

Ross Greene's Bill of Rights for Behaviorally Challenged Kids

"If we don't start doing right by kids with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, we're going to keep losing them at an astounding rate. Doing the right thing isn't an option...it's an imperative. There are lives in the balance, and we all need to do everything we can to make sure those lives aren't lost."

Behaviorally challenging kids have the right:

1. To have their behavioral challenges understood as a form of developmental delay in the domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem-solving.
2. To have people—parents, teachers, mental health clinicians, doctors, coaches, and everyone—understand that challenging behavior is no less a form of developmental delay than delays in reading, writing, and arithmetic and is deserving of the same compassion and approach as are applied to these other cognitive delays.
3. Not to be misunderstood as bratty, spoiled, manipulative, attention-seeking, coercive, limit-testing, controlling, or unmotivated.
4. To have adults understand that challenging behavior occurs in response to specific unsolved problems and that these unsolved problems are usually highly predictable and can therefore be solved proactively.
5. To have adults understand that the primary goal of an intervention is to collaboratively solve these problems in a way that is realistic and mutually satisfactory so that they don't precipitate challenging behavior any more.
6. To have adults (and peers) understand that time-outs, detentions, suspensions, expulsion, and isolation do not solve problems or "build character" but rather often make things worse.
7. To have adults take a genuine interest in their concerns or perspectives and to have those concerns and perspectives viewed as legitimate, important, and worth listening to and clarifying.
8. To have adults in their lives who do not resort to physical intervention and are knowledgeable about and proficient in other means of solving problems.
9. To have adults who understand that solving problems collaboratively—rather than insisting on blind adherence to authority—is what prepares kids for the demands they will face in the real world.
10. To have adults understand that blind obedience to authority is dangerous and that life in the real world requires expressing one's concerns, listening to the concerns of others, and working towards mutually satisfactory solutions.

Behavioral Handout for Parents

Guidelines for Raising a Child on the Autism Spectrum

Realise

1. When your child is anxious, their functional level declines. Just because a child CAN do something does not mean they will when stressed.
2. Your child lives in the present moment. What you do NOW is important. (Threats or promises about the future may have no meaning.)
3. Even though you understand why your child is behaving a certain way (sensory issues, difficulty with transitions, language challenges), it will still be unacceptable for the child to hit, spit, bite, or otherwise cause harm. It's just HARDER for your child to behave the way you want.
4. The caring adults in your child's life must be the guides and the models to help them achieve self-control. If we do not model self-control, we cannot expect it.
5. Children with autism/ASD are very literal. The child may misinterpret teasing words.
6. Remember that most children with autism are visual learners. Use gestures, pictures, or photos to help with understanding. These visual strategies can be extremely helpful.

Try these suggestions

1. Don't say too much and don't repeat a request over and over.
2. Be specific. "Be nice" is vague. "Don't spit" is specific.
3. Keep it simple.
4. Use visuals.
5. Reward often.
6. Be consistent.
7. Keep doing it.

Remember

Your goals for your child with autism are the same for your child without autism. You want a pleasant, cooperative, polite child. You want your child to be a happy, successful, and well-liked adult. It is far harder for the child with autism to reach these goals. It is far harder to parent a child with autism towards these goals. Most likely, it will take far longer than you want, but with effort, time, patience, and love, you can come very close to achieving these goals. Never give up.

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