

Understanding your Child's Behaviour



Mental Health Support Team



Topics for Today

Understanding children's
behaviour

Strategies for managing
behaviour

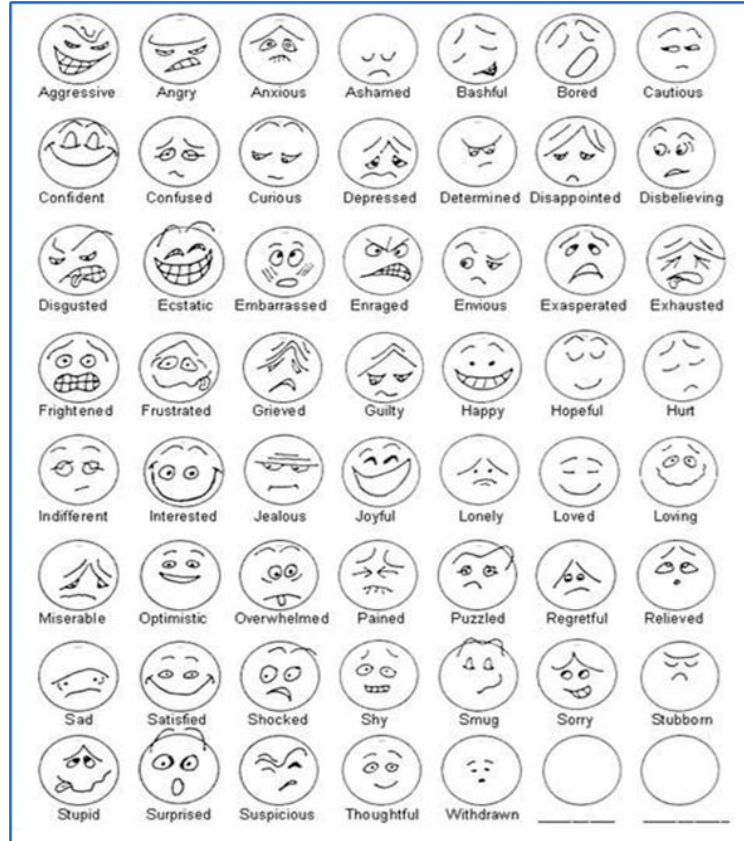
Questions and feedback



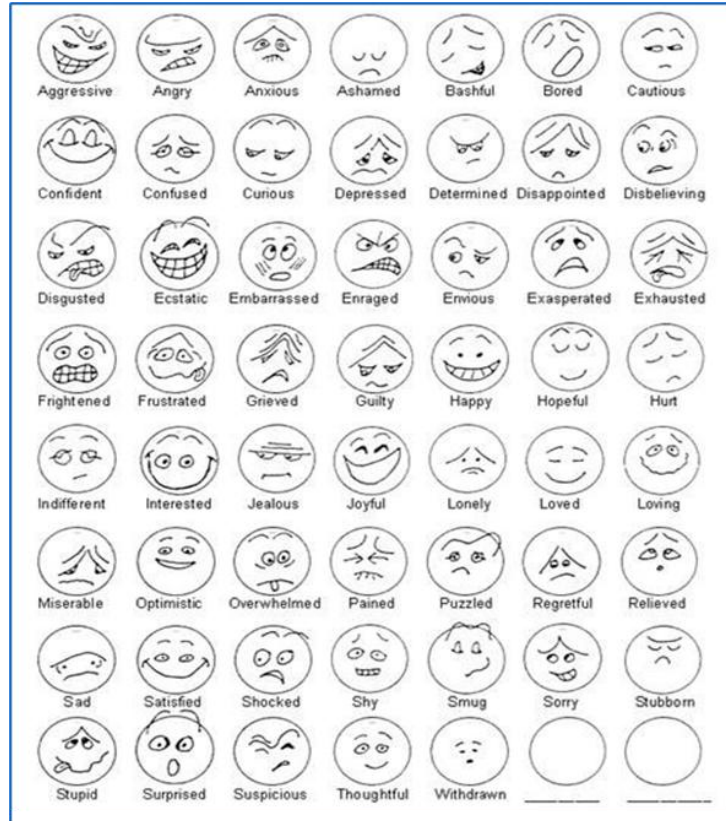
How are you feeling?



