SETTING LIMITS WITH YOUR STRONG-WILLED CHILD

ELIMINATING CONFLICT BY ESTABLISHING CLEAR, FIRM, AND RESPECTFUL BOUNDARIES

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Table 1

Your Child's Temperament Profile

Temperament Characteristic	Easy to Manage →		Difficult to Manage
Negative Persistence	Low	Moderate	High
Intensity	Low	Moderate	High
Regularity	Regular	Variable	Irregular
Distractibility	Low	Moderate	High
Energy/ Activity Level	Low	Moderate	High
Sensitivity	Mild	Moderate	Extreme
Adaptability	Low	Moderate	High
Reactivity	Low	Moderate	High
Mood	Mild	Moderate	Extreme

Figure 3.1

Diagram of a Punitive Interaction

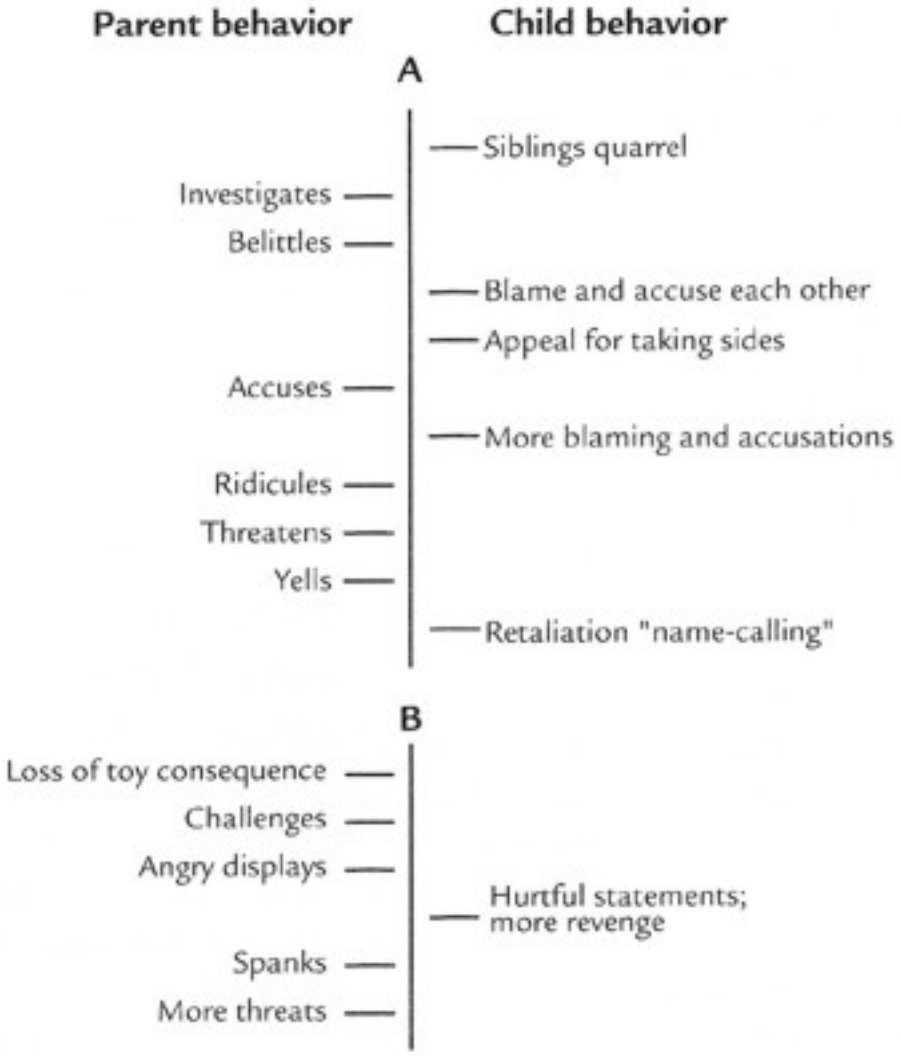

Table 2

The Autocratic or Punitive Approach

Parents' beliefs	If it doesn't hurt, children won't learn. Children won't respect my rules unless they fear my methods. It's my job to control my children. It's my job to solve my children's problems.
Power and control	All for parents.
Problem-solving process	Problem solving by force. Adversarial. Win-lose (parents win). Parents do all the problem solving and make all the decisions. Parents direct and control the process.
What children learn	Parents are responsible for solving children's problems. Hurtful methods of communication and problem solving.
How children respond	Anger, stubbornness, revenge, rebellion, withdrawal, fearful submission.

