

Emotions are Not Bad Behavior

Guest post by Robin Grille.

One of the most commonly heard parental laments is about how children try to get attention. So many behaviors that adults don't like are brushed off as "merely" attention-seeking devices. "Don't worry about him," we say, "he is just doing it to get attention."

When children use oblique ways to get attention, such as causing a ruckus, exaggerating or feigning their hurts, picking on other children, showing off, being coquettish – they risk being ignored or put down, as nearby adults roll their eyes in exasperation. Sometimes, this also happens to children even when they directly and openly call for the attention they crave. Instead of scorning the child, why don't we ask these questions: When a child is being manipulative, instead of direct, how did he learn to do this? How did he come to feel that he shouldn't openly ask for a hug, an answer to his question, sympathy or just to be noticed or played with?

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