested in social interactions which will impair his academic performance and success. If you see inconsistency, defiance of authority, procrastination, need to be center of attention, class clown, etc. we recommend you identify the symptoms that you see.

# Why Children Exhibit Poor Judgment

**Academic Possibilities:** Some children do not understand appropriate school behavior. Academically, there are rules which must be followed. For example, when we take tests, we do not look at other students' papers. When the teacher is lecturing on math problems, we do not talk. Most children understand these academic rules. However, some have poor judgment because academically they are confused about appropriate behavioral rules.

**Environmental Possibilities:** Some children have parents who exhibit extremely poor judgment. They do things which other parents would say are very irresponsible and lack good thinking. Children of these parents may model their behavior. Since all they see on a daily basis is poor judgment exhibited at home, they carry this behavior over to the classroom.

**Intellectual Possibilities:** Limited intelligence can hinder a child's ability to understand that all behaviors have consequences. Consequently, low intelligence can lead to poor judgment because these children do not realize what will happen to them or others because of the decisions that they have chosen to make.

**Language Possibilities:** Children with language difficulties may exhibit poor judgment because they do not understand what is being asked of them to do. They show poor judgment not because they are seeking attention but rather because they do not understand the social rules and norms which are being taught.

**Medical Possibilities:** Children who may have a neurological impairment which could hinder appropriate decision making processes may show poor judgment because of a physiological/organic reason.

**Perceptual Possibilities:** Poor judgment can be exhibited when you do not see things from the same perspective as everyone else. Children's inability to do so can be very problematic because they may not be doing anything that is wrong in their eyes. Perceptual difficulties can lead to poor decision making because the viewpoints from which these children see what they are doing is not inappropriate at all and do not understand why authority figures are getting upset with their behavior.

**Psychological Possibilities:** Psychologically, some children exhibit poor judgment because they have too much on their minds. Their poor decision making processes may be a manifestation or hiding of other things that are really bothering them. If they are suffering from depression or anxiety, they may lack good judgment because they are too busy focusing on their own problems rather than being concerned about what is and is not appropriate judgment.

**Social Possibilities:** Some children will go along and follow everyone else even if they know it is the wrong thing to do. It is more important for them to be accepted and to fit in than it is to show good judgment. In the process, the need to be socially accepted is more critical to their emotional well-being than doing what is right.

## What to Do When This Happens

If the child's poor judgment results in high risk behavior, then we strongly suggest that you immediately refer the child to the school psychologist, principal and child study team.

However, if the child's poor judgment does not involve high risk behavior, please refer to the suggestions used for irresponsibility, class clown, and bothering others. This is due to the fact that poor judgment comes in many different symptomatic forms.

## Why Children are Chronically Late to School

**Academic Possibilities:** Some children may be late because they have not completed their homework, did not fully understand it, and/or are afraid of the teacher's or peers' reactions.

**Environmental Possibilities:** Chronic lateness to school often indicates a functional impairment in the home structure. A functional impairment in this case means that some family routines, rules, supervision, authority or boundaries are greatly inconsistent. Family dysfunction, disorganization, and so on can contribute to the chaotic environment that prohibits a child from getting to school on time.

**Intellectual Possibilities:** Children with intellectual limitations may move more slowly, are unaware of time factors, and may be less responsive to routines. In the process, they either end up missing the bus to school, leave later if they walk or walk so slowly because of their inability to recognize that they are late.

**Language Possibilities:** Not Applicable

**Medical Possibilities:** Certain types of medical problems can affect a child being on time to school. Irritable bowel syndrome, sleep deprivation, nervous stomach, asthma, and so on, can all create a delay in a child attending school. However, if a medical condition is the cause for chronic lateness, some documentation should be on file in the nurse's office.

**Perceptual Possibilities:** For younger children, because of a perceptual difficulty, they are not able to tell time. This leads them to be late not as a result of laziness or defiance but rather because of an inability to recognize time factors.

**Psychological Possibilities:** Difficulties rising caused by depression can be a reason for a child's chronic lateness. In spite of a parent's attempt to get the child up, pervasive depression will immobilize the child and make getting out of bed very difficult, if not impossible. Also, some children will be late to act out certain feelings of anger and frustration which they cannot verbally express. Some children are defiant of authority and rules, and may give their parents a great deal of problems in getting up for school.

**Social Possibilities:** Some children may be late to school to avoid an uncomfortable confrontation with some child prior to school. Some social argument, a bully or some type of retaliation fear can be at the root of a child being chronically late. Also, a child may be late to school because his friends are late to school and he would rather be late than be socially different.

## What To Do When This Happens

- Try to determine why the student may not be arriving to school on time by simply asking the student. If the student has shown a serious pattern of lateness and offers a simple illogical answer, then the truth may lie elsewhere.
- Discuss with the school psychologist whether there are any extenuating circumstances as to why this child is chronically late.
- If it is determined that the reason for the lateness is based on parental irresponsibility, talk to your principal to discuss whether or not it is appropriate for you or an administrator to meet with the parents and discuss the school's concerns. If lateness persists in spite of a meeting with the parents, the Child Study Team should be contacted immediately to determine whether or not there is suspected neglect.
- If it is determined that the reason for lateness is due to some behavior on the part of the child, in spite of parental involvement in getting the child to school, try the following techniques:

1) Give the student a specific responsibility to do first thing in the morning to encourage him being on time.

2) Provide consequences for being late. One effective way of doing this is that if the child does not have an acceptable/legal reason for being late, make the student responsible for the time missed. For example, if the student is 15 minutes late, take this time away from recess.

3) Place the student in a position of leadership for some group activity that occurs in the morning. This places a value on group responsibility.

4) Reward the child for on time arrival. This does not have to be a tangible reward, but merely verbal praise - an indication of appreciation for following school rules.

5) Develop a behavioral contract of expected and acceptable behaviors along with consequences and rewards. This can be done by working with your school psychologist.