

Children's Services

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

What is challenging behaviour?

Behaviour refers to how a child conducts themselves. It is their actions, reactions and functioning in response to everyday environments and situations. Challenging behaviour is a term used to describe behaviour that interferes with a child's daily life. It may be an attempt to satisfy a need or express a want, or be an indication of their needs or interests not being met.

Why is behaviour guidance important?

1. Health and quality of life: Both for the parent and child
2. Reduce risks: Associated with behaviour, including self-injurious behaviour, such as ingestion of foreign bodies, hitting head against hard objects or accidental injury.
3. Social: Challenging behaviour can often lead to social isolation for the parent and child and later impact the child's sense of well being and transition to preschool or school.

What can be done to improve behaviour?

Social skills: Teaching with an emphasis on recognition of feelings, play skills, problem solving and self-regulation.

Functional equivalents: Teaching children skills to identify and show what they are feeling. E.g if physical aggression means leave me alone, teach the child the equivalent skill, i.e. 'go away' sign.

Simple language and "stop": Use clear, specific language when making requests, and if necessary show them what you want them to do.

Tone of voice: Use a firm but friendly tone and volume, if the request is non-negotiable. Even when a child may not understand instructions, they understand the tone of voice.

Top tip to help improve behaviour:

Choices: It's important to put boundaries in. Sometimes this means sticking to saying 'No' once said. You can say "That is not a choice. The choice is ... or, what is the choice you're making?"

References:

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/understand_child_behaviour.aspx#link47

<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/behaviour/challenging-behaviour>

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