Logical Consequences: Rudolf Dreikurs

**Objectives**

This chapter is designed to help you

1. Distinguish between different motives.
2. Use Dreikurs' discipline model to
   a. Ascertained students' motives.
   b. Help students understand their motives.
   c. Help students exchange their mistaken goals for useful ones.
   d. Help students learn the consequences of their actions.
3. Understand how to deal with misbehavior designed to satisfy students' mistaken goals.
4. Apply Dreikurs' plan for preventing discipline problems.

**Assumptions**

1. Inappropriate behavior is motivated by a need to gain attention, exercise power, or display inadequacy.
2. If the motive for attention is satisfied, inappropriate behavior associated with other motives will not be manifested.
3. Inappropriate behavior can be terminated by helping students find legitimate ways to satisfy their needs.
4. Children can learn to understand their own motives and consequently eliminate misbehavior by having teachers help them explore why they behave as they do.
5. Students behave more appropriately in the classroom when they suffer the logical consequences of their behavior.
6. Presenting students with a choice between two alternative behaviors offers a sufficient basis on which they can learn to be responsible.

**INTRODUCTION**

Rudolf Dreikurs was a native of Vienna, Austria. After he received his degree in medicine from the University of Vienna, he became an associate of Alfred Adler, the famous
psychiatrist. Dreikurs emigrated to the United States in 1937 and became the director of the Alfred Adler Institute in Chicago. Although his primary interest was child and family counseling, he became interested in classroom discipline and with various colleagues wrote several books on the subject. He died in 1972 at the age of 75.

Max is a second grader who for a couple of weeks was constantly out of his seat, leaning on his desk, and doing his work from a half-standing position. His teacher finally asked him whether he preferred to stand or sit while doing his work. Max said that he would prefer to stand. The teacher explained to him that he would no longer need a seat and that his chair could be used somewhere else in the school. Max's chair was immediately removed, and he had to stand up for the rest of the day. The following day, at the beginning of the period, Max was asked whether he preferred to stand or sit for the day. He said that he preferred to sit. His chair was replaced. Max no longer tried to do his schoolwork from a half-standing position Figure 5.1.

One day a group of junior high school students seemed particularly restless. Several students were talking rather belligerently and interrupted the teacher's lesson repeatedly. Finally, the exasperated teacher informed the students that she would be in her office at the back of the classroom reading, and that when they were ready to have her teach, they could come get her. The teacher was fearful as she started reading her book, but in a few minutes two serious-faced youngsters came in and said, "We're ready now—if you will come and teach us." After this incident, whenever the class became unruly and the teacher appeared annoyed, someone would say, "Be careful, or we'll lose our teacher again."

These two examples illustrate the application of the logical consequences model and how children may be expected to respond. A key tenet of logical consequences is that children should be given a choice rather than forced to behave as directed. Dreikurs
believed that although some degree of force could be applied a generation or two ago, present social conditions necessitate the use of more democratic procedures. In the past, large groups of people—poor people, women, people of color, laborers—could not openly rebel against authoritarian domination. The same, of course, was true of children. Although they may occasionally have defied their parents or teachers, they could be satisfactorily controlled if sufficient force was applied. Most rebellion could be adequately suppressed. In this day and age, however, people are far less likely to submit to the control of others. They consider themselves to be of value and worthy of respect and thus refuse to permit others to deprive them of liberty and dignity.

In addition to changes in the social scene, more enlightened views of personality development have emerged, giving rise to new ways of interpreting human experience and dealing with human beings more productively. Believing that behavior is driven by an individual's purposes is one critical aspect of these new assumptions about human personality and behavior (Dreikurs, 1960). Even behavior that appears destructive is purposeful. Each behavior has the goal of self-determination. We do not simply react to forces that confront us from the outside world. Our behavior is the result of our own biased interpretations of the world. We act not according to the reality that surrounds us but rather according to our own subjective appraisal of it. For example, when a teacher selects one child to be a classroom leader, other children may interpret this selection as a personal rejection.

Unfortunately, when situations are open to personal interpretation, all of us routinely make unavoidable mistakes in perception. When we choose how to behave, we almost never have all the facts we need to make adequate choices. Our choices, therefore, are very subjective; they lack the validity more unbiased information would provide. Few humans make a habit of investigating the conditions present in particular situations and analyzing the assumptions they make about them. Nevertheless, we tend to act on these assumptions and conditions as if they were true. Of course, as we mature, we are more able to evaluate possible consequences in advance and choose our course of action in a more knowledgeable way.

Human beings all have a need to belong and be accepted. The combination of our human need for acceptance and our biased human perceptions sometimes helps to create distortions in our relationships with others. Children, for example, may not realize that acceptance by others depends on an individual's contributing to the welfare of the group; instead, they may strike out against the very people who could best satisfy their needs. When children's misguided perceptions lead them to abuse others, they commonly feel the acute rejection such actions engender. When they sense rejection, they begin to withdraw and experience even greater deprivation.

Dreikurs believes that the disposition to view the world as unaccepting is in part related to the order of one's birth (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968). The only child is the sole object of parental attention. With the arrival of another sibling, however, the older child is always dethroned. Older children then attempt to regain lost status. They may or may not feel successful in this attempt. Older children are prone to maladjustment.

Second children are always in a position of having older, more capable rivals to overtake. If they are successful, or if they find a different but constructive direction, they usually make satisfactory adjustments. If these children gain the recognition they want, they may develop more daring and flexible personalities. However, if they fail to achieve the status they desire, they may turn to destructiveness as a way to gain recognition. Often second children are very competitive.

When a third sibling arrives, second children may feel squeezed out. They often find that their older siblings have assumed a position of greater responsibility and their younger
ones play the role of the baby. Second children may not have the rights of older children or the privileges of younger ones. They may then interpret life as unfair and feel that there is no place for them.

Youngest children, although they are often babied and spoiled, appear to have a somewhat easier time than the others. For one thing, they are never displaced. They remain the baby for the rest of their lives—even if they outdo their siblings—and consequently get a disproportionate amount of attention from parents. It is common for youngest children to get attention not only from parents but from older siblings as well. Older brothers and sisters serve as substitute parents and often must perform parenting duties assigned to them.

In large families, the effects of birth order also extend to groups of siblings. There may be a group of oldest children, a group of middle children, and a group of youngest children. Within these groups, there may be an oldest child, a middle child, and a youngest child. Knowing a student’s place in the birth order helps teachers better understand the basis for development of the student’s personality and lifestyle.

**MOTIVES FOR BEHAVIOR**

Attaining recognition as a worthy, able individual is central to personality development. Dreikurs accepts the basic idea of Alfred Adler that all behavior—including misbehavior—is orderly and purposeful and directed toward achieving social recognition (Dreikurs, 1968). Unfortunately, our culture does not furnish sufficient means for children to achieve this recognition. In many children, the desire for attention goes unfulfilled. When children solicit recognition without success, they usually misbehave to gain it. All misbehavior is the result of a child’s mistaken assumption about how to find a place and gain status. Parents and teachers need to be aware of what children do to be recognized and appreciated so that they can more fully accommodate them. They must also learn to avoid falling for the unconscious schemes children use to achieve their mistaken goals. Dreikurs has identified four such goals and the schemes used to achieve them:

1. Gaining attention
2. Exercising power
3. Exacting revenge
4. Displaying inadequacy

These motives have a hierarchical relationship to one another. Children first try to achieve recognition and status through strategies designed to gain them attention. If these strategies do not work, the children employ power. Power may be followed by revenge. Finally, children use inadequacy as an excuse when earlier strategies have proven unsuccessful.

**Gaining Attention**

Attention is by far the most common goal for most young children. Children who seek excessive attention are often a nuisance in class. They distract their teachers by showing off, being disruptive, being lazy, asking special favors, needing extra help on assignments, asking irrelevant questions, throwing things around the room, crying, refusing to work unless the teacher is right there, or being overly eager to please. They seem to function appropriately only as long as they have their teachers’ approval. Teachers often respond to these children by giving them too much attention—reminding them often, coaxing them, showing pity for them, or feeling annoyed at them.
Giving attention to attention-seeking children does not necessarily improve their behavior. When attention is given in response to children's misbehavior, the misbehavior increases. Although the search for attention is usually manifested in the form of misbehavior, even the cooperative behavior of very young children may stem from a desire for special attention. Often, these children try to do better than others, and they are very sensitive to criticism and failure. As with other misguided children, these youngsters must be helped to realize that they do not need constant testimonials to affirm their worth. They also need to learn that greater satisfaction comes from cooperating in groups than from provoking group members to get attention.