Figure 3.2

Diagram of a Permissive Interaction

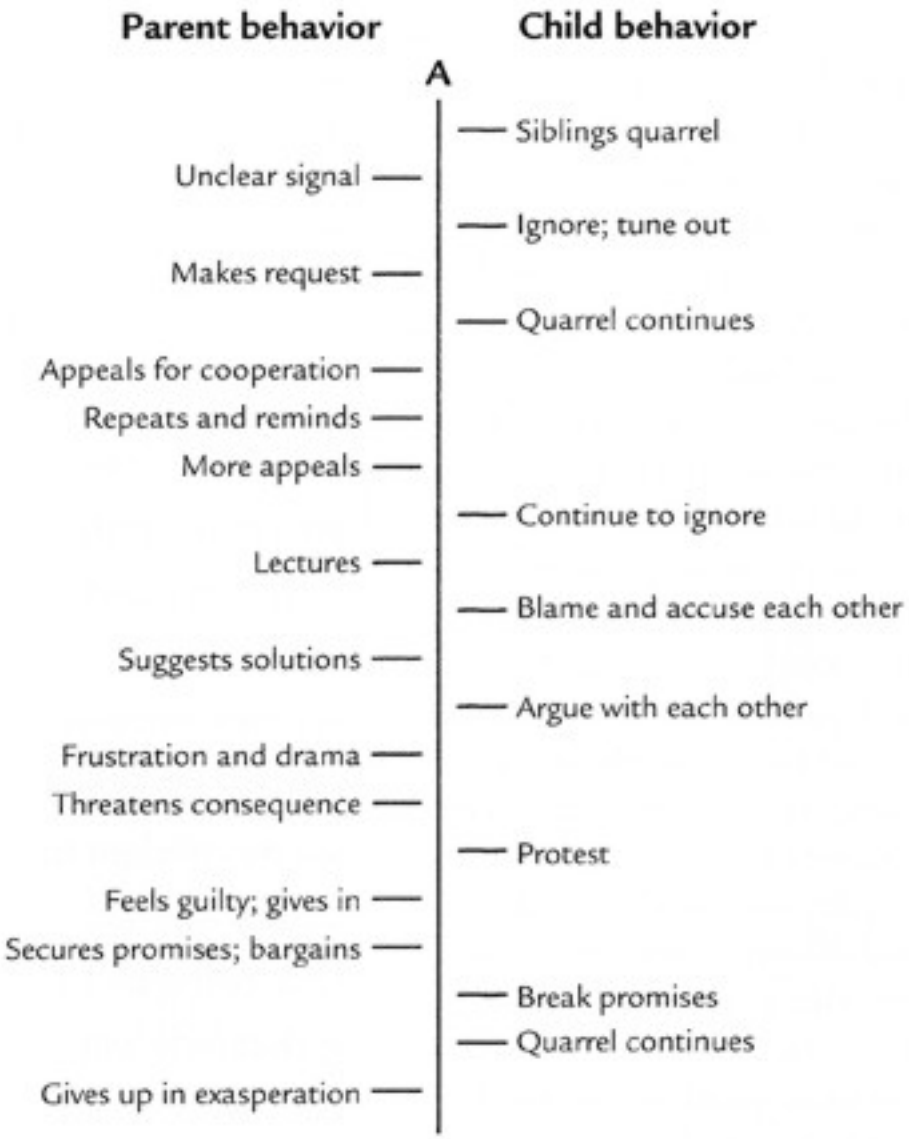

Table 3

The Permissive Approach

Parents' beliefs	Children will cooperate when they understand that cooperation is the right thing to do.
Power and control	All for children.
Problem-solving process	Problem solving by persuasion. Win-lose (children win). Parents do most of the problem solving.
What children learn	Rules are for others, not me. I do as I wish. Parents serve children. Parents are responsible for solving children's problems. Dependency, disrespect, self-centeredness.
How children respond	Limit testing. Challenge and defy rules and authority. Ignore and tune out words. Wear parents down with words.

