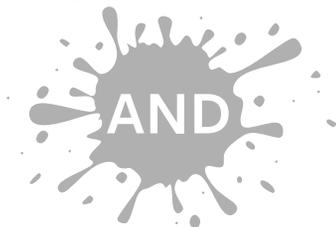


Why Your
Kids
Misbehave—



What to Do
about It

DR. KEVIN LEMAN



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To all you smart parents
who picked up this book.

The knowledge you'll glean
will save
countless future heartaches.

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Introduction

Why Your Kids Work You

*Your kids can read you like a book,
and they're master readers.*

My lovely wife, Sande, our daughter Krissy, and I recently had dinner at Texas Roadhouse, a favorite steakhouse. Not too far from us was a young couple with Grandma, Grandpa, Auntie, and a cherub in one of those little wooden high chairs at the end of the table. Clearly that 13-month-old didn't want to stay in that high chair prison.

Oh, this is gonna be good, I thought.

The 13-month-old fussed and wriggled in the chair for a few minutes until she was too loud to ignore any longer. Then Dad picked up baby, put her on his lap, and offered her a spoonful of her mac and cheese.

I could predict what was going to happen next . . . and it did.

Baby grabbed the spoon and, with a petite shove of her right fist, sent that mac and cheese flying about a foot, barely missing landing in the middle of Grandma's filet mignon dinner plate.

Eagle-eyed Mom spotted what was going on and reached for baby. "Honey, do you want this? Or do you want that?" she asked, pointing to her own food.

I started chuckling.

Sande and Krissy simultaneously shot me "the look." The one I know from experience means, "Leemie/Dad, don't you even think about it."

So, in deference to my own family members and our cooked-just-right steak, I bit my tongue. I didn't say anything to that cute, well-meaning couple who likely thought they were doing everything right but were, in fact, doing everything wrong. They were already being controlled by a kid who was shorter than a yardstick and likely couldn't even walk yet.

Without intervention of some kind—like carrying out the practical, smart strategies I'll reveal in this book—that same kid will become a mouthy middle-schooler. That mouthy middle-schooler will morph into an uncontrollable teenager with princess syndrome.

Yet those parents who were smiling at their firstborn Snookums had no idea they were on the way to creating a power-driven child.

You see, if you're a parent, you're also the teacher of a daily workshop for your kids, no matter how young or old they are. It's called "How to Misbehave."

Give yourself some credit. You're an awesome teacher. You're adept at balancing trying to do things right in parenting and accepting all kinds of advice from Grandma, Dad, your sister, and even your brother, who isn't a parent yet but thinks he knows best how to handle your little Snookums.

You've read a bunch of parenting books and mommy blogs galore. You've dialogued with other parents in the trenches about a

score of hot subjects, such as getting your kid to try new food, how to effectively potty train, the best ways to adapt to kindergarten, how to find a good soccer league, what to take to summer camp, how to navigate a certain teacher known for being a stickler, and which AP classes your child should take or which clubs she should join to ease her way into the university of your choice.

It doesn't matter that your kid isn't even a toddler yet. You're determined to know all the ropes and be a good parent to create a successful child who stands head and shoulders above the rest in every area.

So, in search of the "Parent of the Year" title, you try out all sorts of ideas on your child (aka guinea pig), especially if this is your first go-round in parenting. Some of those brainstorms work, but others don't have a high success rate. *Why is that?* you wonder. They seem to work for other people you read about.

The biggest problem is that, as you find your way in the real-life maze of parenting, you're inconsistent. You try one thing, then another. What does that inconsistency say to the child watching you?

Let's say your child is that 13-month-old I observed at Texas Roadhouse. Take a peek at the "aha" phenomenon going on in her pint-sized brain as her parents interact with her. That smart baby has already put two and two together to come up with, well, four.

Aha 1: Oh, I get it now. I know exactly how to make those people, who look like giants to me, do what I want. I cry, and they pick me up. Simple.

Aha 2: This being a kid isn't as hard as I thought it would be. I give my Cheerios a push off the tray here, and they come running. Look how much power I've got in my little finger.

Aha 3: Gosh, I thought adults would be tough. But these guys are so easy. All I have to do is pout and refuse to open

my mouth when they feed me. The next bite they'll offer me comes fully loaded with entertainment—an airplane motion and buzzing noise. I wonder what else I can do to get them to perform like well-trained seals?

