

ANGELS WHEN THEY ARE OUT BUT NOT AT HOME

by Sally and Brian Burgess, Forefront families LLC

We often get asked this question. Why are my kids angels when they are at school, at church or at the neighbors, but turn into little monsters when they are at home? The first thing we say is, "Congratulations, you have taught your children how to behave when they are away from home." However, this does not answer the question as to why they misbehave when they are at home.

The first point to make is that there are outside influences on them when they are out. Schools have clear expectations and structure. There is pressure from both teachers and other kids to abide by the rules. Kids may also be on their best behavior when they are out because parents are much more conscious of their kids' behavior in other company and will correct them more quickly. The behavior may reflect on the family! Home is a place where feelings can safely be expressed, frustration is aired, people are forced to live in close quarters, and where brothers and sisters get on one another's nerves and into one another's stuff. Home is a place where it all hangs out.

The question then is, should misbehavior be acceptable just because it is home? Should families accept a chaotic, noisy household? If you could describe the ideal home environment, what would it be? I would want a positive, harmonious, productive and caring environment where we could all feel accepted and valued as individuals, while still being a close-knit family unit. I am sure every family would want that. It is not just a dream, but can easily become a reality for every family.

Children will be well behaved in a structured environment with clear expectations, boundaries and consequences for negative behavior. Structure, routine and consistency creates the security that kids need. It allows them to think positively, proactively and, therefore, productively. Productivity keeps them busy and promotes a sense of purpose.

There is a raft of other reasons why kids misbehave at home. Parents may not be good role models at home. When there is stress between parents, the kids pick it up. Parents may frustrate the children by comparing or favoring one child over another. Children may not have enough physical activity at home to burn off excess energy. There may be no expectations of them at home to occupy themselves with creative activities. Such pursuits give them a sense of accomplishment and the opportunity for praise.

Kids may not be given the attention they need by parents, both in quality and quantity time. Kids may be hungry because of unhealthy food and irregular meal times. They may be tired because no set bed times are in place, and too

much television is watched. The family often does not have in place the necessary values or principles that teach the importance of respect, loyalty, forgiveness, trust, honesty, obedience and integrity.

You can achieve a peaceful home with happy, healthy children if you take an honest look at why your kids are misbehaving and make amends to meet these needs.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.