Figure 3.3

Diagram of a Mixed Interaction

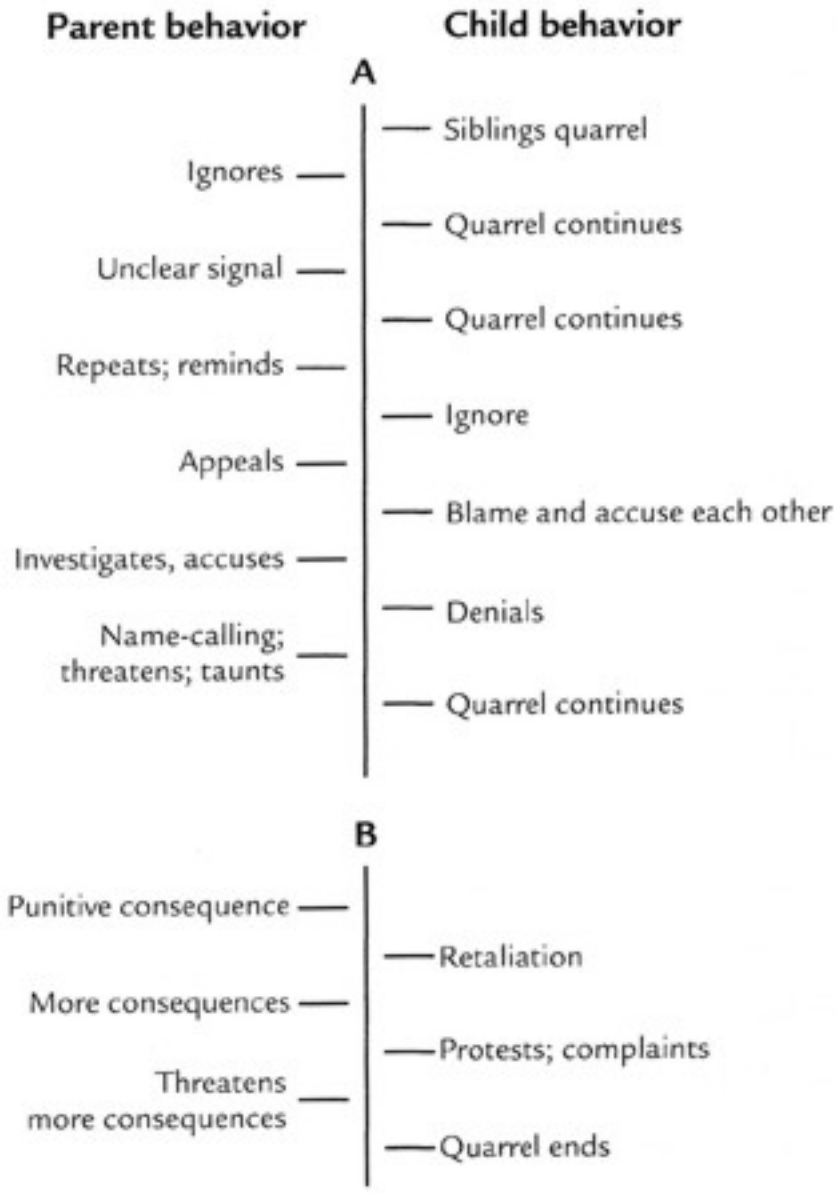

Table 4

The Democratic Approach

Parents' beliefs	Children are capable of solving problems on their own. Children should be given choices and allowed to learn from their choices. Encouragement is an effective way to motivate cooperation.
Power and control	Children are given only as much power and control as they can handle responsibly.
Problem-solving process	Cooperative. Win-win. Based on mutual respect. Children are active participants in the problem-solving process.
What children learn	Responsibility. Cooperation. Independence. Respect for rules and authority. Self-control.
How children respond	More cooperation. Less limit testing. Resolve problems on their own. Regard parents' words seriously.