Aha 4: So, what's on the menu today? . . . Oh, yuck, it's that squishy mac and cheese again. I hate that stuff. I know. If I launch that spoon back in Dad's face, he'll pass me to Mom, who'll give in and feed me from her plate. At least her food has interesting textures, even if it doesn't always taste good. Even better, I get to sit on her warm lap instead of this cold, hard high chair. And Grandma plays with me then too. I like the googly faces she makes. They make me laugh.

Kids do read us like a book. They're expert readers, in fact, even by the age of 13 months.

Why do kids misbehave? What do *we* have to do with it? And how can we stop that behavior before it starts, or turn the train of misbehavior around when it's already chugging down the path?

There's something called training. It's not only for kids. It's for parents too. *Why Your Kids Misbehave—and What to Do about It*:

- provides expert insight into why kids do what they do and why you do what you do
- explores the basics of what discipline really is and isn't, and why punishment never works
- reveals the four stages of misbehavior and how you can handle each one . . . *before* it progresses
- gives time-tested strategies that have worked with millions of parents and families

- offers real questions from other parents in the trenches and my winning answers

Simply stated, kids work you *because they can*. Those cute ones shorter than a Canada goose? They're smarter than you think. And the gangly ones with big puppy feet and hands who now tower over you at age 14? They've got parental manipulation down pat. But they all have the same agenda—to win you over so they can have what they want, when they want it, and the way they want it. They're programmed to do it from babyhood on, unless you, wise parent, intervene.

However, you already have the upper hand, even if you don't know it. Those kids need you, though they may not act like it and would never admit it. After all, without you they wouldn't even have undies, much less clean ones. Nor would they have any of those gadgets they consider necessary to life, like an iPhone, a smart TV, available transportation, or a refrigerator that's open 24/7.

That's a good starting point for your parental authority, wouldn't you agree?



Why Your Kids Do What They Do

*Everything has a beginning,
and so does misbehavior.*

Every parent runs into a few snags as they rear ankle-biters through the hormone group. So if any of these next scenes sound even vaguely familiar, congratulations. You're in good company.

1. Your two-year-old reaches her pinkie into the electrical outlet on the wall five times in one morning. Fearing a zap will scare her or shorten her life span, you're worn out from racing across the room to stop her.
2. Your three-year-old gets kicked out of preschool for yanking toys away from other kids and making them cry. This is the highly coveted preschool you signed up for the month after you gave birth because the waiting list was three years.

3. Your five-year-old princess has a new favorite behavior: stomping her foot and yelling “No!” when you ask her to get dressed for kindergarten in the clothes you’ve laid out for her.
4. The school office calls you in the middle of a meeting at work to say your six-year-old has been accused of bullying another first-grader. That student’s angry parents are waiting for you in the principal’s office right now.
5. Your spacey eight-year-old continually leaves a string of possessions outside to get rained on, and you’re always playing pickup.
6. When your nine-year-old has math homework, everyone in the family runs for cover. As soon as she wails, “It’s too hard!” and starts her crying jag, your night is ruined. You end up doing her homework.
7. Your 10-year-old is such a cranky mess every time he returns from staying at your ex’s apartment for the weekend that you wish you could FedEx him back there until he’s an adult.
8. Your 11-year-old has mastered picking on his little sister and exiting stage left before you catch him in the act.
9. Your 13-year-old has morphed overnight into an alien creature who talks back.
10. A teacher caught your 14-year-old smoking an aromatic illegal substance in the alleyway behind school. Now your tarnished-wings angel is stuck at home on a month of probation. To him, it seems like a vacation, and he’s taking advantage of it. But you? You feel like the one on the hot seat with the school administration, plus you’re suffering at home with your bored troublemaker.
11. After taking the keys of the family car without permission, your 15-year-old went for a joyride, got into a fender

bender, and ended up at the police station. He had his rights read to him by a stern police officer and experienced being cuffed and placed in the back of a police car. Then you got a call and had to join the not-so-fun discussion with that police officer at the station.

12. Your 17-year-old isn't getting around to her college applications, so you secretly start to do them because you're afraid she'll miss the application window.

Some of these misbehaviors may seem minor and not worth your attention. After all, you've got a full-time job on top of being a parent and a lot of other worries that keep you up at night, like the washer that needs to be replaced and the leak under your kitchen sink. Surely the little things your kid does that temporarily drive you crazy will pass, right? You'll both feel different in the morning after you get some needed sleep.