Today, I Have Felt...



Today, My Child May Have Felt...



Communicating Through Behaviour



How do children express their feelings?

- Most young children haven't yet learnt the words to be able to talk about their feelings. Instead they express their feelings in other ways such as:
 - Play
 - Facial expressions
 - Body language
 - Behaviour
- From birth, children are learning how to recognise, express and manage their emotions. They do this through interactions with caregivers.
- Therefore, parents have a really important role in helping their children understand their feelings and behaviours, and know how to manage feelings in a constructive way.

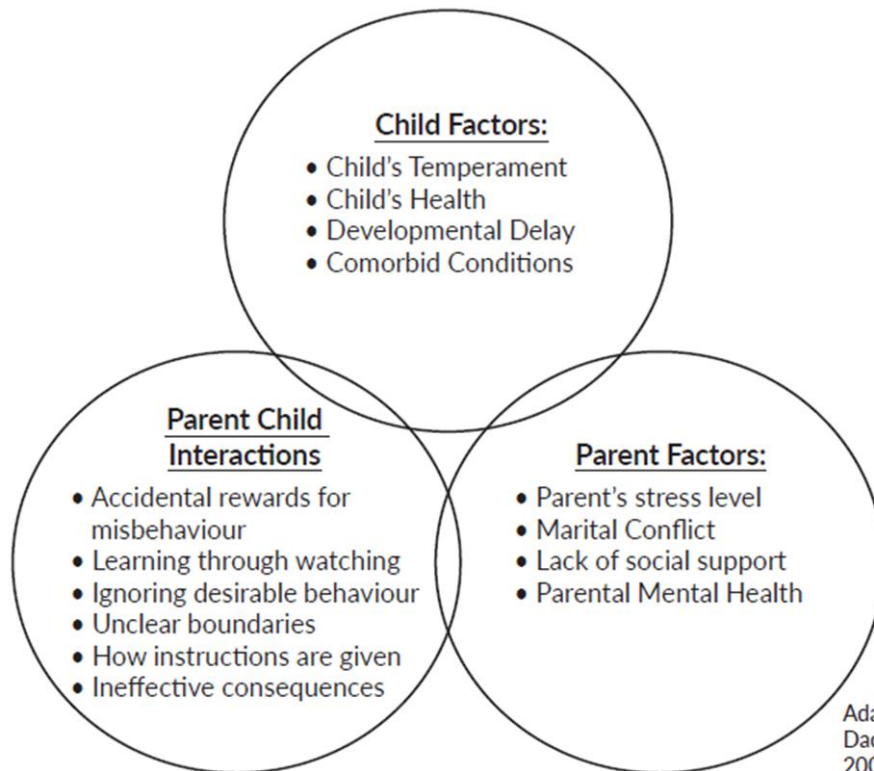


Why do we need to understand children's behaviour?

- Behaviours are our actions and responses to feelings, emotions, and needs.
- All behaviour has meaning and is closely connected to how we feel and what we think.
- Think of behaviour as a child's way of communicating. If you understand the feelings, the behaviour may feel more manageable.



Factors Impacting on Children's Behaviour



Adapted from
Dadd & Hawes,
2006



Attention vs Attachment Seeking

- Children do things that get them noticed and receive attention AND closeness to their care giver
- If they don't get attention for positive behaviours, then they will shift to seeking attention/connection via unwanted behaviours instead

	"OK" CHILD BEHAVIOUR	"NOT OK" CHILD BEHAVIOUR
CARER ATTENTION	PRAISE Positive behaviour Increases	Negative behaviour Increases
NO CARER ATTENTION	Positive behaviour Decreases	IGNORE Negative behaviour Decreases



What is behaviour that challenges?

We call it “challenging” because, as adults, we don’t always know how to respond.

These behaviours can look like...

Shouting	Swearing	Arguing
Oppositional	Crying	Hitting
Hurting Others	Hurting Themselves	Throwing Objects

These behaviours happen because your child is trying to communicate...

