



In every newsletter this section will break down two specific behaviors. These behaviors, along with many others, can be found on the internet at www.disciplinehelp.com.

THE AGITATOR

I. BEHAVIOR:

Specific attitudes and actions of this child at home and/or at school.

- Tries to cause trouble—and appears delighted with it.
- Gets others to do or say what he/she would not do or say.
- Uproots old controversies, cries "unjust," incites hostilities, and causes as much trouble as he/she can.
- Tries to appear to be an innocent bystander in any trouble he/she causes.
- May act upset, stir others to rebelliousness, then walk away from the group when the disturbance is about to take place.
- Usually gets other students in trouble more often than he/she gets in trouble. More often than not, does not get openly and publicly involved—but operates from the sidelines.
- At home, hits, pushes, and trips siblings when out of sight of parents—then says the brother or sister "started it" if problems result.
- Starts rumors to create turmoil.
- Plays other people against one another, including teacher against teacher, parent against parent, students against classmates.
- Often provokes physical confrontations between other people.
- Consistently immature and irresponsible.
- Tattletale.
- Seeks the attention of others.
- Appears to operate without loyalties, even to those regarded as friends.

II. EFFECTS:

How behavior affects teachers, classmates, and parents in the school learning environment and the home family situation.

- Others are influenced to do or say what the agitator would not do or say him/herself.
- Learning experience in the classroom is seriously disrupted by the agitator's activities because students and teacher alike are distracted from the work or discussion at hand.
- Social experience of students in the halls, cafeteria, etc., becomes negative.
- At times, others are led to admire the agitator's sly and manipulative behavior. Therefore, he/she is a hero to some.
- Teacher can easily start to feel threatened and as if he/she were losing control of the class.
- Classmates can begin to feel as if they might be able to get away with similar behavior.
- Class may be in a continual or almost continual uproar regarding some issue.
- Teacher influence and credibility may be reduced.
- Teacher may lose self-control.
- Teacher may feel inadequate. As a result, he/she can become tense and transmit this tension to the agitator and other students.

III. ACTIONS:

- Identify causes of misbehavior.
- Pinpoint student needs being revealed.
- Employ specific methods, procedures, and techniques at

school and at home for getting the child to modify or change his/her behavior.

Primary cause of misbehavior:

- **Power:** The need for power is expressed by creating situations that demonstrate this student's ability to be in control.

Primary needs being revealed:

- **Hunger, Thirst, Rest:** The lack of food and rest may be a form of abuse and should be investigated.
- **Sexuality:** Because of past experiences, this person may find it very difficult to establish any positive relationships.
- **Escape from Pain:** This student protects him/herself by the use of power to cover his/her pain.

Secondary needs being revealed:

- **Aggression:** This student has a need to control.
- **Inquisitiveness:** This student may have a strong need to know what's going on. He/she wants to know the why behind what we're doing and what's going on.
- **Power, Status:** This student may be trying to achieve through agitation.
- Remember that the agitator's biggest fear is exposure; basically he/she is a pretender as well as a coward. The agitator cannot accept the full and open responsibility of a leadership position, but needs others to fulfill his/her needs.
- Identify the agitator through these two behaviors: First, he/she is always present—but appears to be an innocent bystander—in trouble situations. Second, he/she is never personally involved in any dispute, if it can be avoided. Whenever you observe an ever-present innocent bystander, look for his/her position of leadership in group situations.
- Indicate tactfully and professionally, in a private conference, that the disguise has been revealed. This will curtail his/her activities almost immediately.
- Be careful not to make a total accusation—for he/she can easily deny involvement.
- Seriously, but gently, tell the student that you suspect what he/she is doing. You may add that you have the professional obligation to discuss this deceitful behavior with parents, his/her other teachers, and administrators.
- Regardless of the student's response, fear will be his/her emotion. Treat this fear kindly.
- Listen carefully, then show concern. When you operate in a professional manner in this regard the agitator will make every effort to improve and to make sure that you know he/she is trying. Therefore, confront ... in a caring way ... always.
- When you confront, use the "What Is More Important Than Why" technique. Don't ask why the student did something. The student may not even know he/she is agitating. Regardless, "why" is not the immediate issue. You can talk about "why" later. Ask what he/she did, and what he/she is going to do about it. You may even skip asking what the student did—and tell him/her. However, you must ask what he/she is going to do about it.
- Recognize and acknowledge his/her efforts to improve. Otherwise, the agitating may begin again.

ALL ARTICLES OF INTEREST, PHOTOS, NEWS, ETC...FOR THE APRIL ISSUE OF SEEKER MUST BE IN NO LATER THAN MARCH 15, 2000. PLEASE SEND ALL INFORMATION TO:

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