Four different attention-seeking behavior patterns have been identified: active-constructive, passive-constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1982) (see Table 5.1).

**Active-Constructive Behavior.** Active-constructive children are very cooperative with adults and conform readily to their expectations. These children are highly success-oriented but usually have poor relationships with children their own age. They are very industrious and have an exaggerated conscientiousness. They tend to be perfectionists and are often spurred on by parents who are themselves overambitious and perfectionistic. Active-constructive children are very competitive and try at all costs to maintain their superiority over others; in doing so, they accept the role of the model child or the teacher's pet. Their goal is to receive praise and recognition, and they sometimes tattle on others who fall short of their high standards. The following example illustrates active-constructive behavior in an elementary school child who receives precisely what she is seeking:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5.1 Attention-seeking behavior patterns</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tattle on others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Overly cooperative</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Conform readily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Highly success-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perfectionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• To receive constant praise and maintain superiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Charm others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Manipulative</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Manipulate by helplessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Vain, cute, flattering</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cling to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To get others to serve them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jane looked up from her drawing assignment just long enough to observe her classmates. It required only a glance to see that they were far behind and that their drawings were of much poorer quality than her own. Smugly, she busied herself again, humming as she worked. In a few minutes, she raised her hand. “Look, Mr. Lowe,” she said to her teacher, “I’m all done. Is there something else I can do?”

Mr. Lowe replied, “Jane, you always finish your work so quickly. You have done an excellent job, as usual. Class, look at Jane’s picture. Don’t you like the way she has blended her colors?”

A better response from Mr. Lowe would have been as follows: “Thanks, Jane, for working so hard on your project. You’re free to choose something else to do for the next while.”

**Passive-Constructive Behavior.** Passive-constructive children try to achieve their goals by charming others. In this way, they manipulate adults into serving them, often by putting on a façade of helplessness. These children are never involved in destructive, disruptive behavior. To be so occupied would only diminish their power. They give an appearance of being interested in others, but in reality they are very self-centered. They are the vain, cute, flattering children who are always clinging to those on whom they depend. The story of 10-year-old Robby illustrates this behavior along with inappropriate responses by his teacher:

Robby entered the classroom wearing brand-new slacks and a sports jacket. He walked around the classroom so that everyone could see his clothes. “My, Robby,” Mr. Wallace remarked delightedly, “what a sharp-looking outfit!” Robby beamed and took his seat, looking pleased. “Look at Robby’s new clothes,” continued Mr. Wallace. “Don’t they go well together? Robby is always dressed so neatly. We could all use him as an example.”

It would have been better for Mr. Lowe to avoid commenting about Robby’s clothes. Drawing excessive attention to Robby only bolsters his manipulative inclinations. In addition, it either singles Robby out to receive the condemnation of his peers as the teacher’s pet or promotes feelings of inadequacy among those not similarly recognized. Had Robby tried to force a positive comment from Mr. Lowe about his clothes, he might have said, “I’m glad you’re interested in dressing appropriately when you come to school. It’s also important for us to wear clothing that we feel comfortable in.”

**Active-Destructive Behavior.** Children who are impertinent, defiant, clownish, or bullying are classified as active-destructive. These children may be confused with those who seek primarily power or revenge. Power-oriented children want more than momentary attention; they want their own way all the time and keep pestering others until they get it. Active-destructive children, however, will stop provoking others when they receive the attention they desire or when they fail to get the responses they are seeking. For example.

“I won’t do this dumb assignment,” yelled Rose as she threw down her pencil in anger. Ms. Phippen looked at her momentarily and immediately turned her attention to the papers on her desk. “Ms. Phippen, you can take this assignment and choke on it for all I care.” Ms. Phippen looked up again, smiled, and then returned to her work. Rose sat grumbling to herself for a while and started on the assignment.

Ms. Phippen responded appropriately. Once Rose had successfully completed a significant part of the assignment, Ms. Phippen may have gone to her
and said, "Thank you Rose for working hard on your assignment. What do you think about how well you have done?"

**Passive-Destructive Behavior.** Passive-destructive children are characterized as "lazy." Through their lack of positive action, these children force others to be overly concerned with them and to help them. They claim that what they are asked to do is too hard. Often, they claim not to understand what is expected. Their behavior patterns include bashfulness, dependency, untidiness, lack of concentration, and self-indulgence. The story of Dwayne provides an illustration of how a student entices his teacher to help him when it isn’t necessary:

> Dwayne sat looking out the window as his classmates busied themselves with their math assignment. Ms. Clegg watched him for a moment and then suggested that he start his work.
> "I can’t do these problems," whined Dwayne.
> "You’re going to have to start them sometime," replied Ms. Clegg.
> "I just need a little help to get me started," implored Dwayne.
> Ms. Clegg went to Dwayne’s desk and began helping him with his problems. With each problem, Dwayne claimed to have difficulty understanding. By the end of the period, Ms. Clegg had helped Dwayne finish all his work.
> It would have been better if Ms. Clegg helped Dwayne start his work and then said, "You’ve made a good start. You understand now what you must do. Continue working and I'll check back with you in 15 or 20 minutes."

**Exercising Power**

When children fail to gain all the attention they seek, they often engage in a power struggle with parents and teachers. Teachers should avoid putting pressure on these children in an attempt to make them behave properly because such pressure usually leads to a power contest. As teachers apply pressure, they are likely only to increase the frustration of these children, which in turn provokes even more irrational, power-seeking behavior in the children. Teachers almost never win in these power contests. Children win because society expects adults to behave in a responsible, moral way. The same behavior is not expected of children. They can argue, cry, contradict, throw temper tantrums, lie, and be stubborn and disobedient. Adults are expected to be composed, trusting, loving, honest, and helpful. These expectations for adults are often exploited by power-seeking children for their own purposes, as the following example illustrates:

> Ching sat in the back of the room talking with friends as his fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Finch, tried to explain the meaning of the Bill of Rights to the rest of the class. She stopped a number of times in her lesson to remind Ching to be quiet, but after a minute or two he continued talking. Eventually, Ms. Finch became angry and demanded that Ching leave the room and stand out in the hall. He told her that he would not go. Ms. Finch then went to Ching’s seat and demanded that he leave immediately. He looked back at her defiantly. She tried to pull him from his seat forcibly. He would not budge. Ms. Finch started screaming at Ching uncontrollably. Soon her voice cracked and her vision blurred with frustration. As she retreated from the room, visibly shaken, Ching sat with a look of contentment on his face.

Ms. Finch was handicapped by assuming that she had the responsibility to subdue defiant children. She felt an obligation to show misbehaving children who was boss and to make them follow orders. In addition, she became personally involved in the power
struggle, and her fear of losing face and prestige as the teacher proved to be a stumbling block. She will continue to fail to resolve power conflicts as long as she fears humiliation. She must learn not to fight and not to give in. Instead, she must focus on the problem. She needs to realize that power-hungry children will always try to defeat those who try to control and suppress them. Unfortunately, their success in defeating adults who try to control them adds to their power. With the support of the whole class, they are able to wield considerable influence over teachers. This power can be reduced through discussions in which all class members are given an opportunity to comment about power-seeking behavior.

For example, Ms. Finch might have stopped her lesson about the Bill of Rights and initiated a discussion with the class about disruptions, something like the following. Her actions are designed to avoid a power confrontation with Ching and let the class be the source of correcting his misbehavior:

**Ms. Finch**

At the moment, I'm unable to continue with the lesson. As a class, we must decide what kind of a classroom environment we want to have and what should happen when learning is disrupted. What do you think?

**Jesse**

I'm finding it hard to concentrate when there is so much talking. I wish those responsible would just quit disturbing the class.

**LaDawn**

There are just a few people who always get out of hand. They need to agree to keep it quiet so that we can all learn.

**Camile**

I think those who are noisy should be required to leave.

**Ms. Finch**

Where would they go?

**Darmon**

Maybe they could just go to the library until they are ready to be quiet and learn with the rest of us. I think they should have to petition the rest of the class to get back in.

**Ching**

I don't think that's fair.

**Ted**

That's because you're the one doing most of the loud talking.

**Ching**

It's not just me.

**Gwen**

It is most of the time. If you'd stop talking so much, we wouldn't have a problem.

