

Can You Call a 9-Year-Old a Psychopath?

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The New York Times:

One day last summer, Anne and her husband, Miguel, took their 9-year-old son, Michael, to a Florida elementary school for the first day of what the family chose to call “summer camp.” For years, Anne and Miguel have struggled to understand their eldest son, an elegant boy with high-planed cheeks, wide eyes and curly light brown hair, whose periodic rages alternate with moments of chilly detachment. Michael’s eight-week program was, in reality, a highly structured psychological study — less summer camp than camp of last resort.

Michael’s problems started, according to his mother, around age 3, shortly after his brother Allan was born. At the time, she said, Michael was mostly just acting “like a brat,” but his behavior soon escalated to throwing tantrums during which he would scream and shriek inconsolably. These weren’t ordinary toddler’s fits. “It wasn’t, ‘I’m tired’ or ‘I’m frustrated’ — the normal things kids do,” Anne remembered. “His behavior was really out there. And it would happen for hours and hours each day, no matter what we did.” For several years, Michael screamed every time his parents told him to put on his shoes or perform other ordinary tasks, like retrieving one of his toys from the living room. “Going somewhere, staying somewhere — anything would set him off,” Miguel said. These furies lasted well beyond toddlerhood. At 8, Michael would still fly into a rage when Anne or Miguel tried to get him ready for school, punching the wall and kicking holes in the door. Left unwatched, he would cut up his trousers with scissors or methodically pull his hair out. He would also vent his anger by slamming the toilet seat down again and again until it broke.

Read the whole story: [The New York Times](#)