

Supporting the Emotional Well-being and Mental Health of Our School Community

Following a number of requests from parents, this term's well-being newsletter focuses on behaviour management strategies. As pupils also approach the end of the school year, and prepare for the next, there is also a section on coping with change.

As always, if you have any worries or concerns about your child's emotional behaviour or well-being, then please let school know. There will be things we can do to help further and support you.

Understanding the connection between emotion & behaviour

A child that has difficulty regulating emotions may frequently engage in behaviours that appear impulsive and might be challenging to manage.

A misguided view is that such behaviour is a result of general 'naughtiness' or even bad parenting. However, in truth, there could be many reasons behind this challenging behaviour...

The strategy of 'Stop, Think, Do' is a good mantra for parents/carers to use.

Remember, this behaviour is trying to 'tell' us something.

You just need to find out what ...



1) Stop and think about what the behaviour might be communicating

- an unmet need or SEND
- communication difficulties
- hunger/illness/tiredness
- sensory overload
- seeking human connection
- anxiety/emotional dysregulation...

2) Respond calmly and clearly.

Children need to be aware that their behaviour has consequences; however, they require patient teaching, reminders and clear boundaries and expectations that are repeatedly explained in different ways and enforced consistently.

Try to work out a set of boundaries with the children so they understand your expectations and you can grasp theirs too.

3) Do – Managing Conflict

Respond to the underlying emotions rather than the behaviour.

When conflicts and tensions escalate, it is important to encourage time out and space for everyone so they can unwind.

Additionally, build in positive actions into their daily life such as keeping active, connecting with others, taking notice of how they are feeling and reflecting on things that have gone well that day.

Build in family time in the day so the children feel supported. Ensure they have structure through their day to minimise conflict.



How can I talk to my child about their behaviour?

Your child's behaviour is a communication about how they're feeling.

When your child is acting out, it can be useful to think of an iceberg. The difficult behaviour is the tip, but there are likely to be a range of emotions hidden under the surface.

By opening up a conversation with your child, you can find out more about how they're feeling and what's going on for them.

1. Find a suitable time and place to talk. Your child might find it easier to talk if you start the conversation while doing an activity.

2. Make it clear that the behaviour is the problem, and not them.

Let them know that it's okay to feel however they feel, whether that's sad, angry, worried or something else, and that you can work together to find new ways of managing these feelings.

Focus on listening and trying to understand things from their perspective.

3. Explain why the behaviour is not okay so they understand that what they are doing is not acceptable.

For example, you might say that while it's normal to feel angry and frustrated, it hurts other people when they hit and kick.

4. Be curious, empathetic and non-judgmental.

5. Use simple phrases such as

- 'I notice there is a lot of shouting happening'
- 'I think something might be upsetting you'
- 'I feel worried you're not happy'
- 'I need you to know you can talk to me about what's going on'.
- 'I can see that something's bothering you. You talk and I'll listen'

6. Reassure them that you love them and want to help them feel happier and enjoy things again.

Useful Websites

https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/behaviour/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMlZjJl47yJ-AIV2JBoCR3hmQMvEAAAYASAAEgl_6PD_BwE

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parent-s-a-z-mental-health-guide/challenging-behaviour/>

<https://www.children1st.org.uk/help-for-families/parentline-scotland/guidance-advice/cat/understanding-behaviour>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/leaflets/positive-parenting>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/babys-development/behaviour/dealing-with-child-behaviour-problems/>

Listening to your child

As with any emotionally charged situation, children's feelings often emerge in physical or verbal (mis) behaviour. They are trying to convey something to us and we may need to take the time to understand what they are trying to say. During this time our reactions play a key factor, here are some helpful tips when responding to outbursts.



When we want to say

I've had enough of this...

Just calm down...

Stop shouting...

They may need to hear

I'm here for you, tell me...

Take a deep breath then tell me...

Let me help you... how can I help...

Helping children cope with change

As a result of the pandemic, children have coped with a number of changes that may have needed additional support to help them express and understand their own anxieties and feelings.

These feelings of confusion may be challenging, frustrating or frightening for them to grasp. These feelings can leave children feeling overwhelmed.

As we approach the end of the academic year, pupils will be preparing for more changes in school re: meeting their new teacher and visiting their new classroom. They may also be with a different group of friends.

It is important therefore that we listen to and acknowledge their emotions towards change, giving them the time and opportunity to talk about them.