
The Good News About Bad Behavior

Why Kids Are Less Disciplined Than Ever— And What to Do About It

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General Information

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Every parent experiences that feeling of irritation, shame, embarrassment, or frustration: why can't my kid behave? And now, with digital distractions everywhere and disapproving grandparents looking on, it seems like today's kids are having a harder time than ever maintaining self-control. Are we crazy, or is kids' behavior really worse now than ever before?

It's not all in your head, Katherine Reynolds Lewis tells us. When she faced parenting challenges with her young children, she used her reporting skills to investigate the phenomenon of bad behavior, crossing the country to talk to parents, teachers, and kids and learning what works and what doesn't from the top parenting, classroom-management, rehabilitation, and brain-science experts. Her 2015 piece for Mother Jones about discipline at school, "What If Everything You Knew about Disciplining Kids Was Wrong?" struck a nerve with parents; it went viral via social media and quickly became the most-read story the magazine had ever published.

Now, in *THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT BAD BEHAVIOR*, Lewis presents a comprehensive portrait of the modern state of bad behavior—and highlights game-changing strategies. Lewis, herself a certified parent educator, walks parents through four empowering approaches, all of which share three key components, to help parents navigate tricky behavioral situations and work with their children toward better solutions. Her outline of an Apprenticeship Model of parenting gives kids responsibility within ever-increasing limits.

So often, parents ask, "How do we get the kids to do what we want?" Lewis, though, has found that the right question is: "Why can't the kids do what we want?"



Katherine Reynolds Lewis

is an award-winning journalist based in the Washington, DC, area who regularly writes for the Atlantic, Fortune, USA Today's magazines, Washington Post, and Working Mother. Her story about school discipline was Mother Jones' most-read article ever. She is a certified parent educator with the Parent Encouragement Program in Kensington, Maryland, a Logan Nonfiction Fellow with the Carey Institute for Global Good and an EWA National Reporting Fellow. She and her husband Brian are the proud parents of three children.

Praise for *The Good News About Bad Behavior*

“The Good News About Bad Behavior is the book parents and teachers need in order to understand the link between empathy and genuine, human connection to positive behavioral outcomes. Lewis explains how children's lack of self-regulation and resilience is at the root of so many modern parenting dilemmas and gives practical, useful advice for how to do better for our kids. The Good News on Bad Behavior is an important addition to my parenting and education library.”

- **Jessica Lahey, New York Times bestselling author of *The Gift of Failure***

"Katherine Lewis has written a smart, compassionate book for the 21st century parent. Forget the carrot-and-stick approach to redirecting children's' behavior. We can help our kids develop their inner motivation for behaving well — while simultaneously forging lasting family bonds — by following the wise guidance in BAD BEHAVIOR.”

- **Daniel H. Pink, New York Times bestselling author of *WHEN and DRIVE***

“Our new-normal is a generation of children who cannot self-regulate and who instead exhibit behavior that is both disruptive at school and home and can make us parents feel embarrassed; we then seek control via rewards or punishments, neither of which creates any permanent learning or intrinsic change in the child. Into the breach steps journalist Katherine Reynolds Lewis, armed with the latest behavioral science research and her eye-opening journalistic inquiry. She introduces a new discipline model making all the difference in classrooms and families, at the heart of which is a paradox - in order to get kids to behave the way you want, you must give up control of that outcome and let them do the work to get there themselves. The logic of it becomes clear through her detailed real-life stories of parents, educators, and kids whose lives are changing dramatically. An absolute must-read for anyone raising or teaching 'difficult' children, and insightful to anyone eager to teach kids how to regulate their own behavior and ultimately thrive in society on their own.”

- **Julie Lythcott-Haims, New York Times bestselling author of *How to Raise an Adult***

“A book that is both incredibly fascinating AND insanely helpful? That's what you're holding in your hands. A great book! It is both reassuring and fantastic to know that there's a way out of bad behavior, and a very rational reason for why it exists in the first place!”

- **Lenore Skenazy, President of Let Grow, founder of Free-Range Kids**

“If you hate disciplining your kids with time-outs and punishments, you're in for a treat. Instead of trying to control children, this timely book shows how you can teach them to control themselves.”

- **Adam Grant, New York Times bestselling author of *Give and Take*, *Originals*, and *Option B* with Sheryl Sandberg**

“Katherine Lewis has written an important book that will give hope and support to mothers and fathers who want both understanding and answers. With a parent's compassion and a journalist's rigor, she offers advice from the trenches while providing a realistic roadmap towards a better family life. Blending solid science and highly readable storytelling, *The Good News About Bad Behavior* is sure to become a parent must-read.”

- **Judith Warner, New York Times-bestselling author of *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety* and *We've Got Issues: Children and Parents in the Age of Medication***

“At a time when families are feeling pressed for time and stressed by the demands of modern living, Katherine Reynolds Lewis makes an urgent case for connection, communication and giving children space to develop their own capability. With compelling stories and research, Lewis's book is a welcome guide through the land mines of modern parenting.”

- **Brigid Schulte, award-winning journalist and author of the New York Times-bestselling *Overwhelmed: Work, Love & Play when No One has the Time*, and director of *The Better Life Lab* at New America**

“The definitive book on raising children to cope with the distractions and temptations of the modern world. A must read for parents and educators looking to do things differently than in the past.”

- **Laura Vanderkam, author of *I Know How She Does It: How Successful Women Make the Most of Their Time***

Conversation Topics

“Our role as parents isn’t to preside over an always peaceful household; it’s to see disruptions as a chance to better understand our children and help them grow. The home is a learning lab where our children can experiment, fail, and eventually succeed, not a shrine to perfection.”

- How social media, increased pressure on academics and extracurriculars, and lack of responsibilities and connection to their family and community has contributed to a rising incidence of behavioral and mood disorders—such as anxiety and depression—in young people.
- The newest findings about how the parent-child relationship influences the development of the brain’s ability to self-regulate and how parents inadvertently “teach” kids about anxiety, fear, depression, and stress.
- It’s not just about time: researchers have found zero association between the amount of time moms and dads spent with young children and any measures of behavioral, emotional, and academic performance.
- Why the old methods—hitting, yelling, time outs, sticker charts—don’t work, and why the research-backed models of discipline featured in this book do. What the latest science tells us about how to motivate and encourage children.
- A mindset change makes all the difference. Adults stop seeing a child having a tantrum or losing items as willfully disobedient, and instead see that child needing help self-regulating.
- Why parents need to examine their own perspectives and motivations before trying to manage their children. Are you type A? Your children may not be.
- Give up the quest to be a perfect parent. Why making mistakes and being imperfect can actually help you better relate to your child—and help your child relate to you.
- Reflective listening—restating what you’re hearing from your child and asking for confirmation or clarification—is a great way to get more information about why your child is misbehaving and what’s really going on.