



ILLUSORY OBJECTIVES AND HIDDEN BELIEFS



TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To recognize a "mirage" goal in a child, here are some steps based on the principles of Positive Discipline:



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UNDERSTANDING THE ERRONEOUS BELIEF UNDERLYING THE BEHAVIOR



Each mirage goal is based on a distorted perception:

- Capturing attention: “I only count if someone looks at me”
- Taking control: “I only belong if I dominate”
- Seeking revenge: “I restore justice by hurting as I was hurt”
- Confirming incapacity: “I am useless, no point in trying”



OBSERVE THE EMOTIONS THAT THE BEHAVIOR EVOKES IN YOU



Your own feelings are valuable clues. For example:

- If you feel annoyed or irritated, the child is probably seeking attention.
- If you feel challenged or questioned in your authority, they might be trying to take control.
- If you feel hurt or disappointed, it may indicate they are seeking revenge.
- If you feel powerless or discouraged, they might want to confirm their belief of incapacity.



LOOK FOR THE HIDDEN NEEDS BEHIND THESE BEHAVIORS



These behaviors are often clumsy attempts to meet fundamental needs:

- Feel seen and loved.
- Be respected and have control.
- Restore a sense of justice.
- Avoid the fear of failure and preserve self-esteem.

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ADAPT YOUR RESPONSE WITH KINDNESS



Once the identified mirage goal is reached, respond to the real need rather than the behavior:

- To capture attention, give them your undivided time and praise their efforts..
- To take control, offer limited choices and collaborate on rules.
- To seek revenge, listen with empathy and reassure them of their place in the family.
- To confirm incapacity, encourage every little effort and put them in a position to succeed.



IDENTIFY THE CHILD'S SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR



Analyze what they are doing and how they react to your interventions:

- If the child temporarily stops his agitation but quickly resumes, they are seeking attention.
- If the opposition lasts and turns into a power struggle, their goal is probably to take control.
- If the child responds with hurtful words or actions, they are seeking revenge.
- If they adopt a passive attitude or avoids tasks, they want to confirm their belief that they are incapable.



"Positive Discipline" by
Jane Nelsen



"Mistaken Goal Chart" –
Positive Discipline
Association



"Break the Code
of Misbehavior" –
Positive Discipline



"Mistaken Goals
(From the Positive
Discipline Online
Parenting Class)"



The Parent
Education Network



"MISTAKEN GOAL CHART" – POSITIVE DISCIPLINE ASSOCIATION

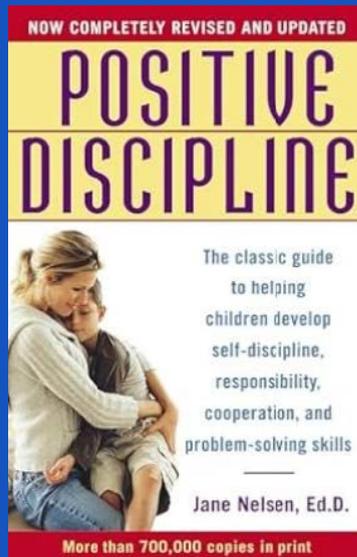
A concise, one-page PDF resource designed to help educators and parents identify the possible mistaken goal behind a child's misbehavior –by analyzing the adult's emotional response and the child's reaction to correction.



"BREAK THE CODE OF MISBEHAVIOR" - POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

This article from the Positive Discipline website explains how to understand and respond to misbehavior by uncovering the underlying mistaken belief the child is acting on.





"POSITIVE DISCIPLINE" BY JANE NELSEN

This foundational book introduces the core principles of Positive Discipline, emphasizing respectful, firm, and kind interactions with children. It includes a detailed explanation of mistaken goals, such as attention-seeking, power struggles, revenge, and assumed inadequacy.



THE PARENT EDUCATION NETWORK

Since 1974, PEN, a nonprofit organization, has supported families by promoting positive, respectful, and effective parenting approaches. Through workshops, coaching, and practical resources, PEN equips parents with tools grounded in encouragement and mutual respect. Its programs are designed to foster confident, responsible children through discipline that is both kind and firm.



"MISTAKEN GOALS (FROM THE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE ONLINE PARENTING CLASS)

Behavior is often a coded message that reflects a child's underlying beliefs about themselves and the world. When a child misbehaves, they're often expressing, through the only means they know in that moment, that they feel discouraged or disconnected. As you learn to interpret these signals, your responses will begin to shift and over time, so will your child's behavior.