Figure 3.4

Diagram of a Democratic Interaction

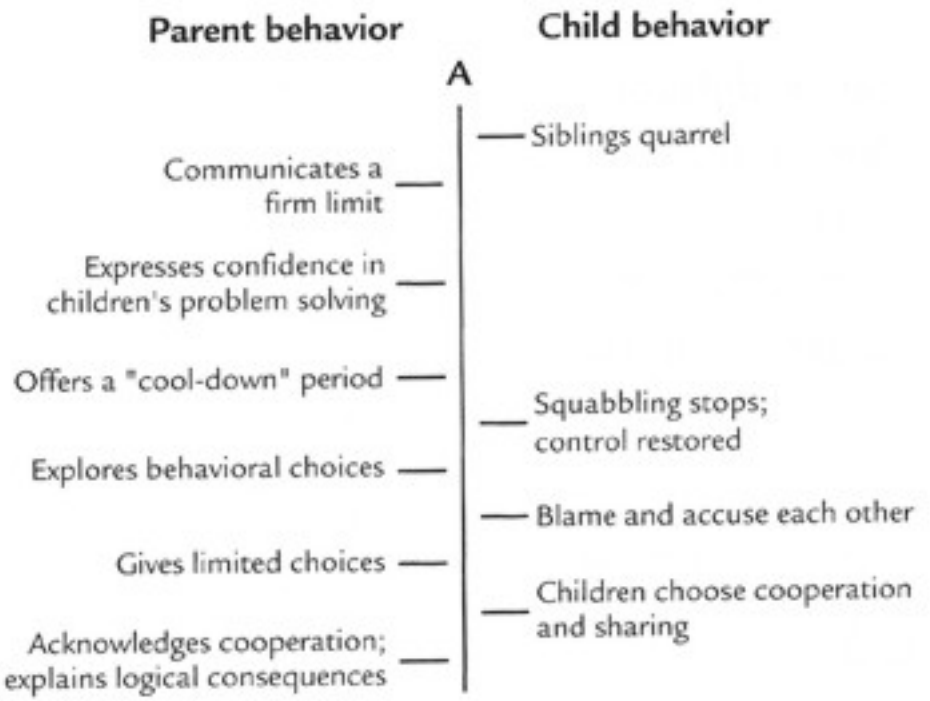

Table 5

Comparison of Firm and Soft Limits

	Firm Limits	Soft Limits
Characteristics	Stated in clear, direct, concrete behavioral terms.	Stated in unclear terms or as "mixed messages."
	Words supported by actions.	Actions do not support intended rule.
	Compliance expected and required.	Compliance optional, not required.
	Provide information needed to make acceptable choices and cooperate.	Do not provide information needed to make acceptable choices.
	Provide accountability.	Lack of accountability.
Predictable outcomes	Cooperation.	Resistance.
	Decreased limit testing.	Increased limit testing.
	Clear understanding of rules and expectations.	Escalating misbehavior, power struggles.
	Regard parents' words seriously.	Ignore and tune out parents' words.
Children learn	No means no.	No means yes, sometimes, or maybe.
	I'm expected and required to follow the rules.	I'm not expected to follow rules.
	Rules apply to me like everyone else.	Rules are made for others, not me.
	I am responsible for my own behavior.	I make my own rules and do what I want.
	Adults mean what they say.	Adults don't mean what they say.
		Adults are responsible for my behavior.

