

**Characteristics & Practices of Children
with Disrespectful, Obnoxious, Abusive Behavior**

James Lehman- The Total Transformation

1. **Victim Stance-** Youth sees himself as the victim. Rejects the idea that any of the problem is his responsibility.
2. **Injustice-** Youth constantly sees that things are unfair. Makes that the focus and reason for breaking rules.
3. **Uniqueness-** Claims no one ever understands him. Your lack of understanding is the problem, not his behavior.
4. **One-Way Boundaries-** Demands his boundaries are met, but routinely violates the boundaries of others.
5. **Concrete Transactions-** Rules are obstacles. Relationships are vehicles. Relationships are often used to get around the rules and rights of others.
6. **Pride in Negativity-** Youth takes pride in knowledge of negative behavior. Use of knowledge gives him a “secret life” and negative power.
7. **Anger with an Angle-** Youth who “lose control” often end up controlling the situation by their behavior. Adults change their behavior in order not to “set him off” into another episode.
8. **One-Way Training-** Youth trains adults about what will happen if he is resisted or opposed by using a variety of inappropriate behaviors. He resists all efforts to train him to use appropriate methods to get what he wants.
9. **One-Way Role Models-** Overly susceptible to negative role models (peers or other adults), but completely non-responsive to positive one.
10. **Wishing-** Faulty thinking or unrealistic view of himself when forced to change behavior. Goals and commitments are avoided, resisted, or rejected.
11. **Put Offs-** Youth avoids doing things that interfere with what they want to do at the moment. Pressure to respond is met with inappropriate behavior, inattention, or silence.
12. **Casing-** Youth “sizes-up” the power, vulnerability, or usefulness of others. Rejects those who pose a threat.
13. **Dishonesty and Misinformation-** Dishonesty has many forms- vagueness, confusion, pretending to misunderstand, omission, concealment, distortion, lying, etc. Dishonesty is used to avoid situations or justify their actions. Tells others what he thinks they want to hear. Half-truths and secrets are common. Says “yes” even when they don’t mean it.
14. **False Apologies-** Does not acknowledge wrong doing even if they apologize.. “I’m sorry, but...”
15. **Turn Around-** Puts others on the defensive when confronted. Forces adult to do the explaining. “It’s not fair..”, “You don’t care about me..”
16. **Partialization-** Completes the part of the task that is the easiest and demands full credit and full rewards. Becomes indignant or defiant.

One Minute Turn Around

1. **Assume Control- Self-confidence without hostility-** Give directions, instead of making requests- rights to decent treatment- “Where are you supposed to be-go there! Don’t justify, argue, or defend, don’t ask for excuses. Acting out kids train adults to talk in a” tip-toe around me” way. Bad attitude- kid thinks he is in control and entitled to things he is not.
2. **Disconnect-** Cut-off communication once child becomes disrespectful, obnoxious, abusive. Stop the show, don’t keep the conflict going. “Don’t talk to me that way, I don’t like it.” Turn and walk away.

3. **Script it for the next time-** During the lulls, discuss with the student what will happen the next time there is inappropriate behavior. Casual and low-key. What they can do the next time. Student repeats what will happen next time. Our goal is that next time....how can we make that happen.
4. **No speeches-** Adults try to justify themselves, morally, socially, they make rationales. Maybe he'll understand, maybe he'll like him. Adult is trying to get the kid not to blame him. If their being rude, don't have a discussion with them. "It's your responsibility..."
5. **Focus on behavior that is occurring now...be specific.** Not on attitudes or emotions. Attitudes are formed by expectations and perceptions. Not looking for the student not to be angry, we are looking for him to change impulsive behavior. Whether the student is resentful or not, now is the time for them to what they are directed to do. Whether they are angry or not, you don't call me names. Want what is going on now to stop and do what they are supposed to do regardless if they are angry. Feelings make adults uncomfortable. Cannot change their feelings, can only direct them to change their behavior. Be more comfortable with the student bad feelings and attitudes and instead focus on inappropriate behavior.
6. **Halt over-stimulation-** Deal with students without an "audience" or other distractions. Work with other kids, when you are disciplining one child, get others involved and remove them as an audience. How can you help me when a student is having a hard time? Do not try to argue or "make sense" in front of a crowd. Over stimulates them and they cannot communicate or respond effectively. Time out is to reduce over-stimulation. Don't talk to them or lecture them during that time.
7. **Use strategic recognition and affection.** Remind the student how they handled a similar situation or link a recent success to the current conflict. No buts...only ands! Get the kid to listen louder.
8. **Self disclosure-** Tell the student what you are feeling. "It's impossible to talk to you when you are being rude to me." Or "It's very frustrating to help you solve this problem when you are blaming me." Or "I can't help you solve a problem when you are so negative about every solution." Let them know. Self disclosure reflects how the student's behavior reflects you. Tells them how their behavior is affecting your ability to communicate and problem solve with them. Two benefits: A) emotions don't build on the part of the adult; B) clarifies whose problem it is- it's theirs. Adults often take responsibility for both the problem and the solution.
9. **Do, not say!** - Children pay much more attention to what adults do, not what they say. Follow through is essential. If you need time to compose yourself, before you deal with a child, take that time! Do the thing you want the child to do. Yelling, being sarcastic, or being disrespectful to a child is not the same as them yelling, being sarcastic, or disrespectful towards you. Know what you are going to do ahead of time, don't be reactionary. Role model the behavior you want the student to do. If you want them calm, be calm!
10. **Accept bad moods and bad days.** Bad times of the day... Less communication in these times cuts down on conflicts. "You seem to be having a bad time right now, why don't we take a break and then start over." Kids need to know they can start over. "I'm sorry you're having a bad day, but you don't need to take it out on me." Check back in with them. Gives them a sense of accountability. Support the environment that provides for them to be successful.