### Exacting Revenge

When children's efforts at control are thwarted, they usually claim to have been dealt with unfairly. They believe that others have deliberately tried to hurt them, and they attempt to get even. Commonly, they take out their revenge on anyone around them. They are convinced that nobody likes them and create proof of this dislike by provoking others to retaliate. These children lash out by tripping, hitting, kicking, or scratching others or by destroying their property. They may knock books and supplies on the floor or scribble on classmates' papers. They may also seek revenge against the teacher by marking the teacher's desk, ripping pages from books, insulting the teacher publicly, or deliberately breaking equipment. Revenge-seeking children are very difficult to help. Teachers must realize that they hurt others because they feel hurt. Causing them more pain will only provoke more revenge-seeking behavior. Instead, teachers must offer understanding and assistance. They need to ensure that other children do not retaliate when revengeful children behave improperly. In the following example, Mr. Bright plays into the hands of a revenge-seeking student:

▼ Carter was the only student absent in Mr. Bright's seventh-grade music class that day. When Mr. Bright sat in the puddle of glue on his chair, he knew immediately who had put it there. He even caught a glimpse of Carter peering
through an outside window in an effort to see what the teacher's reaction would be. Screaming at the top of his voice, Mr. Bright dashed to the window and threatened Carter with expulsion. He then stormed out of the room to report the incident to the principal.

In this case, it would have been better had Mr. Bright not made such an overt expression of his anger. Reporting the incident to the principal is probably not a good idea either, because it more fully publicizes what happened. The more the people who know about his revengeful actions, the more gratified he is likely to feel and the more the support he is likely to garner, particularly if other students have their own issues with Mr. Bright. In addition, the teacher doesn't want any form of retaliation against Carter. That's likely to just fuel the problem. Instead, he should confront Carter privately. The purpose of this meeting is to make sure that logical consequences are applied. The conversation might go something like the following:

Mr. Bright: I saw you looking through the window laughing when I sat in the glue on my chair. I assume it was you who put it there.

Carter: Yea, so what?

Mr. Bright: For one thing, you have ruined a good pair of pants which you will be required to replace.

Carter: Who is going to make me do that?

Mr. Bright: Your parents have already been contacted and agreed to make sure that you pay for the pants from your own resources and not theirs. It is right for you to take care of this. You had your laugh, now you must take responsibility for what you did. What do you think about what you have done?

Carter: I just wanted to get back at you for my poor grade. I didn't deserve an "F."

What could you have done to avoid that?

Well it wasn't my fault. I couldn't get to the performance. What should you do when you know you can't be there.

Tell you I guess.

Of course, that is only part of the difficulty you have encountered. You didn't turn in a log of your outside practice with your quartet and you did nothing in the music history part of the course. If you are having a problem, I'd be glad to help you. All you have to do is come to me.

But I don't like all that history stuff and I don't get along with the people in the quartet. They criticize me and arrange practices when I can't come.

These are problems I'd like to help you work on. If you come to me well in advance, I can help you solve them. There is still something that can be done about your final grade if you'll let me help you.

Displaying Inadequacy

Children who fail to achieve a sense of self-worth through attention, power, or revenge often become so discouraged that they give up and seek to wrap themselves in a cloak of inadequacy. They are joined in this misguided quest by other children who at an early age conclude that they are not as capable as others and also give up. These children strive to be left alone and avoid the humiliation group participation inevitably brings. They attempt to retain what little self-esteem they have left by avoiding any kind of public display. They believe that others will leave them alone if they are believed to be inadequate. The
purpose of this behavior in a student, like that of other behaviors, is to somehow affirm the student’s significance. A display of inadequacy is a last-ditch effort to reach this ultimate goal of being accepted for what one is, even if one is inadequate.

When the PE teacher is organizing softball teams, Wendy positions herself behind other students and moves toward the back of the group, hoping not to be seen and selected to play on one of the teams. When she is finally selected in last position, she says she is not feeling well enough to play today.

Pause and Consider.
1. What evidence is there that the children’s motives have a hierarchical relation with one another? Compare Dreikurs’ hierarchical arrangement of motives with the view that all children’s needs can potentially be manifest without hierarchical dependency. Identify which of these theoretical conceptions is most supportable and explain why.

TEACHING STYLES

The reaction of teachers to students’ misguided goal-seeking behavior can be instrumental in either reducing or increasing the incidence of misbehavior in the classroom. Avoiding these discipline problems depends to some degree on teachers’ personalities. Different teachers tend to react to their students in different ways, and their reactions produce different results. Dreikurs identifies three types of teachers: autocratic, permissive, and democratic (Charles, 1992).

Autocratic

Autocratic teachers force their will on their students. They take firm control and refuse to tolerate any deviation from the rules. They force rather than motivate students to work, and they punish those who refuse to conform. Autocratic teachers use no humor or warmth in their classes. Instead, they enforce their power and authority over their students. Students are not very receptive to the tactics of autocratic teachers. They usually react with hostility to the demands, commands, and reprimands of these teachers.

Permissive

Permissive teachers are also ineffective when working with students. They fail to realize how critical rules are in the classroom. In addition, they do not follow through on consequences. The need for students to develop self-discipline is unimportant to them. Instead, they allow their students to behave as they wish. The usual result is general chaos and a poor learning atmosphere. These teachers encourage the misguided goal-seeking of their students rather than help them to adopt a more responsible lifestyle.

Democratic

In a democratic classroom, teachers provide firm guidance but do not promote rebellion. Students are allowed to participate in making decisions about what is studied as well as in formulating rules. Democratic teachers help students understand that making decisions is firmly tied to responsibility. Students are allowed freedom, but they are expected to assume responsibility for what they do. These teachers do not feel compelled to habitually correct the behavior of their students. Allowing students some leeway, they believe, is the best way of helping students develop.
the best way to help them eventually learn to be self-governing. Democratic teachers have a way of establishing order and limits without usurping their students’ right to autonomy. They are firm and yet kind, and they involve students in cooperative learning experiences. Children in their classrooms are free to explore, discover, and choose their own way as they increasingly assume personal responsibility. Children in a democratic classroom develop a sense of belonging to and having a stake in the class.

**HELPING STUDENTS CORRECT THEIR MISBEHAVIOR**

The following steps, suggested by Dinkmeyer and Dinkmeyer (1976), are useful for helping students correct their misbehavior. Some of the steps can be applied to preventing discipline problems. Keep in mind that for this approach to work successfully, teachers must already have established a good relationship with the students they are trying to help. A relationship of trust is essential in using logical consequences.

1. Teachers attempt to ascertain students’ motives.
2. Students are helped to understand their motives.
3. Students are helped to exchange their mistaken goals for useful ones.
4. Students are encouraged to become committed to their new goal orientation.
5. Students are taught to apply logical consequences.
6. Group discussions regarding class rules and problems are held.

**Understanding Students’ Mistaken Goals**

Before teachers can help children alter their mistaken goals and improve their behavior, it is imperative that they understand children’s behavior from a psychological point of view. That is, teachers need to understand the private logic of their misbehaving students (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1982). Private logic consists of what a person really believes and intends. Included are a person’s long-range and short-range goals and the reasons and rationalizations created to justify related behavior. Individuals begin in childhood to explain to themselves, with varying degrees of insight, the appropriateness of their behavior. Even maladaptive behavior can thus be judged acceptable if it can be rationalized.

Children have limited conscious understanding of their goals or motives. However, when the purpose of their behavior is explained to them, they recognize its connection to their goals. Younger children will either willingly admit that they misbehave for the reasons suggested or betray themselves by exhibiting an obvious recognition reflex: a smile, an embarrassed laugh, or a twinkle in the eye. Older children are too sophisticated to admit the motives behind their contrary behavior. They recognize the fact that society looks on such behavior as childish and therefore resist disclosing their motives. They put on deadpan expressions in an effort to hide their recognition, but they give themselves away with their body language. Their lips may twitch or their eyes may blink or bat more frequently; they may adjust their seating position, swing a leg, tap the desk with their fingers, or shuffle their feet.

To get children either to reveal their goals or to expose themselves through a recognition reflex, Dreikurs, Grunwald, and Pepper (1982) recommend that you ask the following questions:

1. “Do you know why you __________?” (Even if a child does not know the reason for the misbehavior, this question is raised in preparation for the next step.)
2. "I would like to tell you what I think." (Ask one or more of the following questions from the group that is related to the mistaken goal.)

*Gaining attention:*
- "Could it be that you want me to notice you more?"
- "Could it be that you want me to do something special for you?"
- "Could it be that you want to be special to the group?"