Figure 5.1

Sherry's Diagram

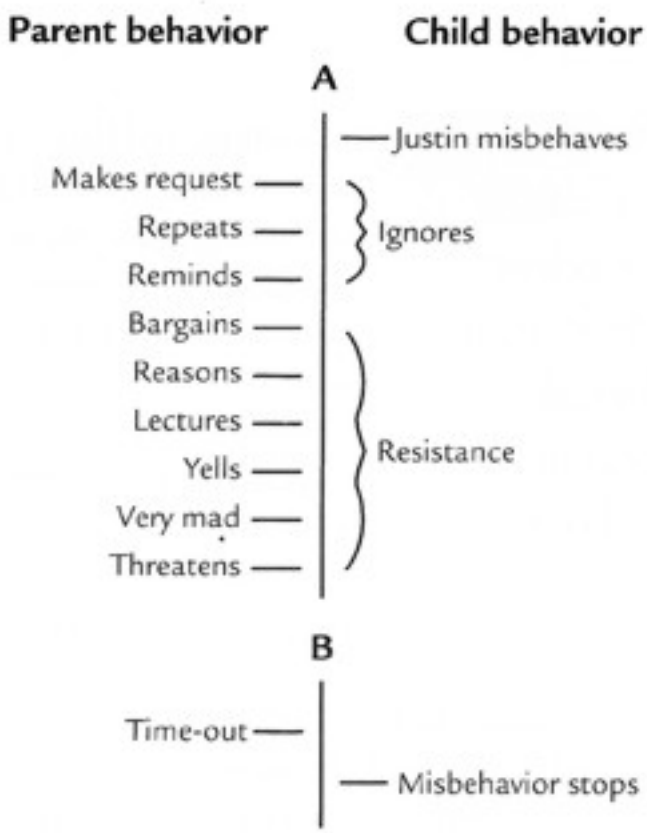

Figure 5.2

Sherry's Diagram: Verbal and Action Steps

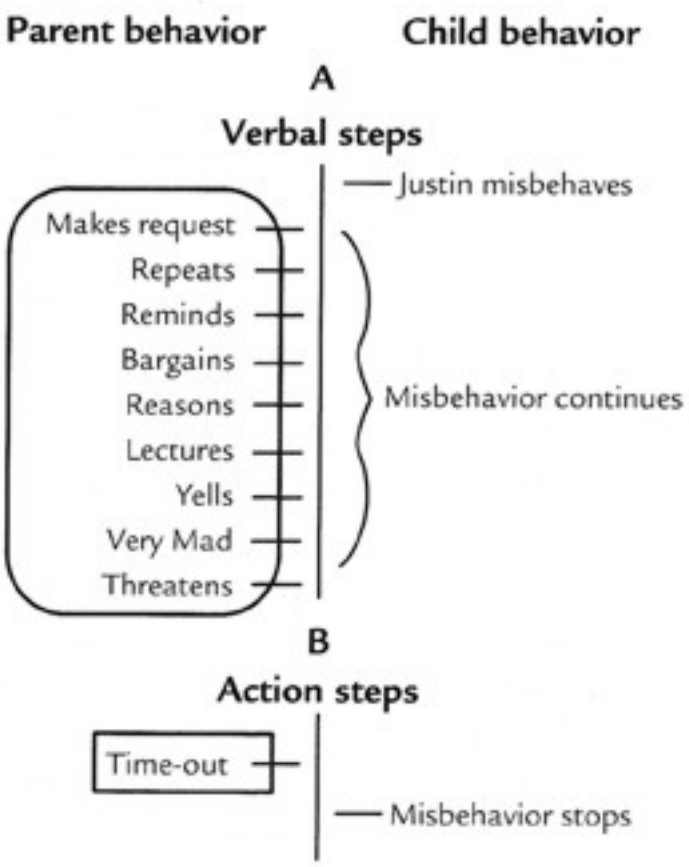

Figure 5.3

Mike's Diagram

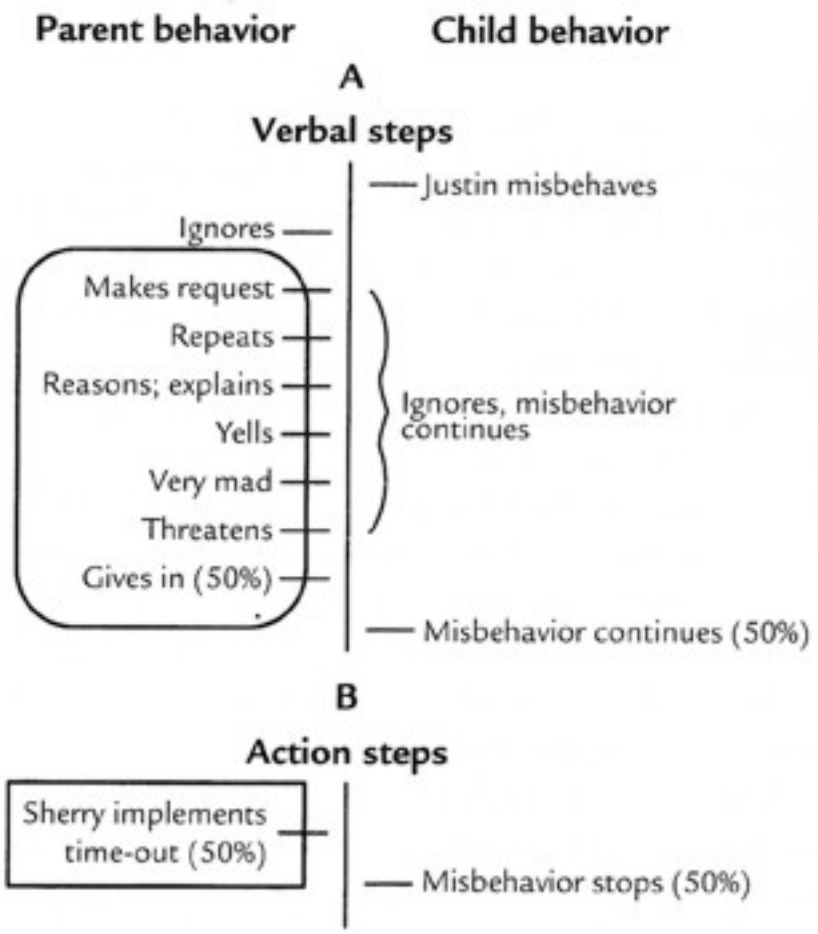

Figure 5.4

Mike and Sherry's New Diagram

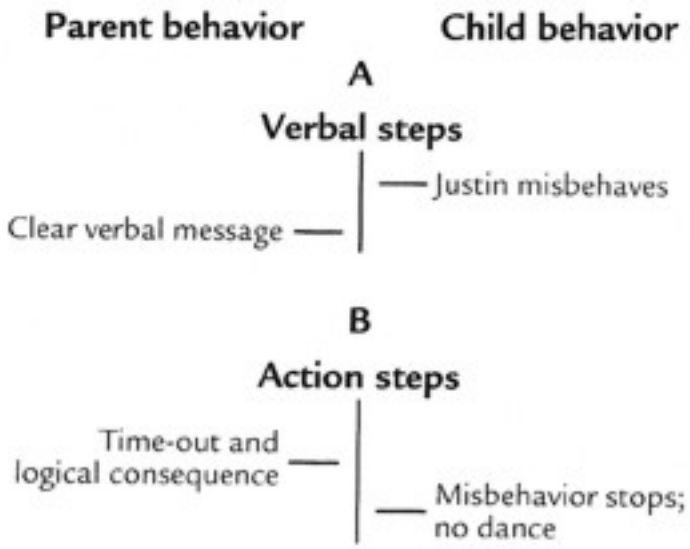

Figure 5.5

Rick's Diagram

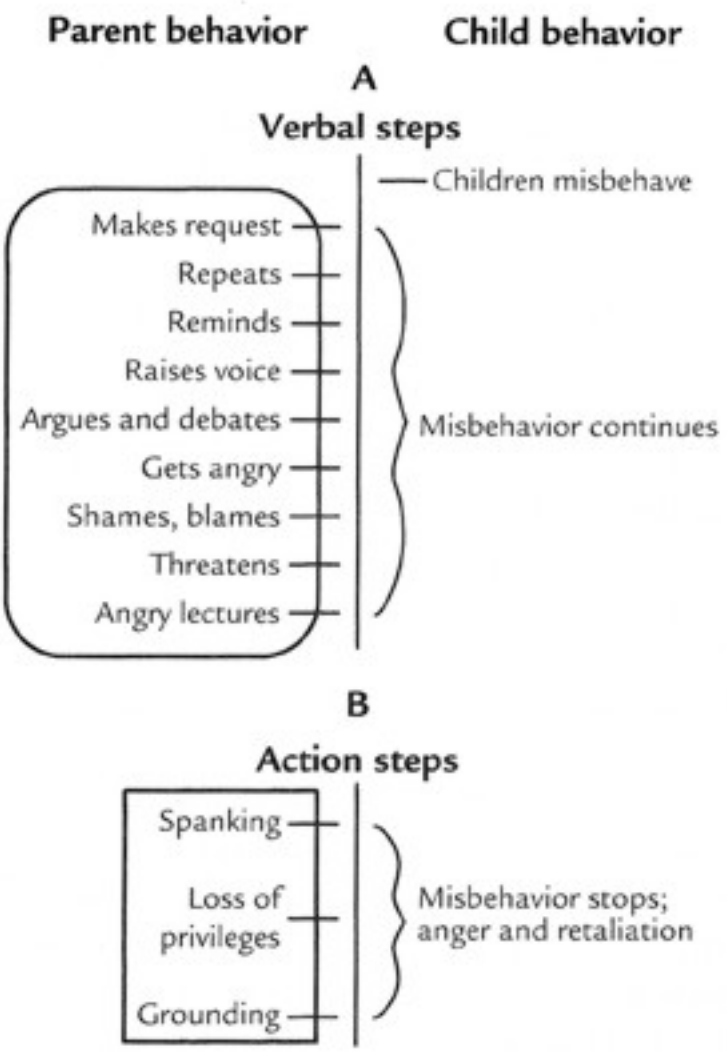

Figure 5.6

Linda's Diagram

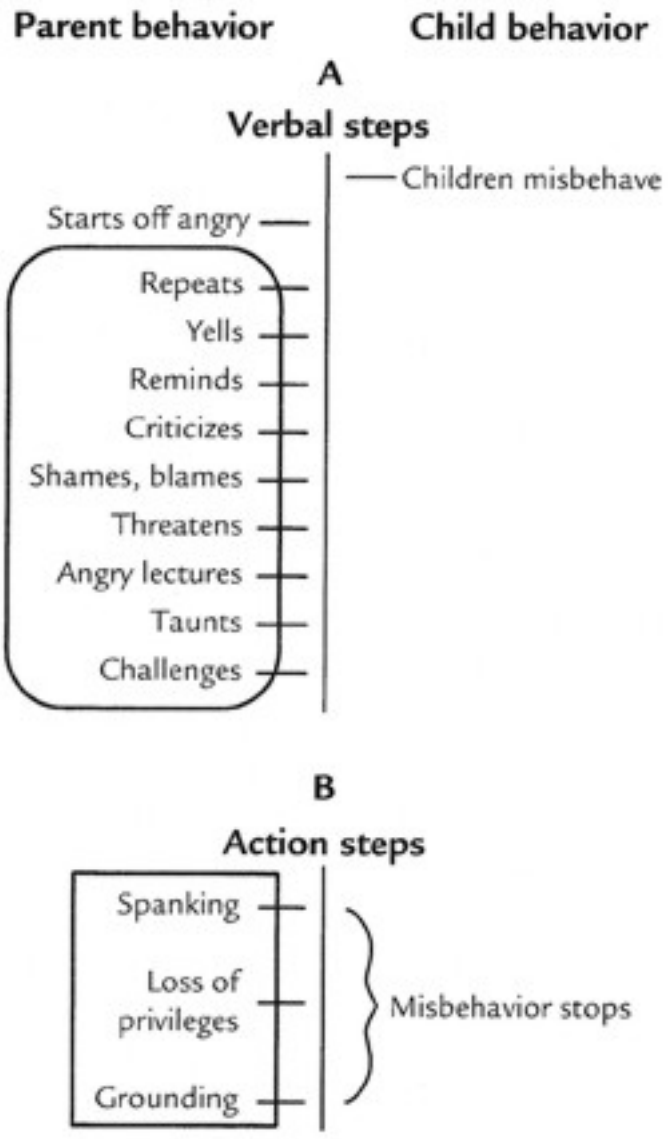

Figure 5.7

Rick and Linda's New Diagram

Figure 5.8

Connie's Diagram

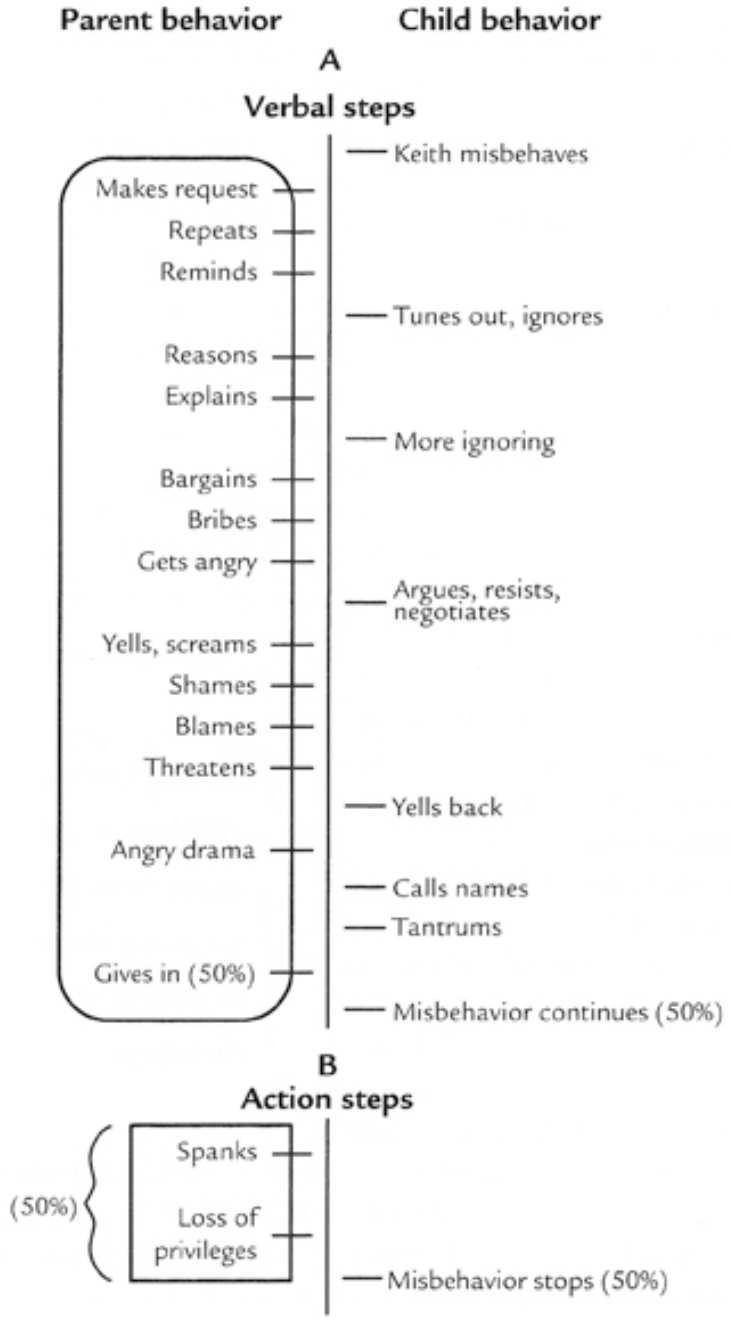

Figure 5.9

