

## Positive Soul Formation

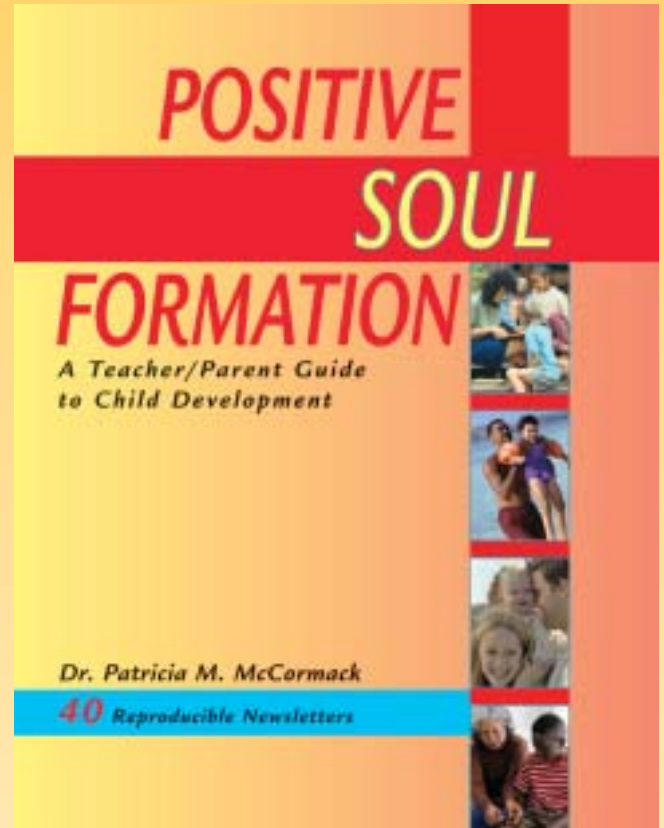
By Dr. Patricia McCormack

Here's a versatile tool for uniting home and school in the soul formation of children. These reproducible newsletters are positive in tone, situating each topic within a faith context and providing formative support.

They're ideal for weekly distribution to encourage ongoing parent involvement, as follow-ups to topics covered in parent conferences, as a focus for parent study groups, or as inserts in the Sunday bulletin. Newsletters cover 10 topics – with four newsletters each.

### Topics include . . .

- Christian parenting
- Fostering self-discipline
- Instilling purpose and initiative
- Building self-esteem
- Cultivating respectful relationships



96 pages, 8 1/2" x 11" #3900

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For additional parenting resources, including online resources, go to Dr. McCormack's Web site at [www.formativeparenting.org](http://www.formativeparenting.org) and click on "Links" in the menu at the left.

# Establishing Self-Esteem

## Handling Misbehavior

**O**n most occasions children's misbehavior indicates their perception that they are being denied a basic need. Psychologist Rudolf Dreikurs and his contemporary disciples explained that the goal of misbehavior is to satisfy a basic need or to grieve its loss.

Children are giving messages through isolated instances of behavior that are motivated by attention, power, revenge, or inadequacy. Hear the misbehavior as a cry for help. Respond in ways that nurture self-esteem.

An explanation of the basic needs and how to recognize them during demonstrations of misbehavior was explained in the newsletter, "Meeting the Four Basic Needs." This newsletter, "Handling Misbehavior," suggests alternative adult responses during times of misbehavior.

### **Basic Need: To be loved**

**Misbehaves to get attention:** Children who believe they belong only when they are noticed or being served by the adult act out for attention. Instead of coaxing or reminding them about behaving better, try these alternatives.

- When possible, ignore the misbehavior.
- At neutral times, give attention for positive behavior.
- Resist the temptation to become a personal servant or secretary. Instead, establish routines, procedures, and systems that involve the child's participation.
- Recognize that it is counterproductive to remind, punish, reward, and coax. Such responses reward inappropriate behavior.
- Schedule time with your child on a

*Hear the misbehavior  
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regular basis.

- Discuss the question, "Could it be that the reason you [state the behavior] is to get my attention and to keep me busy with you?"

### **Basic Need: To be in control**

**Misbehaves to gain power:** Children who believe they belong only when they are in control or proving their position as boss are looking for power. Instead of fighting with them or giving in to them, try these alternatives.

- Withdraw from conflict.
- Without speaking, act kindly but firmly.
- Redirect them to use power constructively.
- At neutral times ask for their help, enlist their cooperation, and give them responsibility.
- Understand that fighting or giving in only increases their desire for power.
- Discuss the question, "Could it be that the reason you [state the behavior] is to show me that you are big enough to do things for yourself?"

*Correct the behavior;  
love the child.*

**Basic Need: To be treated respectfully, justly, and fairly.**

**Misbehaves to get retaliation:** When children perceive that they are being treated unfairly or with disregard, they are hurt and believe that they belong only when they are hurting others. They do not believe that they are loved. Consequently, they lash out in revenge. Instead of retaliating and getting even with them, try these alternatives.

- Avoid feeling hurt. Realize that the hurt you feel is a reflection of the hurt your child is carrying.
- Withdraw from the revenge cycle; avoid retaliation and punishment.
- Build a trusting relationship demonstrating respect for your child as a person and showing dependency on your child's contributions.
- Communicate with encouragement statements (clear affirmation about specific strengths).
- Separate the behavior from the person. Correct the behavior; love the child.
- Discuss the question. "Could it be that the reason you [state the behavior] is because you feel hurt and want to get even with me or someone else?"

**Basic Need: To be competent and relied upon**

**Misbehaves to be considered helpless:** Children who feel incompetent believe that they belong only by convincing others not to expect anything from them but, instead, to view them as unable and inadequate. They display inadequacy. Instead of passive response or failing to respond to them at all, try these alternatives.

- Stop all criticism.

- Encourage any positive attempt, no matter how small. Arrange for small successes.
- Focus on the child's assets.
- Avoid pity and despair.
- Take time to train the child in skills and accomplishments.
- Discuss the question, "Could it be that the reason you [state the behavior] is because you don't feel you can succeed and so you don't even want to try?"

**Proactive remedies**

Upcoming newsletters focus on parent and teacher practices that provide foundations of security, autonomy, initiative, and industry that eliminate the need to misbehave.

**Check It Out**

- ✓ Schedule time with your child on a regular basis.
- ✓ Understand that fighting or giving in only increases your child's desire for power.
- ✓ Withdraw from the revenge cycle; avoid retaliation and punishment.