*Exercising power:*
- "Could it be that you want to be the boss?"
- "Could it be that you want to show me that I can't stop you?"
- "Could it be that you insist on doing what you want to do?"

*Exacting revenge:*
- "Could it be that you want to punish me?"
- "Could it be that you want to get even with me?"
- "Could it be that you want to show me how much you hated what I did?"

*Displaying inadequacy:*
- "Could it be that you want to be left alone because you believe that you can't do anything?"
- "Could it be that you want to be left alone because you can't be on top?"
- "Could it be that you want to be left alone because you want me to stop asking you to do something?"

One way of reaching a child who is particularly resistant to your questions is to use the "hidden reason" technique. This technique is applied when a child says or does something out of the ordinary. You try to guess what is on the child's mind. If a child answers "no" to your initial question, ask a follow-up question. Continue asking follow-up questions until the answer is "maybe" or "perhaps." This response will lead you to a correct guess. The following example shows the use of this technique:

▼ Darryl has on several occasions refused to do as the teacher directed. Now, in yet another episode, Darryl has been told to start an assignment and has again refused to do it in class. But this time the teacher decides to look more closely into Darryl's behavior.

**Teacher**
Darryl, could it be that you want to make me feel guilty and sorry for something I did to you?

**Darryl**
Well, not exactly.

**Teacher**
Could it be that you want to show me how much smarter you are than I am?

**Darryl**
No.

Recognizing that Darryl appeared to be very popular with most of the other students in the class, the teacher decided to explore the possibility that Darryl's behavior reflected a desire to be the group leader.

**Teacher**
Darryl, do you have a lot of close friends in the class?

**Darryl**
Yes, I do.

**Teacher**
Do your friends try to be like you and do what you do?

**Darryl**
Yeah, sometimes.
Helping Students Correct Their Misbehavior

Teacher: Could it be that you want me to give you control over what you and your friends do in class so that you can have control over them?

Darryl: Yeah, I guess that’s right.

Teachers can use two additional methods to discern their students' motives (Charles, 1992). The first method requires teachers to analyze how they feel when a student responds. If they feel annoyed, the student is probably seeking attention. If they feel threatened, power-seeking behavior is being expressed. When teachers feel hurt, the student probably wants revenge. A feeling of being powerless is an indication that the student is displaying inadequacy.

A second way teachers have of determining a student's motives is to observe the reactions of the student.

**If the student:**
- Stops the behavior and then repeats it
- Confronts or ignores authority
- Becomes devious, violent, or hostile
- Refuses to participate or cooperate

**The student's goal is to:**
- Gain attention
- Exercise power
- Exact revenge
- Display inadequacy

Determining a child's motives can be difficult and complex. However, if teachers use the recommended techniques, they will get a better idea of the nature of these mistaken goals. These mistaken goals must be revealed to children before teachers can successfully help them pursue more worthwhile goals.

Helping Students Change Their Mistaken Goals

Once teachers understand children's mistaken goals, they can take more valid and decisive action. Until they know these motives, they are more likely to do more harm than good. In fact, they may unwittingly reinforce bad behavior. Children's behavior can then become painful and intolerable. Dreikurs believes that it is essential to identify the mistaken goal correctly. Otherwise, the behaviors encouraged to satisfy an assumed motive will not be appropriate to the situation.

**Dealing With Attention-Seeking Behavior.** Attention-seeking children seem unable to tolerate being ignored. They prefer the pain of humiliation or other forms of punishment to receiving no attention. If they fail to receive the attention they desire, they do things that cannot be ignored. When a small disturbance elicits no response, more provocative behavior can be expected. Teachers ordinarily pay attention to these behaviors by nagging or scolding the misbehaving students. However, they should avoid falling into the trap of reinforcing bad conduct. When students behave unacceptably, teachers must ignore them. If their misbehavior is consistently ignored, children will not learn to associate attention with inappropriate behavior. Sometimes teachers complain that ignoring bad behavior “does not work.” They commonly reach this conclusion when in fact they are giving children attention through the use of various nonverbal cues. For example, students' bad behavior may be reinforced when their teachers stand and glare at them with hands on hips and say impatiently, “All right, class, we’ll have to wait until everyone is ready to continue with the lesson.” Ignoring misbehavior is also more effective when accompanied by reinforcement of good behavior. Teachers need to be on the lookout for occasions when
their students are listening attentively or working on their lessons productively. When they do, attention should be drawn to the fact. Teachers may give them a pat on the back or tell them how much they appreciate their cooperation.

**Dealing With Power-Seeking Behavior.** It is commonly believed that teachers must react decisively and with force if students try to usurp their authority. It is indeed very difficult for teachers to restrain themselves when children make a play for power. Teachers are usually unprepared to avoid power struggles with students who threaten their authority and prestige. Consequently, struggles for power are waged in most classrooms. Teachers fight back to avoid letting students get the best of them. After all, they believe, teachers must avoid losing face at all costs. Unfortunately, fighting with students—even though teachers may win the contest—breeds more hostility.

One way to avoid power struggles is to make it necessary for errant students to confront the whole class in the quest for power. Most students will realize the futility of this confrontation. For example, if a student constantly disrupts your teaching, stop the work of the entire class and wait for the disruptive behavior to cease before continuing the lesson.

Teachers must also make sure that they do not give in to the demands of power-seeking children. To children who are trying to provoke them, teachers may say, “I am sure you prefer to be the leader, but the class has decided to rotate the leadership among all members during field projects” or “I can see that this situation is a difficult one for you. However, the class has agreed not to be disruptive during discussions and demonstrations.” To children who refuse to do their work and say that the teacher cannot make them, the teacher may respond, “You're right. I can’t make you. You will have to decide whether or not you want to participate with the rest of the class on your project.”

Teachers need to remember that they must not fight with students. They can often avoid power struggles simply by refusing to play the role of authoritarian. Students cannot meet their mistaken goal of power if there is no one with whom to fight. Children rebel in direct proportion to the autocratic level of their teachers’ behavior. Autocratic teachers complain about the unruliness of their students, and the misbehaving students protest the controlling rigidity of their teachers. Each party sees the other as being in the wrong; both are unable to see their own part in the difficulty. If a child initiates a confrontation with an autocratic teacher and the teacher takes the bait by responding negatively, the student will usually become more resistant and disruptive. This reaction is illustrated in the following example:

> During a chemistry lesson, David was listening to his portable stereo and beating on his desk in time to the music. Ms. Edwards told him to stop, but he just looked back at his teacher and continued drumming on the desk. Ms. Edwards then scolded David and threatened to take away his stereo if he did not stop. David just smiled back at her and continued to keep time with the music. Infuriated, Ms. Edwards demanded that David wipe the silly grin off his face. David’s smile broadened, and he started to move his whole body in rhythm with the music as he continued banging on his desk. Ms. Edwards stormed over to David’s desk and in a rage snatched the earphones from his head, knocking the stereo to the floor. For an instant, shock registered on David’s face, but it quickly faded. In its place came an enormous grin as he started again to thump his hands against the wooden surface of the desk. Ms. Edwards’s face was red with anger as she demanded that David come with her to the principal’s office. David just continued drumming. Ms. Edwards grabbed David’s arm and tried to pull him from his seat, but David grabbed the side of the desk and held on. The smile on his face was accompanied by a defiant laugh (Figure 5.2).
This example shows a teacher becoming increasingly demanding and controlling and a student becoming more resistant and defiant. The grin displayed by the student was a sure way to infuriate the teacher. It was the student's way of publicly belittling the teacher. The student was able to remain calm and under control, but the teacher was out of control. If the whole class witnessed this episode, they would likely side with the student, not with the teacher. Certainly, the student's peers would provide reinforcement for the daring confrontation with the teacher. The teacher should have avoided a confrontation with the student about his behavior. If the inappropriate behavior continued, even though the teacher ignored it, the student might be asked to provide a leadership role in the class, like being the chairperson for a group activity, helping the teacher take roll, operating a video camera, or similar activities.

Classmates also sided with the student in the following episode. The example is given as an illustration of a student making a play for power, although another student exhibiting the same behavior could simply be pulling a prank.