Connie's New Diagram

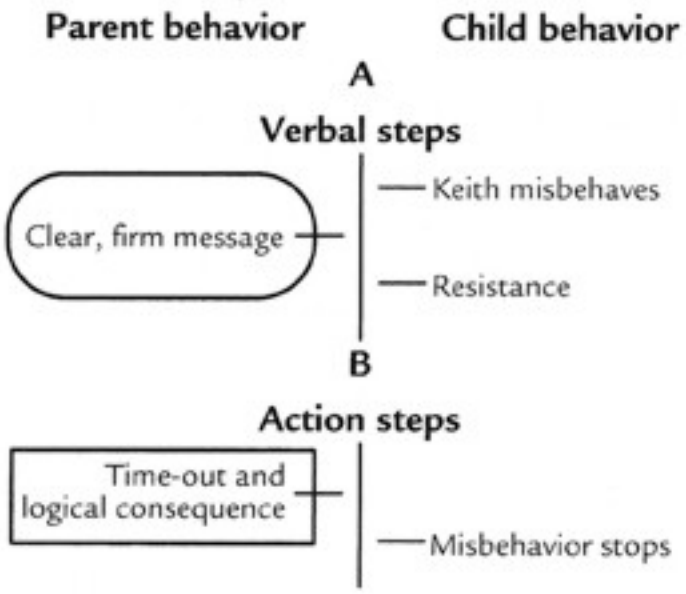

Table 6

Positive Versus Negative Approaches to Motivation

Encouraging Messages	Discouraging Messages
Inspire cooperation	Inspire resistance, retaliation
Motivate and empower	Discourage and humiliate
Convey respect, confidence, support	Diminish, blame, reject
Create cooperative relationships	Create adversarial relationships
Meet needs for belonging, competence, self-worth	Perceived as personal attack
Focus on choices and behavior	Focus on child's worth and capabilities

Appendix Table 1

Getting Started with Two-Year-Olds

