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Parenting Made Easy System

**NAVIGATING THE CHOPPY WATERS OF
THE TEENAGE YEARS**

**DAY 16: THE GOALS BEHIND
CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR**

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In a nutshell – Kids are great experts in hooking you in to their agenda, and their behaviour is the BAIT or HOOK that reels you in! So today we will look at some of the real goals behind challenging behaviour ...

Welcome back!

Kids are great experts in hooking you in to their agenda – their behaviour is the BAIT or HOOK that reels you in! One of your roles as a parent is to see beyond the behaviour, and to identify what your teenager is really “fishing for”. Crack this, and you can respond to their challenging behaviour far more effectively.

Try and spot the goals behind the challenging behaviour as it helps you feel back in control, calm and strong:

There’s **POWER AND CONTROL** - to find out who’s the strongest.

REVENGE -to get “back at you” for something or for some reason.

SEEKING ATTENTION - to keep you busy with them and to get your attention, as any attention is better than none.

PITY - so you “rescue” them.

APPROVAL - which is typical of teenagers and kids of any age.

EXCITEMENT AND THRILL - things like taking drugs, going to wild parties and joyriding.

So on the next page we will look at some examples of the “hooks” I’ve come across ...

HOOK: MAKING HURTFUL REMARKS

Sophie often mutters under her breath that her mum is a 'silly cow'. Her mum feels hurt and threatens "Don't you talk to me like that or you're grounded!".

What do you think Sophie's hidden goal might be?

For some reason Sophie wants to be hurtful. Maybe her mum is too bossy and controlling and Sophie is trying to get revenge and her own back?

- How else could her mum react?
- What would you do differently?
- What could she do instead of fighting back and threatening?
- What could she do to work on the relationship between herself and Sophie?
- Does she need to change her style of parenting?
- Is there something Sophie needs to talk about, e.g. her feelings about her dad having left home?

HOOK: REFUSING TO CO-OPERATE

Jack, aged 14, refuses point-blank when he's asked to help with chores in the home. If he's forced to do a job, he messes about or does it badly. His parents feel very angry. There are lots of arguments in the home.

- What might Jack's hidden goal be?
- Does this sound like an issue of power and control?
- Is Jack just trying to exert his independence?
- What other emotion could it be about - feeling over-controlled?
- How else could his parents have reacted?
- What would you do differently?

How about choosing not to try to win the power struggles and negotiate instead a win-win solution through brainstorming and discussing ideas together? Should Jack be expected to help in the home but given a choice of which job or when he does it?

HOOK: SQUABBLING AND BICKERING WITH SIBLINGS

Tom deliberately winds up and irritates his younger brother and sister while his mum is within hearing distance. Mum tries to sort it out but the behaviour just keeps happening. Eventually she loses the plot and gives him a good telling off and ends up feeling guilty afterwards as she goes too far.

- What might Tom's hidden goal be?
- Does this sound as if it's about attention seeking and keeping Mum busy with him?
- Does he enjoy making her mad?
- How else could his Mum have reacted?
- What would you do differently?

Perhaps she could try using her **One Point**, and giving him the positive attention he clearly would like on a one to one basis regularly? If she doesn't rise to the bait will he get bored and do something else? If she spent some quality time chatting, laughing and listening to him properly do you think the behaviour would improve?

HOOK: ACTING HELPLESS

Whenever Holly has homework to do she keeps sighing, getting up from her chair, asking questions and saying she can't do it. Her Mum's partner always takes pity on her and does it for her more or less, as he is keen for her to do well at school and get along with him.

- What might Holly's hidden goal be?
- Does this sound as if she has him round her little finger?
- Is she lazy, insecure or genuinely unable to do the work?
- Does she enjoy the attention?
- How else could her Mum's partner have reacted?
- What would you do differently?

Perhaps he could try talking to her about her schoolwork, show her ways to structure her time or her work and then let her get on with it herself, yet still take an interest in it after she has finished? How else could he encourage her to become more independent - talk to her teacher, get her to ask more questions at school? How else could he show an interest in her - through doing a sport together or going for a walk where they could talk?

Now it's your turn!

Just for this week start to notice the “hooks or bait” that reel you in and make a note of the things your kids do to hook you in to their agenda. Look at the underlying reason to the behaviour – if you can identify the underlying motive then you can get back into the driving seat of the relationship and look at new ways to handle it all. So make a note of:

1. What did my teenager do? (e.g. kept on irritating younger sister etc)
2. How did you respond? (e.g. got annoyed and told him off)
3. What might the GOAL of the behaviour be? (e.g. attention seeking)
4. How else could you respond?

Conflict is perfectly normal in family life and it happens – boundaries, rules, mistakes will all be broken and made – it's all about give and take and talking things through.

A Quick Recap

- Teenagers are experts in hooking you in to their agenda.
- You need to identify the underlying motive behind their behaviour.
- Understanding this will reduce the occasions when you overreact, and will improve your relationship with your child.
- There are a number of “real” reasons behind poor behaviour, including seeking attention, approval or revenge.

Next time ...

We look at how parents become experts at owning their children's problems, and what you can do about it ...

See you then!



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As seen in:



THE  TIMES



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RADIO

Daily  **Mail**

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The Daily Telegraph

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