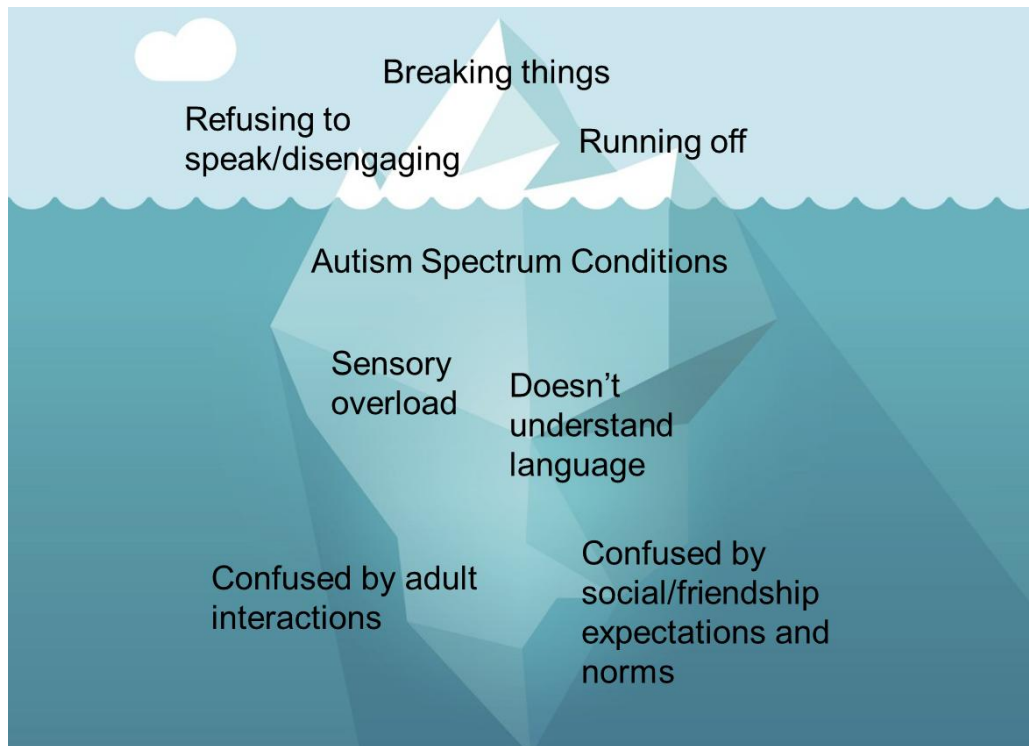
- A need (e.g., hungry, tired)
- A strong feeling (e.g., frustration, fear, stress, embarrassment, anger, jealousy, sadness, worry)

These can result from anything – a busy day, falling out with a friend



Tuning into your child

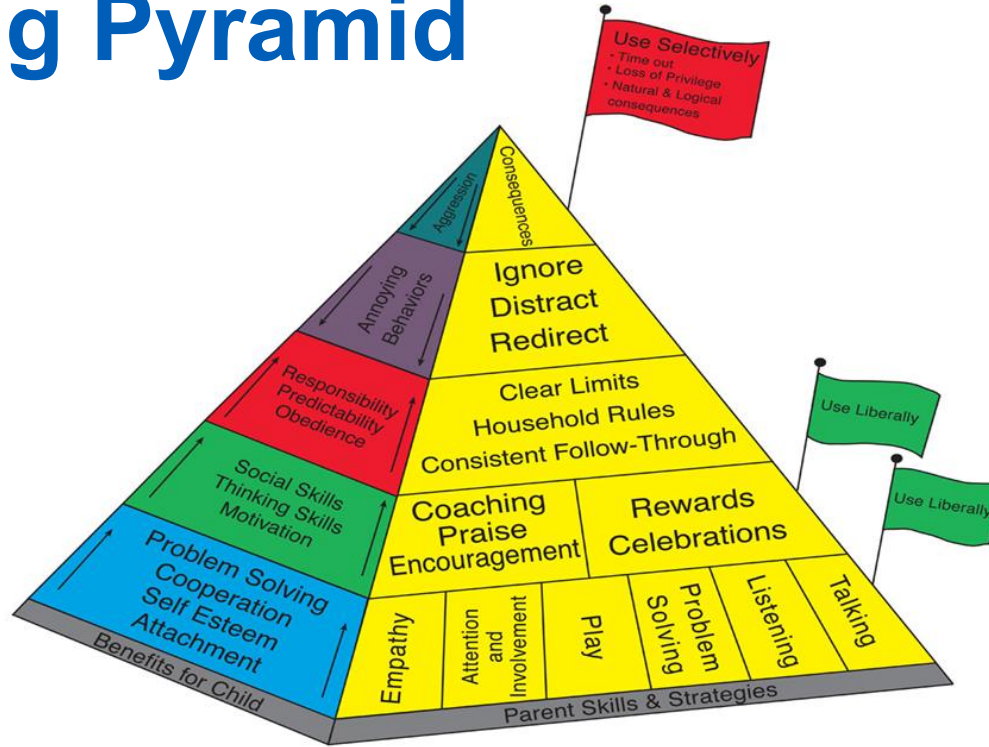
What can you see?



