

Parents

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my **opinion**

When kids act like little devils, the reason may be simpler than you think.

THE PSYCHOLOGY TRAP

By Jacob Azerrad, Ph.D.

IN my work as a child psychologist, I meet a lot of parents whose children's misbehavior is driving them crazy. They complain that their kids are whiny, selfish, arrogant, rude, and defiant. They tell me stories of preschoolers who have horrible screaming tantrums; who kick, bite and scratch; who race through the house, cursing at their parents and knocking over furniture.

Quite often, I hear explanations from parents about why a child behaves as badly as he does: "I think it's because he has an attention-deficit problem," one mother

recently told me. "She must have oppositional-defiant disorder," another parent explained. I've met with mothers and fathers who've diagnosed their children as having explosive personality problems, difficult-child syndrome, hyperactivity, and more.

Yet when I spend time with these kids—and their parents—I often don't discover any pathology underlying the behavior. In other words, there is no psychiatric problem making the child behave this way.

How do I know this? Because I have seen many children's behavior improve dramatically without drugs or

