

Children And Families

Kids Behaving Badly: A Misdiagnosed Epidemic?

(NAPSA)—What’s wrong with kids today? Although every generation seems to ask the same question, the debate on children’s manners has heated up significantly with articles, Op-Eds and even TV shows like “Nanny 911” that paint an alarming picture of manners and misbehavior unparalleled since...well, since the last generation grew up.

To help desperate parents and frustrated onlookers, child development experts are pointing out clues—and perhaps cures—for the causes of what they say may be a publicly misdiagnosed epidemic.

“Manners are important,” says C.T. O’Donnell II, President and CEO of KidsPeace, a 124-year-old national charity that works to bring peace to the lives of children and families in crisis. “They are vital to social order, building mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation, without which conflict and chaos will prevail. And while most indicators on youth behavior are becoming more positive, with youth crime, teen pregnancy and drug use and smoking all dropping, we’re now discovering a number of commonsense reasons why children seem to listen less and sometimes act in ways that make us—and often, them—unhappy.”

Social Issues: Sociologists point out that children’s more challenging attitudes are, in part, a reflection of our own changing view of authority and authority figures. We openly question the motives of politicians, bankers, lawyers and other former authority figures in ways our parents did not. We may not be able to turn back the clock but the key seems to be to teach today’s Generation Y how to be “Generation Why?”



New resources can help parents understand and teach better manners to kids.

in a way that still shows respect.

Family Issues: Parents work hard to do their best but with the rise of the dual-income household, time spent with kids teaching and behavior modeling is scarce. Even the best parents have a hard time providing enough meaningful time and instruction when, according to one study, the average American parent spends no more than seven minutes per day in uninterrupted, one-on-one time with each child.

“The world is a different place now than when we grew up and parents with less time need more resources, especially creative resources,” says David Bruce, author of “Manners I. Care” (Child Life Books, www.mannersicare.com), which aims to improve children’s manners by having kids and parents read together an amusing story of a child, his behavior, his loved ones’ frustration and the hidden reasons for kids’ actions. “By putting a child on your lap and experiencing together in a fun way a fictional character’s less-than-perfect behavior and the frustra-

tion it causes, the whole family builds caring and sharing, understanding and values.”

Medical Issues: Doctors note some behavioral issues can be traced to physical problems such as ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder) or related to emotions and stress. “It’s not well known but children, especially younger children, respond to stress differently than adults do,” says Dr. Herbert Mandell, medical director of the KidsPeace Children’s Hospital. “When children hear about terror attacks and school shootings or are bullied, they often show it through behavior rather than words. When kids are subjected to tremendous stress, in their home lives or through school or TV, things may happen that look like misbehavior but can be a sign they’re struggling with something. While bad behavior needs to be corrected, at the same time bad feelings need to be unearthed and dealt with.”

Resources for Parents, Kids

To discover the difference and help kids when they’re truly dealing with stresses, parents, teachers and other caretakers can go to the non-profit site www.kidspeace.org for a wealth of information on coping with childhood problems and events in the news. At the acclaimed, clinically screened Web resource www.TeenCentral.net, older children can find safe, free help and encouragement to avoid and defuse pressures of growing up. Bringing up kids may be more difficult now than ever before but parents should know they’re not alone and there are books and free resources to help children grow up healthy, happy and with better manners than...the last generation.