What's beneath the surface?



Parenting Pyramid



Parenting Pyramid®



Importance of Play Between Parent and Child

Undivided positive attention

Helps to build and maintain a positive relationship

Model appropriate ways to play – turn-taking, sharing

Build empathy

Encourage children's imagination

Helps them build problem solving skills

Development of language and communication skills



Special Time

Schedule 10 minutes of child-led play/activities each day

AVOID:

- Taking charge
- Changing activity
- Giving commands
- Asking questions
- Teaching
- Criticising
- Competing

DO:

- Undivided attention
- Follow child's lead
- Show interest and 'amazement'
- Descriptive commenting



Listening

The goal is to be alongside your child, not to rescue them from their feelings. It is important for parents to be able to show that they can bear their child's feelings.

Tips for reflective listening:

- Give your child your full attention
- Use a warm tone of voice
- Repeat back what your young person has said or feels
- Leave space for them to speak – don't ask lots of questions or try to control the pace of what they are telling you
- When you do ask questions, try to use open questions - be curious
- Listen to the feelings, not just the problem
- Try not to judge or problem-solve
- Walk or drive and talk (if face to face feels too intense)



Talking

Parents/carers help their children develop their emotion communication and regulation through labelling emotions:

- “I can see through your stomping that you feel angry that I have said no”
- “I wonder if you might feel angry”
- “That sounds really disappointing for you”
- “It sounds like you’re feeling really frustrated that your teacher told you off”
- “Wow! You are so excited about going to that party”
- “I know it’s scary to stay away from home”
- “My, you seem angry!”



Importance of Praise

- Builds child's self-esteem
- Let's them know that they're loved & appreciated
- Teaches valued/wanted behaviours
- Encourages positive behaviour



Giving Effective Praise

- Labelled praise
e.g. *“wow, you worked really hard on that science homework”*
- Unlabelled praise is less effective
e.g. *“Well Done!”*, *“Good boy/girl!”*



Using Reward Charts

- Reward charts can be used for a specific positive behaviour that you want to increase/see more of
- Initial reward is given straight after the behaviour or as soon as possible during that day
- Set a realistic goal which will result in a bigger reward for the end of the week



Rewards



- Be specific
- Use 1-3 agreed behaviours
- Agree what you're working towards



- Remove a sticker/pompom reward if a child exhibits a problematic behaviour

Giving Effective Instructions

- Ensure the child is listening
- Break down into steps
- Make instructions simple, clear & polite
- Don't give instructions as a question
- Give 'do' instructions
- Give child time to comply (5 seconds)
- Give specific praise if child complies



Managing Demand Avoidance

- “If **now** you do X, **then** we will do Y”
- Make instructions a game:
 - Use timers to “beat the clock” with Alex, colourful sand timers, or YouTube
 - Have children put all their toys away in the style of different animals (e.g., as a lion or a mouse)