As the students in Mr. Larsen's biology class slowly filed in, their attention was drawn to Gordon, who was standing near the display table in the front of the room on which Mr. Larsen had placed his prized stuffed fox. From his pocket Gordon took a cigarette. He put it to his lips, lit it, and placed it in the fox's mouth. Hurrying along, he took his place near the front of the room and pretended to read his book. Smoke from the cigarette curled up toward the ceiling as Mr. Larsen strode into the room. His attention was immediately drawn to the ludicrous sight of the smoking fox. Complete surprise registered on his face, and then rage as he demanded that the culprit who put the cigarette in the fox's mouth come forward and stand in front of him. Nobody moved. The entire class was immobilized with fright. Then an audible snickering was heard from the front of the class. Mr. Larsen demanded to
know who thought a smoking fox was so funny. Gordon raised his hand. Mr. Larsen went straight to where Gordon sat, grabbed him by the arm, and spirited him out the classroom door. A few minutes later, a red-faced Mr. Larsen appeared at the door and marched to the front of the room. He ordered the students to take out their texts and begin reading silently. There was to be absolute quiet. It was so quiet for nearly 5 minutes that you could have heard a pin drop. Then Ruth, unable to contain herself any longer, giggled softly to herself. Miggs followed suit. Then Lois started in. Mr. Larsen looked up from his desk and glared at the class. Another snicker was heard from the back of the class. Mr. Larsen demanded to know who had snickered and promised to make an example of that student. No one responded. Then more laughing erupted. Mr. Larsen stood and moved toward the back of the room in an effort to detect the source of the noise. He had not gone two paces before Gordon appeared at the classroom door with a grin on his face. He defiantly walked to his seat, laughing loudly. The rest of the class joined his laughter and then began clapping. Mr. Larsen continued to move toward the back of the room and proceeded on out the door.

Both Mr. Larsen and Ms. Edwards were successfully drawn into a power contest with students. In each case, coercive control was increased in an effort to maintain order. However, both teachers failed. Instead, the students became more defiant. In the case of Mr. Larsen, the whole class turned against him. Had Mr. Larsen come into the room and burst into laughter when he first saw the smoking fox, Gordon’s play for power would have been undermined, the class would have had a good laugh, and Mr. Larsen’s reputation and status would have been preserved.

Sometimes students’ desire for power can be redirected. They may be satisfied with taking a leadership role in the class instead of confronting their teachers. A child who seeks power by disrupting the class may, for example, be asked to be in charge of maintaining order during class activities. The student could be asked to report on which techniques helped in keeping order or to make recommendations for improving the atmosphere of the class.

Doing the unexpected is another way to deal with power-seeking students. When children misbehave, teachers usually have an immediate emotional reaction. Reactions ordinarily are predictable because most people tend to react in the same way in a given situation. Children commonly have ready-made responses to these standard reactions. Therefore, teachers can nip an impending power struggle in the bud by doing the exact opposite of what they feel like doing. Children are put off balance because the teacher’s behavior is new and unanticipated.

**Dealing With Revenge-Seeking Behavior.** The desire for revenge is often closely tied to the desire for power. It may sometimes be hard to differentiate between the two. Revenge is usually the motive in children who are convinced that they are right and can do whatever they please. They often try to hurt others and feel that those who try to stop them are their enemies. They feel the need to hurt others because they have been hurt themselves. Ordinarily, their need for attention and acceptance has gone unfulfilled because others view them with contempt and refuse to associate closely with them, sometimes because they are different in some way or because they exhibit bizarre behavior in their attempts to gain the attention they so desperately desire. It is difficult to reason with these children. Convinced that they are hopelessly disliked by everyone, they distrust any effort to persuade them otherwise.

Children who pursue their desire for attention or power are sometimes unaware of the purpose behind their behavior. Those who feel hurt and disliked, however, are very much aware of their goals. They seem oblivious, though, to their own suspiciousness. They are also unaware of the hostility they provoke and the fact that their own behavior dictates how the relationships children have with others will affect them. Instead of trying to gain their acceptance, they will try to hurt others. They will do all they can to recover for the wounds they have sustained. If they are unable to find another way to be satisfied, the behavior will continue. It is not unusual for these students to be tatooed to the point of self-mutilation. They may also resort to drug addiction and suicide attempts as a way of recovering from the pain they have experienced.

The desire for revenge is strong and the need for attention is equally strong. Both desires can be powerful, and they may be difficult to control. Teachers must be aware of their students’ needs and try to meet them in a way that does not involve power-seeking behavior.
helping students correct their misbehavior

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how they are treated. They rarely accept the responsibility for the destructive relationships they have with teachers and classmates. It is always others who are wrong. These children are firmly convinced that they are right in what they believe and justified in retaliating against those who, they believe, are their enemies.

Helping revenge-seeking children is a very delicate matter. Teachers can enlist the help of other class members, but they should do so with care. Children often will side with teachers by shunning revengeful children. Unfortunately, teachers may be prone to accept such alliances because of their own sense of failure in dealing with these children. Instead, teachers need to encourage the class to be more positive. They could, for example, persuade more popular peers to take a special interest in outcast children. Such a program will take considerable effort, and teachers will have to give their helpers the support they need to stay with this task. Revenge-seeking children are likely, in the beginning, to be antagonistic in the face of friendliness and kindness. They will obviously retain a sense of distrust for a time. Even after trust seems to be developing, they may put everyone to the test by doing something outrageous. When they do, children whose help has been solicited should be encouraged to avoid rejecting their revengeful peers but at the same time not to accept their behavior. The following example illustrates this point:

\[\text{Tui disdainfully watched the other students successfully working on their experiments in the biology lab while at the same time feeling unsure of himself and the results he was obtaining on his own experiment. He was particularly incensed by the way certain students sought and obtained special help from Mr. Bingham. It wasn't fair that when they asked for help, Mr. Bingham ignored the rest of the class and gave the teacher's pets all the help they wanted. A clever idea suddenly clicked in Tui's mind. He turned in his seat and looked toward the back of the room. A sinister grin spread across his face as he quietly slipped from his seat and made his way stealthily to a cage on the back counter. Throwing a quick glance in Mr. Bingham's direction, he noiselessly opened the cage and took out the huge bullfrog that was kept inside. He promptly put the enormous amphibian behind his back and walked unobtrusively toward a group of A students who were working together at a lab table. While they were looking down at their experiments, he set the frog on the table and quickly returned to his own seat and pretended to be immersed in his own experiment. The frog suddenly croaked and jumped right into the middle of the area where the group was working. To Tui, the pandemonium that ensued was beautiful to behold. All five let out a yell and jumped back from the table, knocking over stools and lab equipment and strewing papers everywhere. Three of them made such a mess that it took them nearly 10 minutes to clean up after Mr. Bingham had captured the frog and returned it to the cage. The rest of the class was laughing uproariously, some doubled over with tears running down their cheeks. Mr. Bingham was seething, and his face was bright red. As the students began to notice their teacher's rage, the room grew quiet. No one dared breathe. Mr. Bingham searched the room with penetrating eyes, looking for the guilty party. His gaze settled on Tui. He noted the satisfied look on Tui's face. "You," Mr. Bingham said with feigned control as he pointed at the door, "go to the principal's office immediately. I'll be following you" (Figure 5.3).\]

This situation was obviously handled badly if Mr. Bingham sincerely wanted to help Tui overcome his vengefulness. Had Mr. Bingham quickly captured the frog, reassured the flustered students, and helped them to laugh at the situation, he would have not only taken the wind out of Tui's sails but also added to his credibility in the classroom. The momentary fright and embarrassment caused by the incident could not be ignored, of course, but revengeful behavior on the part of the teacher would not solve the problem either.
Dealing With Displays of Inadequacy. If children have been sufficiently rebuffed in their efforts to gain attention, they may become so discouraged that they behave like blobs. When they do not achieve their goals of attention or power or revenge, they may just give up. These children wish to be left alone. They believe that their case is hopeless and want their teachers to believe it, too. Many teachers do give up on these children.

Students who display inadequacy do so for one of the following reasons:

1. **They are overly ambitious.** This is probably the most frequent cause of giving up. These children despair of not doing as well as they want to do. If they cannot be first, make the best grades, be the leader, be the star athlete, or the like, they refuse to put forth any effort. Children with debilitating overambition will not participate in an activity unless it provides them an opportunity to prove their superiority. These children must be helped to see how they defeat themselves. They must learn to continue trying even though others may outperform them.

2. **They are overcompetitive.** Some children are convinced that they have no chance to do as well as others. They believe that they are not good enough to be successful, and comparisons with others usually serve only to confirm their belief. Unfortunately, parents and teachers sometimes try to motivate these children by making such comparisons: “When I had your sister in my English class, she was my best student.” “Why don’t you do as well on your tests as your brother?” These comparisons should be avoided for all children, but especially for those who are overcompetitive.