However, some of these behaviors demand your immediate attention since people outside your family clan are involved, like a principal or the stern-looking police officer who has your child in tow.

But whether minor or major, all of the above are misbehaviors, and all of them happen for a reason.

Why Misbehavior Continues

Misbehavior will continue happening and will likely grow larger until you identify the underlying reason for that behavior.

That two-year-old who stuck her finger in the electrical outlet? She became the eight-year-old who left her backpack and school-books out in the rain.

That three-year-old who yanked toys away from others at preschool? He became the six-year-old who bullied another child in first grade.

That nine-year-old who cried every time she had to do math? She's now the 17-year-old who can't do her own college applications.

That 11-year-old who picked on his sister, then hightailed it out of Dodge before he got caught? Well, that was only the beginning of the wild rodeo rides he took his parents on, including a joyride in the family car at age 15.

The best thing you can do right now is to envision what kind of adult you want your child to be. One who is responsible and

Envision what kind of adult you want your child to be.

accountable for his actions? One who is respectful, loving and kind toward others, and well-grounded in values important to you? One who has healthy self-worth, has internal motivation to do his best, and contributes in a positive way to his family, neighborhood, and community?

No matter where you and your child are right now in your relationship, there's no better time than the present to begin that transformation. It starts with a simple statement: "I want to see some things change around here. For that to happen, we need to do some things differently."

Note the "we" language. There's no finger-pointing at your child. No "*You're* the problem. What's wrong with you? You need to change. You need to stop this behavior."

There's no finger-pointing at yourself. No "I know it's my fault. If only I would have done X, we wouldn't be at this place today."

The past is just that—the past. Nothing good comes from digging up old bones from the backyard and dragging them onto the front porch for viewing. The present, and where you go from this juncture, is what matters.

Both of you are in this relationship. Your job throughout this book is to work on the areas in which the two of you intersect, so that when situations of misbehavior arise, you'll naturally start to think:

What did I do or say in the past?

Well, I . . .

Did that work?

No. It only made the situation worse.

So what could I do or say differently this time for a better long-term outcome?

Let me set your mind at ease. There's no such thing as a perfect parent or a perfect kid, so throw those ideas out the window right now. Each of you will make mistakes as you go through life, especially with each other. We tend to unleash our emotions on those closest to us, because they feel the safest.

It's like the cartoon I saw many years ago that was so true to life it lodged in my brain. It went something like this:

Dad has a very bad day at work. He walks in the kitchen door and yells at his wife.

A question mark erupts in thought bubbles as she wonders, *What did I do?* Now she's having a bad day. The instant her son walks in the door, she lets him have it.

The son has two question marks in thought bubbles. *What's with Mom? She's mad about that old thing?* Now he's having a bad day. He seeks out his younger brother and picks a fight.

Three question marks erupt in thought bubbles from the younger brother. *What did I do to deserve this? He could have gotten me for all kinds of things last week, but I haven't done anything lately. What's with him?* Now he's having a bad day. He seeks out the family dog and gives it a swift kick.

Multiple question marks fill the thought bubbles from the dog as it slinks away to hide behind the couch.

See what I mean? We all have our flawed moments, and we're inherent experts at passing those moments on to those we love. So consider that you and your kids are on a shared learning curve.

Your goal in this book is not to get yourself elected for “Mother of the Year” or “Father of the Year.” It’s not to train your kids to high-jump over the bar of perfectionism either.

Instead, you’re going to discover how to walk *together* through life, jumping over whatever hurdles are put in your path, even

We all have our flawed moments, and we’re inherent experts at passing those moments on to those we love.

running side by side when you need to. All with the end goal of transforming your children into the best adults they can be as you stay in healthy authority over them.

But don’t forget to stop every once in a while to smell the roses.

As the father of five who are now adults, trust me when I say the length of time your children are at home, safely in your nest, is much shorter than you can imagine. That

means every minute you have with them is critically important to their long-term welfare and success.

Thinking of any current misbehavior as “bad,” or thinking of your child as “being bad” and hoping he’ll grow out of it, won’t get you anywhere. Instead, treat that current misbehavior as what it is: behavior that you need to work on as a team. Do that and you’ll be less likely to react in a heated manner and more likely to respond in a way that’s beneficial long-term to your relationship.

Parenting misbehaving kids is never easy. We all have moments when our fuses are short and swiftly lit. But misbehaviors only grow if you don’t address them now or you address them incorrectly. I assure you any short-term pain will be worth the long-term gain.