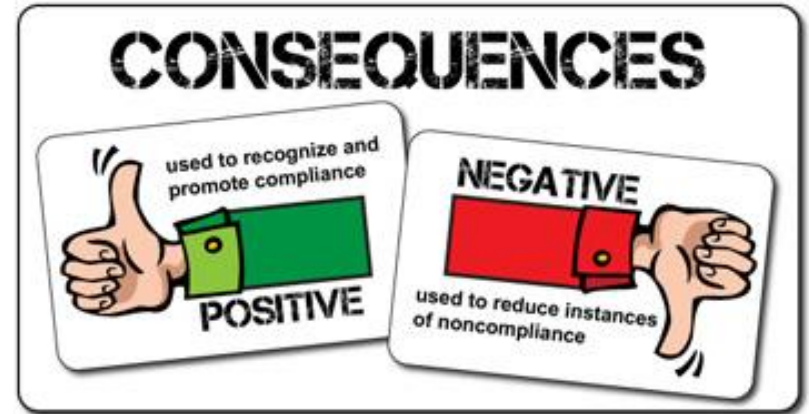
Limit Setting: The Two Hands of Parenting

- Connection and Correction (Dan Hughes)
- Both are essential
- Children need limits and boundaries – They help children feel safe



Consequences

- Create a sense of safety & security
- Help to maintain a consistent routine
- Children learn how to accept limits & boundaries



Natural and Logical Consequences

Natural

Children learn through their own mistakes

Stepping in a puddle =
They will be wet and muddy

Don't eat lunch at school
= They will be hungry later on

Logical

Parents apply consequences as a result of their child's behaviour

Don't eat dinner = No dessert

Don't come off computer when asked = Lose some screen time



Guidelines for Logical Consequences

- Consequences should not be severe or physical to the child
- Discuss in advance so that the child understands
- Make sure the consequence is appropriate for the behaviour
- Make sure that you can live with the consequences that you have given
- Immediate or as soon as possible
- Give warnings & choices
 - For example: “**If** you put your coat on, **then** we can go to the park. **If not**, we will stay inside.”



Selective Ignoring

- Common responses to a misbehaviour like nagging, scolding, shouting and criticising provides attention which will probably result in the behaviour continuing.
- Selective ignoring is a way to decrease your child's unwanted behaviour.
- When selectively ignoring, parents completely remove their attention from the behaviour NOT THE CHILD.
- Ignoring is incredibly difficult however it is an extremely effective form of discipline.



Advantages

- Maintains a positive relationship between you and your child.
- Providing a model of self-control and good emotional regulation.
- Avoids giving negative attention.
- Helps parents to feel calmer.
- Helps the child learn that it is better to behave appropriately to receive positive parental attention.
- Gives children the opportunity to calm down independently, thereby assisting them with their own emotional regulation.



Selective ignoring is good for behaviours like...

- Moaning
- Complaining
- Swearing
- Whining
- Minor squabbles
- Messy eating
- Silly noises
- Fiddling
- Back-chatting
- Pulling faces
- Answering back
- Being rude
- Arguing

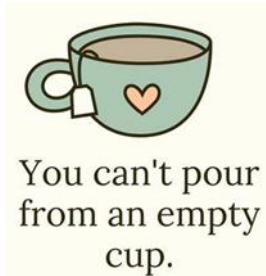


Time Out

- Time out is a consequence for either persistent and/or extreme non-compliance or dangerous and destructive behaviours
- It can be an effective strategy for reducing dangerous and destructive behaviour when used infrequently but consistently.
- A chance for both child and adult to regulate their emotions and calm down

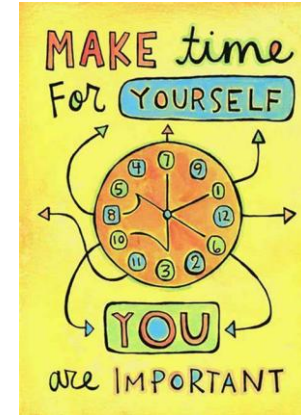


Self Care



FIT YOUR OWN OXYGEN MASK FIRST

You're no use to anyone if you're running on empty.
Caring for yourself first is often the best thing you can do, in order to help others.
It isn't selfish, or egocentric.
Just really good advice.



Questions and Feedback