Week 1	
Clear verbal messages	Chapter 6
Encouraging messages	Chapter 9
Role-modeling	Chapter 10
Logical consequences	Chapter 8
Week 3 or 4	
Add "try it again"	Chapter 10
Week 6 or 7	
Add limited choices	Chapter 7

Appendix Table 2

Getting Started with Three- to Seven-Year-Olds

Week 1	
Clear verbal messages	Chapter 6
Check-in, cutoff, cool-down (select methods needed)	Chapter 7
Encouraging messages	Chapter 9
Logical consequences, time-out	Chapter 8
Week 3 or 4	
Add "try it again"	Chapter 10
Using timers	Chapter 7
Week 6 or 8	
Add natural consequences	Chapter 8
Add limited choices	Chapter 7
Week 10 or 12	
Add role-modeling	Chapter 10
Add exploring choices	Chapter 10

Appendix Table 3.

Getting Started with Eight- to Twelve-Year-Olds

Week 1	
Clear verbal messages	Chapter 6
Check-in, cutoff, cool-down (select methods needed)	Chapter 7
Using timers	Chapter 7
Encouraging messages	Chapter 9
Logical consequences	Chapter 8
Time-out procedure	Chapter 8
Week 4 or 5	
Add role-modeling	Chapter 10
Add "try it again"	Chapter 10
Week 6 or 8	
Add limited choices	Chapter 7
Week 10 or 12	
Add exploring choices	Chapter 10
Add natural consequences	Chapter 8