It is possible to channel all that energy from negative behavior in a positive direction if you know a few secrets about why your kids do what they do. So let’s start with the most important, basic concept that will revolutionize the way you think about and approach your child’s misbehavior.

Purposive Behavior

Of all the words you've used today, this week, or this year, I'll bet you a million bucks you haven't used this one—*purposive*.

Am I right?

Purposive behavior is a psychological term derived from the individual psychology of psychiatrist Alfred Adler.¹ Basically it means all social behavior serves a specific purpose. Everything has a beginning. Children and teenagers are much smarter than you give them credit for. They wouldn't do what they do, and continue doing it, without gaining something from that behavior. Their behavior—including misbehavior—serves a purpose. Simply stated, it works.

But what difference does knowing the term *purposive behavior* mean to you in your real world, when faced with your misbehaving kids who are embarrassing you in front of the neighbors or Granny at Walmart?

Flash back to the situations at the beginning of this chapter, which are based on real-life problems that parents like you have faced. Let's look at the behavior in each situation and identify what purpose it serves to answer the question, Why does the child do that or keep doing that?

Behavior #1: Your two-year-old keeps sticking her finger in the electrical outlet.

Purpose it serves: The answer is simple. That action gets you, Mom, to pay attention to her. Even more, you run toward her like a crazy person, and you're awfully entertaining. It's better than the cartoon movie she watches when you're busy.

Why wouldn't your cherub play this game over and over? It's a doubleheader: attention *and* entertainment.

Why wouldn't your
cherub play this
game over and over?

It's a doubleheader:
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Behavior #2: Your three-year-old gets kicked out of a highly coveted preschool for yanking toys away from other kids and making them cry.

Purpose it serves: He got his teacher’s attention . . . more than his fair share, in fact. Out of all those kids in the room, he made the teacher keep her eye on him.

Going from home, where he had all of the attention, to a place where he had to fight to be noticed because there were a lot more kids like him—who couldn’t tie their shoes either—wasn’t so hard anymore.

Behavior #3: Your five-year-old princess stomps her foot and yells “No!” when you ask her to get dressed for kindergarten in the clothes you’ve laid out for her.

Purpose it serves: Her loud defiance gets your attention fast. She doesn’t want to go to kindergarten because it’s a noisy place, and she’s an only child used to having and creating noise only when she wants it. Also, kindergarten is a scary place with a lot of kids like her, when she’s used to being top dog at home. Add to that the fact she doesn’t like the scratchy collared shirt you make her wear because you noticed all of the other girls are wearing something like it.

Saying “no” leads you to cajole her into going, which takes a while, so you’re often late to school. By then most of the kindergarteners are already in their seats, quietly working. She doesn’t have to jostle for her place among the other kids who are hanging up their jackets and backpacks on the hooks. As a bonus, somewhere along the way you gave up and allowed her to wear the shirt she wanted, just to get her out the door.

Score: Kid 3, Mom 0.

Behavior #4: The school office calls to say your six-year-old is bullying another first-grader, and that child’s parents and the principal are waiting for you.

Purpose it serves: Your hackles rise with immediate attention, right in the middle of that work meeting. Half of you is angry with your kid for getting into this situation. The other half is in full Mama/Papa Bear mode: “How are you sure *my* kid did it? Did you see him do it? He isn’t the kind to do this. How do you know the other kid didn’t provoke him first?”

You’ve been so busy in your new job that you haven’t had much time to listen to your son talk about how first grade is going in his new school, or to show up for the open house, where kids performed a play for the parents. But now you’re in gather-information mode at your battle-command station, and you’re armed and loaded.

Behavior #5: Your spacey eight-year-old continually leaves a string of possessions outside to get rained on, and you’re always playing pickup.

Purpose it serves: That eight-year-old may act spacey, but she’s certainly not dumb. She’s got you trained like a circus animal. She knows you like items in their rightful place and you especially hate it when possessions get lost or unnecessarily ruined because people don’t take care of them.

Leaving her backpack to get soaked in the rain is a ploy for your attention. Even if you’re busy getting dinner ready and don’t stop to talk to her for very long, as soon as you see that backpack outside, out you go to retrieve it.

What you don’t see is her lurking around the corner, laughing every time you do it.

Then again, some kids are naturally lazy or spacey, even if you didn’t go out and snowplow their roads. Not everything a child does is tied to the purposive nature of life. Sometimes they’re only being who they are.

