



Scene #7 **GET ME MILK!**

Error #3 Parents “accidentally” reward bad behavior.

The bad behavior is demanding, bossy behavior.

The reward is a material reward (milk) and a social reward (power and control over father).

This is also an example of the child giving a command to his father!

Do show the scene twice before discussing.

The “SOS Child Management Guidelines” handout has Answers to many Questions. Tell participants, “The Answers are on your handout! Look there!”

Script:

Father is washing dishes while his son is eating a sandwich and demanding milk.

Mitchell: “Get me some milk! ... Get me milk! ... Get me milk! ... Get me milk!”

Dad: “Oh, alright! But you’re big enough to get it yourself.” (Dad gets the milk.)
“Here.”

Questions, Answers, And Comments:

Q: Which rule or error did father follow?

A: Error #3 Parents “accidentally” reward bad behavior. Caution: If participants mistakenly say “Error #4 Parents fail to correct/punish bad behavior,” ask “Which other error might it be?” Ask, “Which is the most serious error, actually rewarding a bad behavior or failing to correct/punish it?”

Q: What is the bad behavior of the boy?

A: Demanding, bossy behavior, giving the parent a command.

Q: What is the reward?

A: A material reward (milk) and a social reward (power and control over father).

Point To Make: This is also an example of a command, but with the child giving the command! **Exercising power over a parent can be a reward for a child.**

Q: Is the child more or less likely to be demanding and bossy in the future?

A: More likely.

Q: What should father have done or said?

A: Ask for and discuss various alternatives with participants.

(1) Not reward the bad behavior by getting the milk.

(2) Father could teach the child the alternative good behavior of asking politely.

(3) Father could gently say, “I don’t like being ordered to do something. You will need to get your milk yourself.”

(4) Father should not use mild correction/punishment.

Technical Comments:

- The scene shows positive reinforcement of son’s undesirable behavior, with a material reward and a social reward (power and control over father).
- Father’s behavior of getting the milk is reinforced (negatively reinforced) by the son discontinuing aversive demanding behavior. Negative reinforcement - a response followed by the termination (or reduction) of an aversive stimulus is strengthened. Father and son are mutually reinforcing each other’s dysfunctional behavior.



Scene #8 DOING A FLIP

Error #2 Parents “accidentally” correct/punish good behavior.

The good behavior is trying to learn a new skill.

The correction/punishment is disapproval.

Do show the scene twice before discussing.

Script:

Chris is trying to do a flip on trapeze rings and Uncle Bill walks up and makes some critical, disapproving remarks.

Chris: *“Uncle Bill, I’m going to do a flip. Watch me. (Does not succeed.) Watch me again. (Does not succeed.) That’s hard to do.”*

Uncle Bill: *“The reason you aren’t any good is that your muscles aren’t built up. When I was your age, I could do 10 flips in a row.”*

Chris: (Appears discouraged and doesn’t say anything.)

Questions, Answers, And Comments:

Q: Which rule or error did Uncle Bill follow?

A: Error #2 Parents “accidentally” correct/punish good behavior.

Caution: Participants might mention two errors, correcting/punishing good behavior and failing to reward good behavior. Then ask, “Which is the more serious error?”

Q: What is the good behavior of the boy?

A: Trying to learn a new skill and trying to socialize with Uncle Bill.

Q: Which of the five mild correction/punishments did Uncle Bill use?

A: Disapproval and unfavorable comparison with himself (scolding and disapproval).

Q: Is the child more or less likely to try to learn to do a flip in the future?

A: Less likely. He feels discouraged.

Q: What should Uncle Bill have done or said?

A: Make some encouraging remarks.

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Point To Make:

- (1) Criticism and disapproval of good behavior causes children to give up when they are trying to learn a new skill. Also, it hurts their self esteem. Social rewards and encouragement are important in starting up desirable behavior.
- (2) When you realize that you have made a parenting mistake consider apologizing to your child. *“You can undo your mistakes!”*

Technical Comments:

Scene demonstrates correction/punishment of desirable, appropriate behavior. The correction/punishment is scolding, disapproval, and critical comments.

Trivia:

In real life, “Uncle Bill” is a university psychology professor who teaches learning theory and developmental psychology!