# Why You Must Stop Making Excuses for Your Child's Bad Behaviour

**Source**: [www.parentcircle.com](http://www.parentcircle.com)

### **By**: Mina Dilip

Are you a parent who keeps giving excuses when your child doesn't behave well? Well, here's why you should stop doing so.

There are a lot of authoritarian parents who think discipline means punishment. At the same time, there are also some overly permissive parents, who suspend all limits or boundaries and end up making excuses for their child's unacceptable behaviour. By doing this they enable the child to escalate such behaviour until it becomes intolerable or causes irreversible damage. Let us examine some common situations where parents make excuses whenever their child misbehaves. We will go on to look at how this impacts the future of such children.

**5 common scenarios where parents make excuses for their child's unacceptable behaviour:**

**1. Excusing misbehaviour on account of stress:**

Often parents say of their child, "He is very stressed out" or "He has been under a lot of pressure lately" when he misbehaves in social settings. Also, when schools bring up the issue of unacceptable classroom behaviour, parents toss in the stress refrain without a second thought.

**2. Rushing to the child's defence owing to parental guilt:**

Regardless of the intensity or frequency of misbehaviour, there are many parents who defend their child's actions because they feel guilty for some reason or the other. The most common reason is not spending enough time with the child. With dual-income nuclear families on the rise, most middle- to high-school children today are latch-key kids, who have access to their own set of house keys to come and go at will. In the name of offering them independence, some parents end up leaving their young, impressionable children unsupervised. This results in an escalating pattern of defiance and misconduct in children, which is often brushed under the carpet by guilty parents who think they are being 'supportive'.

Sometimes, parental guilt kicks in on account of having been too strict with the child earlier. It is important to remember that inculcating positive discipline in your child is one of your primary responsibilities as a parent. So, what if you disciplined him a while ago? It does not mean he gets away with improper behaviour now.

**3. Rationalising the child's misbehaviour:**

Often, parents rationalize inappropriate behaviour by saying, "Kids will be kids," or "She is just being naughty". Some parents overlook a child's malicious actions, and excuse them by saying, "She didn't mean to do that."

Such so-called logical explanations will not help anyway in correcting bad behaviour. On the contrary, they will only encourage such behaviour.

**4. Obsessing about keeping the child 'happy':**

For some reason, parents want to be perceived as 'good' people by their children. If you are one of them, it may be worth exploring why you want to be the 'good' parent who always keeps the child happy, even if it means excusing all forms of undesirable behaviour. So, what if he is unhappy once in a while? Besides, if you never allow him to experience unhappiness, how will he learn to cope with difficulties and discontent when he grows up?

**5. Resorting to the "I-am-too-tired" excuse:**

Yes, parents are human too. Parents often get tired after a long, hard day at work. But, is it wise to frequently fall back on the "I-am-too-tired-to-deal-with-this-misbehaviour-now" excuse and, in turn, ignore your child's disagreeable behaviour? If you notice this has become a habit, ask yourself if you are among those parents who unintentionally destroy their children's future by constantly ignoring wrongdoings and misdeeds.

**The impact of ignoring misbehaviour:**

Young children thrive on routines, limits, and boundaries. When parents stop imposing necessary limits and boundaries, children feel insecure and lost. This is because having specific limitations or restrictions provides a structure or framework within which children feel safe.

Every child test these limits and pushes the boundaries by misbehaving from time to time. The reason for this is that the child is seeking reassurance and looking for the safety of the familiar restraints. When parents make constant excuses and allowances each time a rule is broken or a boundary isbreached, the child feels unsafe and anxious, because the boundary is malleable, and limits appear non-existent. This anxiety exacerbates misbehaviour as the child tries to find a new limitation or boundary within which to operate in order to feel safe. When that fails, too, the child's misbehaviour escalates even further. In simple terms, the worsening misbehaviour is a call for help. This is the child's way of requesting for the safety of boundaries through the imposition of limits.

As the misdeeds escalate, the intensity of the behaviour increases and becomes progressively unsafe, both for the child and for other people around him. When such a child grows into an adolescent, he is unable to distinguish right from wrong, acceptable from unacceptable, and limitation from the free rein. Hence, his offenses spiral out of control, leading him to engage in delinquent and sometimes criminal behaviour.

**Some classic examples of escalating misbehaviour:**

When the safety of rules, limits, and boundaries is lifted, children and adolescents often follow a pattern of progressively intensifying misconduct, as their moral compass 'DIPS'.

* **Drugs or substance abuse:**

Many teens whose parents have constantly excused their unwanted behaviours find themselves hooked to drugs, alcohol, and other harmful or addictive substances. This is because adolescence is dotted with experiments in the search for an identity.

* **Illegal actions:**

Often, when under the influence of these mind-altering substances, children engage in illegal actions such as drunken driving, vandalism, and robbery.

* **Promiscuity and sexual offenses:**

When the intensity of the offenses keeps increasing, it could lead to misconduct such as experimenting with multiple sexual partners and committing rape or sexual assault.

* **Serious crimes:**

In some cases, children who have grown up without firm, consistent limits may go on to commit serious crimes like murder.

Establishing rules and consequences is important for disciplining children and teaching them responsibility. It also helps them feel safe and grow up to be holistic and well-rounded individuals with positive self-esteem. So, stop worrying about playing the 'bad cop' to your children, and work on enforcing the necessary rules and limits in a firm but gentlemanner. Your children will thank you for it.