Behavior #6: When your nine-year-old has math homework, everyone in the family runs for cover. As soon as she wails, “It’s

too hard!” and starts her crying jag, your night is ruined. You end up doing her homework.

Purpose it serves: There’s nothing like a kid wailing, “But it’s too hard! I can’t do it!” to get a parent’s attention. Especially if it comes with a bucketload of tears and a slamming bedroom door.

But that nine-year-old is working you. She doesn’t feel like doing her homework, and she’s angling for you to do it for her. It works. You fall into her trap every time. See why the misbehavior continues?

Behavior #7: Your 10-year-old is such a cranky mess every time he returns from your ex’s apartment that you wish you could FedEx him back until he’s an adult.

Purpose it serves: He’s so irritable that he makes you pay attention to him, even if his behavior provokes negative comments like, “Go to your room . . . and don’t come out until you have a better attitude.”

There’s nothing like a kid wailing, “But it’s too hard! I can’t do it!” to get a parent’s attention. Especially if it comes with a bucketload of tears and a slamming bedroom door.

For your son, even negative attention is better than the *nada* attention he gets at his dad’s place. Your ex-husband has a new wife and a whiny two-year-old who everybody thinks is cute. As far as your son is concerned, he might as well blend into the walls. He even has to rummage in the fridge when he’s hungry because everybody eats around the toddler’s schedule or their own work sched-

ules. There’s no family dinner table there, like he’s used to with you, or when the three of you were a family. He’s been living on leftover cold pizza for the past two days.

Your son’s brain is extra busy as he walks through your door every weekend. He wonders, *Why do I have to be there if nobody even cares that I’m there? And why do I have to sleep on their office couch with*

all their stuff, when I have my own bedroom at home with all my stuff? Just because of some dumb court ruling? At least Mom talks to me, warms food up for me, eats with me, and notices I'm home.

But you don't hear those thoughts. Nor do you recognize that his bad attitude is a call for you, the person he cares about the most and knows cares about him the most, to give him what he didn't have for the weekend: attention. All you can see is a sulky, angry kid who seems determined to pick on you every time he returns home.

Behavior #8: Your 11-year-old has mastered picking on his little sister and exiting stage left before you catch him in the act.

Purpose it serves: Your 11-year-old is a genius, no doubt about it. He knows there's no better way to get your attention than to pick on the "helpless" baby of the family. Not to mention it's also fun to create some drama since her responding squeal is so predictable in his unpredictable, dog-eat-dog adolescent world. It's like a magician learning how to pull the exact item out of his hat that makes the audience applaud and respond, "Oh, wow."

He may not be at the top of the food chain at school, but at home he's the master of the show. The fact that your magician exits as soon as his sister yells, "Mom!" shows he knows exactly what behavior to expect from you.

He's smart enough to stay out of reach of those flailing arms in your initial reaction. All he gets is your cooled-down later version as you say, hands on hips, "Young man, I expect more from you because you're older . . ."

He goes back to his room, grinning because the show he created worked. Your attention to his misbehavior drives him to scheme how next to torture his sister.

Let the games continue.

There's no better way to get your attention than to pick on the "helpless" baby of the family.

Behavior #9: Your 13-year-old has morphed overnight into an alien creature who talks back.

Purpose it serves: Your shocked expression says it all. You might have been focused on cleaning out the basement, but *now* you're paying attention. How could the sweet child who loved to curl up by your side and wanted to hold your hand at the grocery store be acting like this?

By getting your attention through sass, your new teenager is saying, “Hey, look at me. I'm changing. I'm not exactly comfortable with how I'm changing. Sometimes I still want to be a little kid, and I really need my mom and dad. Other times I think they're the stupidest people on the planet. Sometimes I want to be a grown-up, and I'm tired of adults telling me what to do. And sometimes I don't like myself—my body parts are getting weird—or know what I want. I need help, but I don't know how to ask for it, and I'm not sure if I want it. I'm kind of mixed up.”

Well, that's the understatement of the century. Adolescents can be more changeable in emotional color than chameleons faced with imminent danger.

Welcome to the hormone group, you lucky parent, you.

Behavior #10: A teacher caught your 14-year-old smoking an aromatic illegal substance in the alleyway behind school, but it feels like you're the one on the hot seat with the school and suffering at home.

