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?
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.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
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<tr>
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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