3. **They are oversensitive to pressure.** Students who are oversensitive to pressure feel that they cannot do as well as others expect. They therefore refuse to live up to others’ expectations. Two of the misfortunes of our present educational system are the emphasis on avoiding mistakes and the practice of trying to motivate children through criticism and constant negative feedback.

Pause and Reflect

1. What is the lesson of Tui’s behavior?
2. Explain why you think Tui released the frog in the biology classroom.

**Encouragement**

Encouragement is a habit. It is obvious that a habit can be much more powerful than formal procedures. Children need to feel supported and valued for their efforts, not just for the outcome. Caregivers and teachers should provide encouragement as a regular part of their interaction with children. It is important to remember that encouragement is not just about the end result; it is about the process as well.

PREVENTION

It is obvious that prevention is better than cure. If children are inadequately supported and encouraged, they may become overambitious, overcompetitive, or oversensitive to pressure. Teachers and parents should be aware of these tendencies and take steps to prevent them from becoming entrenched behaviors. Critical feedback should be given in a constructive manner, and children should be encouraged to persevere in the face of challenges. The goal is to help children develop resilience and a positive self-image, rather than to punish them for their inadequacies.
and competition. Teachers need to tell children that they are all right as they are and to remove pressure by being less critical. Children need to learn and grow in a less competitive environment. They must be given sufficient time to achieve at their own speed.

Teachers must learn never to give up on students who believe themselves to be inadequate. They must provide these students an abundance of support and encouragement. Encouragement is especially needed when students make mistakes. These students need to feel successful and accepted for what they are. Because of the competitive environment found in most schools, students who are more successful are likely to reject their less productive peers. One of the most important duties teachers can perform is to help other students accept those who feel inadequate.

Pause and Consider
1. Without consideration for the specifics of Dreikurs' discipline approach, how critical is it to determine the motives of students before dealing with associated behavior? Explain your reasoning.
2. Explain what you would have done in each of the following situations described in the text that is consistent with Dreikurs' logical consequences approach: (a) David and Ms. Edwards, (b) Gordon and Mr. Larsen, and (c) Tui and Mr. Bingham.

PREVENTING DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

It is obviously better to prevent discipline problems than to correct them after they occur. Unfortunately, many children have long-standing problems that need correction. These tenacious problems are often extremely difficult to solve. Misbehavior that has become a habit is very resistant to change. Children may be convinced that their way of behaving is the only one that can adequately satisfy their needs. Dreikurs suggests several procedures that can be used not only to deal with these problems but to prevent them as well.

Encouragement Versus Praise

Encouragement is a useful technique for preventing discipline problems because it corresponds so well to children's goals. Children seek approval, and encouragement provides a legitimate means of receiving it. Encouragement focuses on effort rather than achievement; it thus gives positive feedback to children who are trying hard but may be somewhat unsuccessful. Encouragement stimulates them to continue trying. When encouragement is properly given, students gain status and satisfaction more from learning than from relative achievements. Test scores, for instance, have less value than learning itself. Children who have been encouraged accept themselves as they are, even when they are less than perfect. Encouragement can also solidify their place in the group. They can feel that they are contributing members of the group and that the group accepts their efforts as valid. In this process, students become aware of their strengths without undue focus on their weaknesses. When children exhibit more realistic confidence in their abilities, they are less likely to cause discipline problems.

Praise needs to be differentiated from encouragement. Praise focuses on the level of accomplishment or achievement; encouragement highlights the value of learning. Praise is given for high achievement and is ordinarily reserved for those who are more successful according to some measure of performance. Praise fosters the idea that only test performance is worthy. Students who receive praise for their efforts do not work for self-satisfaction.
Instead, they are governed by extrinsic rewards. Encouragement, on the contrary, stimulates cooperation rather than competition, effort and enjoyment rather than quality of performance, independence rather than dependence, and helpfulness rather than selfishness. The following examples show the difference between praise and encouragement:

Your artwork is excellent. You seem to really enjoy art.
You got the highest mark on your exam. I can tell that you worked hard to prepare for your exam.
You always work quietly without disturbing others. Thank you. It seems important to you to do your own work.
You’re doing a wonderful job with these new dance movements. You have obviously been spending a lot of time perfecting these new dance movements.

Teachers need to appreciate children who have diverse abilities, not just those who perform well on tests. Limiting what is acceptable or valued always restricts the number of students who feel encouraged to work for success in school. Teachers must also be careful not to add restrictions (“but’s” or “however’s”) when they offer compliments to their students. Avoid such compliments as “Your drawing is very elaborate, but you must remember to incorporate proper perspective.”

Logical Consequences

Regardless of how encouraging teachers are, they are still likely to encounter misbehavior in students. While encouraging their students, teachers should identify logical consequences in advance and prepare to apply them as behavioral problems develop. Logical consequences need to be distinguished from natural consequences as well as from punishment. Natural consequences are those that occur without a teacher’s intervention. For example, if children throw snowballs or rocks at one another, someone may get hit in the head and injured. Students who do not study for tests often get poor test scores. These consequences are not arranged; they happen naturally. Teachers do not need to threaten children with natural consequences. Children can discover them on their own.

Logical consequences are contrived and then applied as necessary to influence students’ behavior (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968). They do not happen naturally, but they do have a reasonable connection to some action. For example, a student who breaks something may be expected to replace it. Logical consequences generally express the reality of the social order and are the results that can be expected whenever an individual fails to abide by the rules of living that all humans must learn in order to function effectively. These consequences are logically related to the misbehavior the teacher hopes to correct and are devoid of any moral judgments. In addition, they are concerned only with what is happening at the present time and not the future. Logical consequences are given to students in a pleasant, helpful manner, not angrily and coercively (Dreikurs & Grey, 1970).

Sometimes the use of logical consequences is confused with punishment. Punishment, however, does not have a logical connection to a particular behavior. Instead, it is arbitrarily administered and usually designed to be painful enough so that misbehaving students have no choice but to change their behavior. If students, for example, talk during lectures and discussions, the teacher may punish them by subtracting points from their grades. In reality, grades have little to do with talking during instruction. A logical consequence may be to have students leave class until they indicate that they will no longer talk during instruction. Students may be punished by being kicked out of class for a week for talking disruptively. This action is punitive because the length of time students are excluded is arbitrary. For such an action to be a logical consequence,
students would have to be kept out of class just until they were able to make a plan to improve their behavior.

Punishment promotes revenge and causes students to feel that they have a right to retaliate (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972). Students do not associate punishment with their own behavior but rather with the person providing it. Because children's main objective is to feel acceptable and accepted, they will not meekly endure punishment. They will feel humiliated and try to punish the teacher for how they feel. They believe that it is their right to do so. Employing logical consequences helps them understand that it is their unacceptable behavior that brings unpleasant results, not the arbitrariness of teachers.

To be effective, consequences have to be applied consistently. If a teacher applies them a few times and then discontinues their use, students will soon take advantage of the teacher's inconsistency. They will gamble that the teacher will be in a good mood or that they will have good luck. Applying consequences consistently in school helps students become acquainted with the reality of the society in which they live.

Logical consequences must be explained, understood, and agreed on by students. Students more readily accept consequences they have helped determine. Teachers should avoid applying consequences that have not been agreed to by students. When consequences are administered at the time of misbehavior without prior discussion, they have an effect similar to that of punishment. Consequences promote good behavior. Punishment fails to teach correct behavior and often encourages more inappropriate behavior.

Dreikurs, Grunwald, and Pepper (1982) suggest the following examples of logical consequences:

1. If a student pushes someone on the stairway, the teacher may let the student decide whether to avoid pushing in the future or go back to the class and wait until everyone else has cleared the stairway before going down.
2. If a student hands in an incomplete or dirty paper, the teacher may read the paper only if the student submits a complete, clean copy.
3. If students write on the walls, they can either clean them or pay the janitor to clean them.
4. Students who mark their desks can be required to sand and refinish the desks or pay for having them refinished.
5. Students who fight during recess may be barred from recess until they provide the teacher with a plan outlining how they propose to avoid fighting.
6. If students disturb others, they may be isolated from the group until they agree to disturb the class no longer.
7. If students are late for class, they may be directed either to come on time or to wait at the door until they receive a signal that their late arrival will no longer disturb the class.

