

Factsheet

Managing challenging behaviour



This factsheet is to support parents and carers to understand what is meant by the term “challenging behaviour”. We will look at why challenging behaviour occurs and what we (as parents and carers) can do to help.

Frequently asked questions

1. What is behaviour?
2. Does behaviour have a purpose?
3. How can I understand my child’s challenging behaviour?
4. How can I get help?

The ADHD Foundation works in partnership with individuals, families, doctors, teachers and other agencies to improve emotional wellbeing, educational attainment, behaviour and life chances through better understanding and self management of ADHD, ASD and related learning difficulties.

For more information please contact us: by phone: 0151 237 2661 by email: info@adhdfoundation.org.uk

1. What is behaviour?

“The way in which one acts or conducts themselves, especially towards others”
“The way in which an animal or person behaves in response to a particular situation or stimulus” (Oxford English Dictionary)

Behaviour is our reaction to our environment.

We act out our behaviour to achieve a conscious or unconscious goal.

Behaviour becomes challenging when it causes harm to the person displaying the behaviour or to those around them or; if it is having an impact on their ability to function and to fulfil day to day tasks.

Challenging behaviour can be categorised into 3 subgroups:

1. Self injurious (hurting themselves) – biting, scratching, head banging, pulling at hair etc.
2. Aggressive - Hurting others e.g, biting, hitting, kicking, spitting etc.
3. Non-person directed -Damage to property, stealing, inappropriate sexualised behaviour, withdrawal, running away, socially inappropriate behaviour etc.

What's going on “under the surface?”



2. Does behaviour have a purpose?

Children's emotions are driven by the need to feel protected and feel free from pain.

Some children display challenging behaviour because of an emotional need. They may be finding it difficult to express their emotions appropriately.

Others express challenging behaviours to communicate something. For some children they cannot always find the words they need to communicate their wishes. This leads to a child “acting out” as a way of communicating a need.

3. How can I understand my child's behaviour?

Parents and carers can learn to understand and interpret children's challenging behaviour.

When a child is displaying challenging behaviour it's important to stay calm and think about why the behaviour is taking place.

It's important to ask some questions:

Where is the behaviour taking place?

Who is the child with at the time?

Is the behaviour new?

Is the behaviour to avoid doing something?

Is this behaviour for attention or for a need to be met?

Is the child in pain or unwell?

Is there a trigger for the behaviour?

Has anything changed in the environment?



Parent's and carers can keep behaviour records to see if there are any patterns. ABC charts help us to record a child's behavioural expressions. The chart asks us to note down the date, what happened before the behaviour took place (Antecedent), what the behaviour was (Behaviour) and what happened as a result of the behaviour (consequence). Below is an example of an ABC chart:

Date	Antecedent	Behaviour	Consequence

4. How can I get help?



If behaviour is becoming too difficult to cope with then you can ask your GP to make a referral to a specialist with knowledge of challenging behaviour.

If your child is diagnosed or there are concerns that your child may have ADHD then you can contact the ADHD Foundation for additional support. Please visit our website to view the range of services available. You can also find us on Twitter and Facebook.

www.adhdfoundation.org.uk