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*Facilitation, Training and Coaching
Mutually Respectful Environments, Intentionally Created*

The Mistaken Goal Chart is a Dreikurs/Nelsen application of the Adlerian concept that when a misbehaving person is a person discouraged from belonging and significance, he or she acts in one of four “mistaken ways”. The challenge is that the mistaken belief often leads to behaviors which are not socially useful – often keeping adults and children trapped in the “Feeling, Misbehavior, Reaction Cycle.”

The Mistaken Goal Chart helps to pinpoint the CHILD’s goal based on the ADULT’s feeling about the misbehavior. This is really helpful to builds two adult skills. The first is the naming of personal emotions. When adults can name their emotions, we help model emotional literacy for our children, and model that feelings are ok, and our actions when we have feelings are important. The second adult skill is self-regulation. One of the core philosophies of Positive Discipline is that we all do better when we feel better – we can only problem solve for the future when we calm down from upset. Focusing on our feelings can only be done effectively when calm.

Once the adult has an idea about the child’s mistaken goal, we then were able to move to column 8 of the chart for proactive and empowering responses to behavior.

Jane Nelsen suggests these steps to using the Mistaken Goal Chart to break the code of the misbehavior.

1. The adult describes a challenging behavior you are experiencing with a child.
2. Adult identifies feelings about the behavior. Usually, a feeling can be described with just one word. (Frustrated doesn’t count because it is a generic feeling that can be narrowed down to a more specific feeling. Scan Column 2 of the Mistaken Goal Chart to find the feelings that fit)
3. Adult considers what adult usually does in response to the challenging behavior.
4. Quiet reflection allows adult to get into the child’s world. Adult imagines how s/he would feel if an important figure did or said what the adult did or said. Adult imagines what child is thinking, feeling and deciding. This is a clue to the belief behind the behavior.
5. Adult considers Column 7 of the Mistaken Goal Chart to “break the code” and identify what the child needs.
6. Adult considers suggestion from Column 8 of the Mistaken Goal Chart to try the next time child exhibits a similar challenging behavior. Describe how this might be encouraging to the child and how it might help the child revise his or her belief about how to find belonging and significance.
7. Notice the results. If it didn’t seem to work to change the behavior, is it possible that the child is at least making a new decision?

Mistaken Goal Chart
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
The child's goal	Adult's feeling	Adult's usual response	Adult's belief	The child's mistaken goal	Adult's usual response	Adult's usual response	Proactive and empowering responses
Example	Example	Example	Example	Example	Example	Example	Example
Child's goal: To get attention	Adult's feeling: Frustrated	Adult's usual response: Yelling, scolding, spanking	Adult's belief: "My child is misbehaving to get attention."	The child's mistaken goal: To get attention	Adult's usual response: Yelling, scolding, spanking	Adult's usual response: Yelling, scolding, spanking	Proactive and empowering responses: Give attention when the child is doing well.
Child's goal: To avoid a task	Adult's feeling: Annoyed	Adult's usual response: Nagging, reminding	Adult's belief: "My child is avoiding the task because it's boring."	The child's mistaken goal: To avoid the task	Adult's usual response: Nagging, reminding	Adult's usual response: Nagging, reminding	Proactive and empowering responses: Make the task more interesting.
Child's goal: To gain power	Adult's feeling: Angry	Adult's usual response: Power struggles	Adult's belief: "My child is trying to win over me."	The child's mistaken goal: To gain power	Adult's usual response: Power struggles	Adult's usual response: Power struggles	Proactive and empowering responses: Stay calm and firm.
Child's goal: To show competence	Adult's feeling: Proud	Adult's usual response: Praise, rewards	Adult's belief: "My child is trying to impress me."	The child's mistaken goal: To show competence	Adult's usual response: Praise, rewards	Adult's usual response: Praise, rewards	Proactive and empowering responses: Encourage effort and persistence.

Read more about the mistaken goal chart in both Chapter 4 of **Positive Discipline**, by Dr. Jane Nelsen and **Positive Discipline Tools for Teachers** by Drs. Nelsen and Kelly Gfroerer

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
The child's goal is:	If the parent/teacher feels:	And tends to react by:	And if the child's response is:	The Belief behind child's behavior is:	How adults may contribute:	Coded messages	Parent/teacher proactive and empowering responses include:
Undue Attention (to keep others busy or get special service)	Annoyed Irritated Worried Guilty	Reminding Coaxing Doing things for the child he/she could do for him/herself	Stops temporarily, but later resumes same or another disturbing behavior. Stops when given one-on-one attention.	I count (belong) only when I'm being noticed or getting special service. I'm only important when I'm keeping you busy with me.	"I don't have faith in you to deal with disappointment." "I feel guilty if you aren't happy."	Notice Me Involve Me Usefully	Redirect by involving child in a useful task to gain useful attention; Say what you will do, "I love you and ____." (Example: "I care about you and will spend time with you later.") Avoid special services; Say it only once and then act; Have faith in child to deal with feelings (don't fix or rescue); Plan special time; Set up routines; Engage child in problem-solving; Use family/class meetings; Ignore (touch without words); Set up nonverbal signals.
Misguided Power (to be boss)	Angry Challenged Threatened Defeated	Fighting Giving in Thinking "You can't get away with it" or "I'll make you" Wanting to be right	Intensifies behavior Defiant compliance Feels he/she's won when parent/teacher is upset Passive Power	I belong only when I'm boss, in control, or proving no one can boss me. You can't make me.	"I'm in control and you must do what I say." "I believe that telling you what to do, and lecturing or punishing you when you don't do it, is the best way to motivate you to do better."	Let Me Help Give Me Choices	Acknowledge that you can't make him/her do something and redirect to positive power by asking for help; Offer a limited choice; Don't fight and don't give in; Withdraw from conflict and calm down; Be firm and kind; Act, don't talk; Decide what you will do; Let routines be the boss; Develop mutual respect; Get help from child to set reasonable and few limits; Practice follow-through; Use family/class meetings.
Revenge (to get even)	Hurt Disappointed Disbelieving Disgusted	Retaliating Getting even Thinking "How could you do this to me?" Taking behavior personally	Retaliates Hurt others Damages property Gets even Intensifies Escalates the same behavior or chooses another weapon	I don't think I belong so I'll hurt others as I feel hurt. I can't be liked or loved.	"I give advice (without listening to you) because I think I'm helping." "I expect you to know why I focus more on your grades than I focus on you as a person."	I'm Hurting Validate My Feelings	Acknowledge hurt feelings; Don't take behavior personally; Avoid punishment and retaliation; Build trust; Use reflective listening; Share your feelings; Apologize; Make amends; Show you care; Act, don't talk; Encourage strengths; Put kids in same boat; Use family/class meetings.
Assumed Inadequacy (to give up and be left alone)	Despair Hopeless Helpless Inadequate	Giving up Doing for Over helping Showing a lack of faith	Retreats further Passive No improvement No response Avoid trying	I don't believe I can belong, so I'll convince others not to expect anything of me; I am helpless and unable; It's no use trying because I won't do it right.	"I expect you to live up to my high expectations." "I thought it was my job to do things for you."	Don't Give Up On Me Show Me A Small Step	Break task down to small steps; Make task easier until child experiences success; Set up opportunities for success; Take time for training; Teach skills/show how, but don't do for; Stop all criticism; Encourage any positive attempt, no matter how small; Show faith in child's abilities; Focus on asset; Don't pity; Don't give up; Enjoy the child; Build on his/her interests; Use family/class meetings.