Sometimes the discrimination between logical consequences and punishment is inappropriately made. Even Dreikurs is accused of failing to make the necessary distinction when he recommends that a child who is late for dinner might be sent to bed without food as a “logical consequence” (Gordon, 1989). Gordon suggests that a more logical consequence would be for the child to eat the dinner cold, or have to heat it up in the microwave oven. If no leftovers are available, the child may have to fix a sandwich. To send a child to bed without dinner is an attempt to control punittively, he says.

Another questionable aspect of applying logical consequences is the recommended practice of providing children a choice between two competing (and perhaps equally aversive) consequences rather than letting them consider the entire range of possible
consequences associated with their misbehavior. In addition, imposing the consequence selected may be judged by the student to be punitive. Allowing an examination of a full range of consequences, on the contrary, may be a better deterrent to future misbehavior. One example of this is the boy referred to earlier in the chapter who was constantly out of his seat and who was informed by his teacher that either he could keep his chair and sit in it to do his work or he would have his seat permanently removed. Another example supplied by Dreikurs is to tell students who lean back in their chairs that they can either keep all four legs of their chairs on the floor or have the front two legs continuously blocked up. Neither of these examples provides consequences that are particularly logical and free from punitive control. This illustrates, perhaps, the difficulty experienced in determining logical consequences and conveying to students that these consequences are not simply arbitrary punishment. The way teachers’ actions are interpreted by their students is far more important than what teachers intend. For example, a teacher may ask a student to leave the classroom as a “logical consequence” for talking out during a lecture. This may be the same punitive thing that has happened to this student routinely in other classroom situations. How will he or she interpret this action? That probably depends on how consequences are determined and the role students play in this process. If students together determine, in advance, that the appropriate consequence for disturbing class by talking is to have to leave until they come to the teacher with a plan of how to avoid such behavior in the future, they will more likely interpret removal from class as logical instead of punitive.

**Discussions in the Classroom**

Classroom discussions are helpful in preventing discipline problems. Group influence can have a positive impact on the behavior of almost all children. Group discussions, which are imperative in a democratic setting, have several purposes. First, they provide an excellent atmosphere in which students can better learn interpersonal skills and effective communication. Second, they can be used to create common goals and procedures so that class members know their roles and how to perform them; children learn to accept responsibility and understand the consequences they may expect. Third, students can learn more about themselves and others as they take part in discussions. This knowledge provides them with a basis for cooperating with one another and working successfully together.

Teachers must provide expert leadership in group discussions. They should make sure that students are free to express themselves in the group without feeling intimidated. More dominant students should not be allowed to monopolize. Everyone’s rights must be respected (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963). Teachers should promote active, voluntary participation. Teachers must avoid taking too dominant a role, although they do need to ensure that these discussions are productive, implementing a minimal amount of manipulation if necessary.

Group discussions can serve the class as a forum for determining class values and expectations as well as a means of enforcing them. If some students fail to follow group directives, the unacceptable behavior they exhibit can be brought up for group discussion. Bringing up the names of offending students should be avoided. Only the types of misbehavior need be discussed. The teacher must provide the necessary leadership to ensure that a group discussion does not degenerate into a free-for-all.

Group discussions should promote an inner freedom for both students and teachers. All must feel free to choose and take responsibility for their choices. The mutual respect that is thus generated will encourage the free exchange of ideas and a greater tolerance for one another. Proper classroom order can be expected as a result. Dreikurs believes
that children should gradually develop more self-management skills. This development must take place in an atmosphere of social reality. Children must learn the rules we live by in society, become accustomed to them, and adopt them as their own. These same rules should be applied in the classroom. All students must accept responsibility for themselves and their behavior and learn to respect themselves and others. They should realize their strategic role in helping others in the group and develop a sense of group responsibility.

Preventive Discipline Suggestions

Dreikurs offers some specific suggestions for preventing discipline problems. Some of these suggestions are based on developing a positive relationship with students (Dinkmeyer & Dinkmeyer, 1976). First, teachers must avoid reinforcing or provoking misbehavior. Students have motives they attempt to satisfy through misbehavior. Teachers should, therefore, avoid behaving inappropriately in response to students’ provocations. For example, if a student’s motive is attention, he or she may do something to annoy the teacher. If the motive is power, the student may try to provoke anger. Desire to retaliate may be stimulated when a student seeks to satisfy his or her revenge motive. Teachers should not respond to student provocations designed to satisfy these motives.

The second thing teachers can do to prevent discipline problems is to establish a relationship of mutual respect between them and their students. This involves not only being kind to students but also displaying an appropriate level of firmness. Teachers should not make threats or fight with students. If a conflict looms, it is best to withdraw, refusing to fight, while at the same time not giving in to student pressure.

Third, teachers should look for assets in each of their students. Looking for positive attributes in students ensures more positive relationships. Looking for student assets encourages them to more fully display the positive behavior exemplified by these assets. Assets like cooperativeness, persistence, and loyalty can be encouraged when teachers expect their students to have them.

Fourth, teachers need to be flexible in their attitudes toward students. Misbehaving students are commonly discouraged and sense they are not accepted by others. Their misguided efforts to satisfy their motives may have promoted an attitude of unacceptance by their peers and teachers. They sense this and commonly misbehave even more. Teachers must be flexible enough to act as if their students have desirable attributes if they hope to encourage them to develop such characteristics.

Dreikurs also suggests that students be involved in determining rules for the classroom (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1982). A broad range of rules should be addressed. For example, there may be rules regarding borrowing personal belongings, using classroom equipment, playing with other children on the playground, table manners in the cafeteria, calling other children names and swearing, bicycles, getting help from classmates on schoolwork, cleaning up work areas, talking during class discussions and lectures, and entering and exiting the classroom.

Students should also be allowed to work at their own pace, display spontaneity and enthusiasm, explore personal interests, and learn to accept responsibility for themselves. These natural impulses of students need to be expressed and should be sanctioned within an acceptable format in the classroom.

A final way to better prevent discipline problems is to have discipline-oriented class discussions. In these discussions, the five following topics should receive the focus of attention:

1. The good things that have happened since the last discussion are addressed. This aspect of the discussion may well deal with problems that have been overcome and learning that has been enhanced by class decisions that have been made earlier.
2. The class should examine ways to avoid specific problems and improve the class during the next week or so. Here, problems that have plagued the class should be brought up without making reference to particular students. Specific ways to overcome these problems should be brought up and agreed upon.

3. Personal problems should be reviewed. Students should be allowed and even encouraged to bring up problems that affect them personally. When these problems are discussed, children can attain a greater sense of community with their classmates and achieve an increased commitment to help one another.

4. Examine responsibilities of class members for how the class operates. Students should feel a sense of responsibility for what happens in class. This way they can assume responsibility for being a contributing member of the class. Students who feel no sense of class responsibility commonly obstruct classroom activities in an effort to satisfy their own needs.

5. Formulate future plans that provide a sense of class direction. Students will be more enthusiastic about pursuing goals that they have helped develop. These plans can include items such as proposed curricula, projects, future discussion, guest speakers, and equipment purchases.

The following is an example of the nature of a classroom discussion as Dreikurs advocates:

**Mr. Roberts**
This morning we are going to talk about some of the things we have accomplished as a class since our last classroom meeting. As you will remember, we had a problem with some class members flipping spitwads. I think there has been considerable improvement. Also, you have had a chance to work on your group projects, so we need to determine how successful they have been. I have some additional proposals regarding our next unit for your consideration. In addition, another problem has come up that we need to talk about. But let's first address the group projects. What do you have to report about your work on the projects?

**Darlene**
I don't like group projects. I have to do all the work.

**Cleon**
That's a laugh. I've done more work than you and I'm not complaining.

**Mr. Roberts**
So it appears doing an equal amount of work is a concern to some of you. You must remember that on group projects we don't really try to make sure everyone makes the same contribution. It's more important for you to become better acquainted and experience good relationships. How many of you feel you have benefitted from the projects? (Only about half raise their hands.) I want to propose a different learning experience for our next unit. I can arrange for some experts to come in and talk to you. After that I plan to have you do some library research on topics of your own choice and prepare reports which you will give to the class. What comments would you like to make regarding this proposal?

**Thayne**
Can we work in groups if we want to?

**Mr. Roberts**
I suppose that would be alright. Each of you needs to let me know what you want to do. After the talks by our visitors, I'll supply you with a list of topics. I need to make sure all the topics get covered. We need to come up with a plan to make sure of that. Remember if you work in a group, you'll each have to be assigned a role. Now we need to talk about a problem
Several students have complained to me about being sprayed with micropipettes in the lab. As you know, I gave you a strict rule about that at the beginning of the year. We now have to discuss the consequences for this. Who wants to start?

