

## BEHAVIORAL NEEDS

We all act in certain ways to meet our own personal needs. Children are no different, and their behavior, or misbehavior, can be understood best if the underlying need or reason for their behavior is identified. (Use the transparency " BEHAVIORAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN" for student reference.)

1. **NORMAL BEHAVIOR FOR THE CHILD'S AGE.** A 2-year-old child should not be expected to express his/her feelings in the same way that a 12-year-old would. Likewise, a 3-year-old child cannot sit quietly for as long as a 10-year-old can.
2. **NATURAL CURIOSITY.** Young children need opportunities to satisfy their curiosity. Experimentation is an important part of a child's life. This is not always easy for an adult to accept. A child playing in Mommy's makeup is simply satisfying curiosity needs.
3. **THEY DO NOT KNOW ANY BETTER.** Perhaps our instructions to them have not been adequate, or possibly misunderstood, and they are really trying to do what we have asked. Perhaps they are trying something new that they have never done and do not realize what the consequences of their actions will be.
4. **TO GET ATTENTION.** It is important that the caregiver gives attention to the child at appropriate times. Too often, attention is given at inappropriate times, which actually encourages the behavior that is unacceptable. When a child who is misbehaving receives attention, the misbehavior will most likely be repeated to gain attention in the future. Often the caregiver will not see this as attention, because it is negative in nature. However, it is important to keep in mind that negative attention is still attention. A more effective method is to ignore questionable or undesirable behavior. Give attention to children when they are doing what you want them to do.

5. **FOR POWER.** Children need to feel some power and control in their lives. If this does not happen, they become upset over the amount of control others have and may rebel in order to assert some degree of power and control. If the caregiver feels superior to the child and needs to have full control in the situation, the child's desire for power may pose a threat. In most instances, a power struggle will ensue, which escalates the situation.
6. **FOR REVENGE.** This may be directed to the caregiver if the child feels that he/she has no control in making decisions. In this case, the child will deliberately work to hurt the adult and to "get even" with him/her for what he/she has been made to do. In other instances, the revenge may be directed toward another child who they feel has wronged them. If one child falls over another child who is busy playing on the floor, the first child may react to the hurt by hitting the child on the floor. The concept of an accident may not yet be understood.
7. **FEELING INADEQUATE OR INCAPABLE.** Children who are constantly being corrected or given negative reinforcement will often quit trying because they are afraid of failing. In some instances, this is merely used as an excuse for lack of proper behavior. They may say they cannot do something simply because they do not want to do it.
8. **THE NEED TO FEEL THAT THEY BELONG.** A child needs to find a place in the family or peer group in order to feel that he/she belongs. Sometimes this place will be positive, and sometimes it will be negative, but in either instance, the feeling of belonging must be met.