Purpose it serves: After a forced move due to your job relocation and leaving all his childhood friends behind, your 14-year-old has been decidedly unhappy. He found a way to let you know how unhappy he is and that it's all *your* fault. That's why he didn't work as hard as his new friends to flee the scene, so he was the only one caught. Because he wouldn't give up the names of his new posse smoking with him, he's the one who got the time.

The cryptic phone call from school and the probation sentence got your attention, all right. Not only do you look like a

bad parent in this new small town, but the school administration has already labeled your kid as a troublemaker. And your teenager is working hard to find new ways to make you suffer at home, including turning your house into a pigsty while you're at work and refusing to do anything you ask him to.

*He found a way
to let you know
how unhappy
he is and that
it's all your fault.*

Behavior #11: After taking the keys of the family car without permission, your 15-year-old went for a joyride, got into a fender bender, and ended up at the police station.

Purpose it serves: Your teenager has been bugging you to give him more time behind the wheel on his driver's permit, but you've been busy with . . . well, life in general. He has more than half of his driving hours in, and he still has six months to go before he turns 16 and could even go for his license. But he's impatient and doesn't think you take him seriously.

When he asked you earlier to go driving with him, you had a deadline to finish, so you said, "No, not tonight. We can practice driving on Saturday and Sunday."

You could sense the heavy eye roll even with your back turned. Then again, you're used to it. You've got two teenagers.

Since that timeline sounded like a lifetime away, and your son couldn't get your attention when he wanted it and how he wanted it, he took matters into his own hands. He sneaked the car keys off the hook by the back door and took control of his own destiny with a joyride to pick up a friend a few miles away. They'd only intended to pick up some food at a local drive-through, but then he couldn't resist flooring it at an intersection.

Now that dinged car bumper is the least of your worries. He's lost his beginner's permit, and you've lost any shred of a sense of humor.

Behavior #12: Your 17-year-old isn't getting around to her college applications, so you secretly start to do them because you're afraid she'll miss the application window.

Purpose it serves: What a smart teenager. All that online paperwork is daunting, and she really doesn't want to do it. She knows that if she grabs your attention and sympathy by looking super busy and stressed by her classes and looming life transitions, you'll rescue her. After all, if someone else will do it, why should she? It gives her a lot more time to text her friends, buy new songs on iTunes, and watch crazy cat clips on YouTube.

The Secret Your Kids Don't Want You to Know

As we looked at each of those behaviors, did you see how every single behavior served a purpose in that child's life? Let's be blunt. If *you* did a certain action and it served a purpose that was beneficial to you, wouldn't you want to continue doing it?

Of course you would. So would I. As the baby of the family, I learned early on that if I didn't feel like doing something, I only had to drag my feet until my older brother and older sister were either told to do it by my parents or did it anyway because they, as perfectionists, couldn't stand that thing not being done.

Why did I do that? Because it worked.

Why do you do a certain action now? Because it works.

For example, you love cooking but hate cleaning up. You purposefully don't allow enough time to clean up before you have to leave for your long-awaited night out with friends. You know your neatnik partner won't be able to stand it, so he'll clean up for you . . . even if he's muttering the whole time. As long as he cleans up, that's beneficial to you, right?

But what if you made a mess and came home to that same mess? And no one stepped in to clean it up for you? You might be swayed to clean it up before it solidifies into cement on your

kitchen counter and you have to scrub harder. Delaying cleanup would no longer be beneficial in your life.

So here's the secret your child doesn't want you to know: his misbehavior will continue as long as it's beneficial in his life. When it no longer gains him anything, he'll stop. If it's an ingrained behavior, it might take a few times for him to get into his noggin that the picture is changing. But don't worry. Eventually he'll get it, and his behavior will change.

In all 12 scenarios we examined—composites of real-life situations—the misbehavior started at the beginning because of a single word. That's why I've used that key word on purpose in every single scenario. Did you happen to spot it?

If you're a detailed person (likely a firstborn, by the way), you probably did, and it might even have annoyed you a bit. *Why can't a person with "Dr." in front of their name come up with a different word for that?*

If you're a middleborn, you might have noticed, but it didn't bother you. After all, you're along for the ride in figuring out how to juggle being your child's parent *and* friend.

If you're the baby of the family, you're breezing through the book and hitting the highlights (or asking your firstborn partner or friend to read the book for you and give you the highlights), so you didn't even notice that overused word.

So what is that word?

A-T-T-E-N-T-I-O-N.

I even spelled it out for you to get *your* attention.

That, dear parents, is exactly what those misbehaving kids are doing to you. Why you in particular? Read on.