

Book Review

A Misbehaving Child is a Discouraged Child: A Review of *Children: The Challenge*

by Rudolf Dreikurs and Vicki Soltz

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I'm reviewing an oldie but goodie today: *Children: The Challenge* by Rudolf Dreikurs and Vicki Soltz. I honestly believe there is not a parent educator in the country who hasn't been influenced by this book. Whether they know it or not, the foundation for what has become parent education in the United States and abroad was founded upon the works of Alfred Adler and his predecessor Rudolf Dreikurs. *Children: The Challenge* was the seminal book to put psychological concepts into practice for parents.

My favorite quote from this book, and one I use often in my own work as a family life coach, is "a misbehaving child is a discouraged child" (p. 36). This idea is essentially the framework for this book; we all will have improved relationships once we understand that misbehavior stems from unmet needs. Have you ever heard of positive discipline? It started with Adlerian theory, and while it is called something different, you will find it here. While we tend to live in a culture that focuses more on correcting misbehaviors with a variety of strategies, Dreikurs' strength-based approaches to behavioral changes were monumental. Perhaps he was before his time, but in this book, Dreikurs showcased how the path to desired behaviors is through building healthy, happy relationships with our loved ones.

The concepts sprinkled throughout this book focus on developing positive and supportive approaches to helping children grow. The book begins with helping parents understand child development, and it quickly moves into the importance of encouragement. In fact, Dreikurs states, "Encouragement is more important than any other aspect of child-raising. It is so important that the lack of it can be considered the basic cause for misbehavior." Based on this premise, *Children: The Challenge* outlines strategies that have helped parents for half a century and has spawned a whole industry of parenting education and parenting literature.

The key parenting concepts outlined in this book include encouragement, the goals of misbehavior (attention, power, revenge, and inadequacy), respect, kind and firm parenting, the family council, and effective communication. The book is written for parents, yet the concepts covered are appropriate (perhaps essential) for anyone working in the parenting or family life

arena. This is the one parenting book I require for my family life students, and one I wholeheartedly recommend it be a staple on your shelf.

References

Dreikurs, R., and V. Soltz. 1964. *Children: The Challenge*. New York: Hawthorne Books.