Russell: I don't see any problem if just water is sprayed.

Evelyn: But what if there is acid in the pipette? Someone could be blinded.

Huia: Someone squirted acid on one of my best dresses and ruined it. It made a great big hole. I'm glad they didn't squirt me in the face.

DelRae: People know if they're squirting water or acid. If it's acid, they should be punished. If it's water I don't see any problem.

Gyle: Well I do. We shouldn't take any chances.

Mr. Roberts: How many feel like Gyle? (Most hands go up.) That reinforces the rule I presented the first day of class. What should be the consequence of breaking the rule?

I think they should be banned from the lab for the rest of the year.

That's a pretty stiff punishment.

Not when it puts your eyes at risk. And it's not punishment. Clair is right. It is an appropriate consequence for engaging in such a dangerous activity, not a punishment.

Pause and Consider

1. What is the difference between punishing a child by kicking him or her out of class and a logical consequence of excluding a child from class?
2. To what degree are classroom discussions promoted by Dreikurs to prevent discipline problems compatible philosophically with intervention strategies he suggests for correcting misbehavior? Explain.
3. How effectively can students from grades 1 through 12 participate in classroom meetings as Dreikurs conceives of them and successfully prevent discipline problems? Explain your reasoning.

Schoolwide Discipline

Although Dreikurs does not provide specific instructions for the implementation of logical consequences on a schoolwide basis, its basic principles could be applied in a whole-school setting, but with a few possible drawbacks. Particularly recalcitrant students could be referred to administrators or other designated professionals who would diagnose students' motives and help them change mistaken goals for more productive ones in the same way teachers do in their classrooms. These more difficult cases may be handled by administrators in their offices or in a central clearing house created in the school and staffed by professionals trained in logical consequences techniques. These cases may be those that teachers find difficulty working with and still carrying on their instructional program. Unfortunately, moving unmanageable students out of the classroom may just shift the focus of problems and not solve them. For example, revenge or power motives may originate in a particular classroom with a particular teacher and may best be solved in that context. Because this discipline approach deals with motives whose development may be situation specific, schoolwide applications could be less potent and less appropriate than those applied by individual teachers. Teachers may be in a better position to provide
students appropriate options to their mistaken goals, which fit their particular classroom. Because situations in various classrooms may differ, it would be difficult for personnel unfamiliar with these conditions to guide students in determining appropriate alternative behaviors. Also, because trust relationships are critical to the operation of this model, individual teachers may be better equipped to work with these students than personnel in a centralized referral facility.

**STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES MODEL**

**Strengths**
1. It promotes a degree of autonomy for students.
2. It incorporates a preventive approach to discipline.
3. It helps students understand why they behave as they do.
4. It helps students learn correct behavior.
5. It promotes mutual respect between teachers and students.
6. It relies on logical consequences instead of arbitrary punishment and systematic reinforcement.
7. It helps teachers focus on causes for behavior before they take action.

**Weaknesses**
1. Teachers have trouble determining the actual motives of their students.
2. Students may not admit their real motives, either because they believe that their motives are unacceptable or because they do not know what they are.
3. Teachers may find it difficult to respond to students in a noncontrolling way.
4. Teachers may have a problem dealing with the complexity of engaging in a dialogue with their students.

**SUMMARY**

Democratic principles are central to Dreikurs' approach to discipline. Teachers who are democratic will be more successful in helping children become more responsibly self-governed. These principles can also be used more effectively to deal with students who have mistaken goals. Teachers' effectiveness can be improved when they realize that the behavior of all students is an outgrowth of a desire to be accepted on a social level. Misbehavior results when children pursue the mistaken goals of gaining attention, exercising power, exacting revenge, and displaying inadequacy. Children's disposition to seek these mistaken goals is often related to their family experiences as well as to their treatment in school.

A summary of Dreikurs' recommendations for good discipline can be found in his list of don'ts and dos (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1982):

A list of don'ts
1. Do not be preoccupied with your own prestige and authority.
2. Refrain from nagging and scolding, which may reinforce misbehaving children's quest for attention.
3. Do not ask children to promise anything. They will use a promise to get out of an uncomfortable situation with no intention of fulfilling it.
Questions and Activities

4. Avoid giving rewards for good behavior. Doing so will only condition children to expect rewards.
5. Refrain from finding fault with children.
6. Do not hold your students and yourself to different standards.
7. Do not use threats.
8. Do not be vindictive.

A List of Dos
1. Always try first to understand the purpose of children’s misbehavior.
2. Give clear-cut directions for actions expected of children.
3. Focus on children’s present, not their past, behavior.
4. When children misbehave in class, give them a choice either to remain where they are without disturbing others or to leave the room.
5. Build on the positive and avoid the negative.
7. Discuss children’s behavior problems only when neither you nor they are emotionally charged.
8. Use logical consequences instead of punishment.
10. Use cooperative planning to establish goals and solutions to problems.
11. Let children assume increasingly greater responsibility for their own behavior and learning as they are able to do so.
12. Use the whole class to create and enforce rules.
13. Be kind but firm with children.
14. Show that you accept children but not their misbehavior.
15. Help children become more responsibly independent.
16. Make sure that students understand the limits.

CENTRAL IDEAS
1. According to Dreikurs, students misbehave because their needs are not met.
2. The needs to gain attention, exercise power, exact revenge, and display inadequacy form a hierarchy: If one need (attention, for example) is unmet, the next need in the hierarchy (power) becomes predominant.
3. To avoid having to deal with a variety of misbehaviors, teachers should make sure that their students’ need for attention and acceptance is met.
4. Discipline problems can be prevented through the use of class discussions and the application of logical consequences.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES
Questions to Consider
1. What evidence is there that the purpose of misbehavior is to achieve social acceptance?
2. What motives besides the ones Dreikurs accepts do you think explain misbehavior?
3. How does your own experience corroborate or contradict the conclusions Dreikurs reaches regarding the influence of birth order on behavior?
4. To what extent have social conditions changed sufficiently to require more democratic methods of working with children?

Classroom Activities
1. Compare Canter's assertive discipline (Chapter 4) and Dreikurs's logical consequences.
2. Divide the class into groups of four or five members. One member of the group is given a list of behaviors and associated motives. This person describes each behavior to the other group members. They try to determine the motive behind the behavior by asking questions of the group member holding the list. For example,

   Behavior (motive)
   A student digs into the desk with a knife. (Revenge)
   A student fights with other students. (Attention)
   A student is late for class. (Power)
   A student cuts into the lunch line. (Attention)
   A student uses foul language in class. (Power)
   A student talks boisterously. (Attention)
3. Have students change the following praise statements into encouragement statements:
   a. Look at the stitching on this dress you have sewn. You did an excellent job.
   b. Class, you should see Robert's research paper. It was the best one in the class.
   c. Your trumpet playing is absolutely remarkable, Bill.
   d. Mark, you're the best basketball player we have this year.

Student Applications
1. With two classmates, use role playing to discover how a teacher can apply logical consequences to help a misbehaving student in the following situations. One person plays the role of the teacher; another plays the role of the student. The person playing the student should be told only what the misbehavior was. That person then decides on one of the mistaken motives without revealing it to the person playing the teacher. The third person is to observe and help the two other participants analyze the situation.
   a. Bill makes paper airplanes and flies them around the classroom.
   b. Shon trips other students as they walk up the aisle.
   c. Steve rips pages out of textbooks.
   d. Lynette spends time talking instead of working quietly at her desk.
2. With a group of classmates, use role playing to simulate a class discussion in which learning goals as well as classroom rules are determined.

Explore Your Philosophy
1. Defend or refute the assumption that humans are motivated by their need to gain attention, exercise power, exact revenge, or display inadequacy.
2. Defend or refute the assumption that the preceding human needs are related to one another in a hierarchy so that satisfying attention needs will preclude the manifestation of the other needs.
3. Defend or refute the assumption that appropriate behavior changes will take place only when children understand the motives for their behavior and embrace acceptable alternatives to satisfy their needs.
4. Defend or refute the assumption that the best way to determine behavioral manifestations of children's needs is to explore the reasons why they behave as they do.

5. Defend or refute the practice of providing children with consequences in the form of two alternative behaviors from which to choose, instead of allowing them to examine the full range of possible consequences.

6. Compare the principles contained in your educational philosophy with those of logical consequences. Determine consistencies and inconsistencies. Make adjustments to your philosophy as you believe appropriate.

**REFERENCES**