Strength-Based Beliefs & Terminology

Charlie Appelstein, M.S.W.

Life isn't what you see, it's what you perceive!

Reframing= involves taking a seemingly negative behavior and "reframing" it in a positive way.

Pejorative Label	Positive, Hope-Based Reframe
Obnoxious	Good at pushing people away
Rude, arrogant	Good at affecting people
Resistant	Cautious
Lazy, un-invested	Good at preventing future hurt or failures
Manipulative	Good at getting needs met
Just looking for attention	Good at caring about and loving yourself
Close-mouthed	Loyal to friends and family
Different, odd	Under appreciated
Stubborn and defiant	Good at standing up for yourself
Tantrum, fit, outburst	Big message
Learning disability	Roadblocks

Solution Focused Approaches

The Language of Hope and Possibility

Historical:	How many kids have been, or are, in a similar situation? How many succeeded? So can you! What steps did they take to succeed? How will we celebrate when you get there?
Qualifiers:	"I hate this subject!" > "So you're saying you hate this subject right now."
Past Tense:	"I'm stupid!" > "So you haven't been feeling real smart lately."
When & Will:	"I'll never pass that test!" > "When you do, what will it be like."
Scaling Questions:	"On a scale of one to ten, ten being you'll be doing well a year from now, one -- you won't... what number do you think you are at now? What number will it be in three months?"
Identifying In-Between Change:	"What will be the first sign that you've turned the corner?"
Million Dollar Question:	"How come you're not doing worse?"

Strength-Based Practice

Emphasis is on:

- *Strength building* rather than *flaw-fixing*
- *Doing* rather than *understanding*
- *Believing* in youth – not "believing is *seeing*"

Begins with the belief that every youth have strengths and that past successes can be utilized to stop troublesome behavior.

Goal:

Change rather than insight and awareness.

Solution-focused, not problem-focused.

- Does not assume that ownership of guilt is somehow curative.
 - Does assume that change is inevitable, not uncertain.
- Does not assume that large problems require large efforts for solutions
 - Does assume that small changes can ripple out to bring resolution.

Basic Verbal Interventions

Supportive Interventions

“You seem really upset.”

Repeating or paraphrasing with qualifiers (yet, at this moment, now, etc...)

Youth: “I hate this place.”

Adult: “You’re saying you hate this place *right* now.”

Feelings Update

“How do you feel about that?”

Sandwich Approach

“You made a bad decision to throw the paper, but I’m really pleased about how you walked away from that area.”

Praise and Encouragement (praise the action versus the child)

“Way to go!” “That was fantastic!” “I like the colors you selected.”

Humor (said with a smile)

To a fifteen-year-old: “You’re acting like a teenager.”

Apologizing

“I’m sorry for raising my voice with you.”

Reasoning Responses

“What if we let everyone...”

Connecting Statements

“It’s not me against you. I’m on your side.”

Empowering Interventions

“What could you have done differently?” “What do you think we should do?”

Surface Clarifications

“Let me make sure I know why you’re upset.”

Explorative Responses (psychological)

“You don’t usually get this upset. Could something else be bothering you?”

Explorative Responses (historical)

“Have you ever completed such a difficult assignment?”

“Have you ever gotten this angry before and not hit someone?”

Explorative Responses (reflective)

“Is that behavior working for you?”

Plan Making

“Can we make a plan to handle this situation better next time?”

Change is inevitable, not uncertain.