

UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS



What Is Challenging Behaviour?

All children will display behaviours that are difficult to manage at times.

Behaviour can be described as challenging when it:

- Causes harm or puts the child or others at risk.
- Interferes with the child's social relationships.
- Damages the physical environment (including materials and equipment).
- Obstructs the rights of others.
- Prevents learning.
- Is inappropriate to the child's developmental stage or age.

It may also include a child who presents as excessively shy or withdrawn.

What Does Challenging Behaviour Look Like?

Challenging behaviours include:

- Tantrums.
- Swearing.
- Running away.
- Shouting.
- Kicking/hitting/spitting/punching.
- Bullying.
- Teasing.
- Breaking toys or other equipment.
- Refusing to wait, share or take turns.
- Excluding other children.
- Extreme introversion or difficulty 'connecting' with others.
- Lack of eye contact.

Challenging vs. Age Appropriate

Many age appropriate behaviours are often confused with challenging behaviours.

Examples of age appropriate behaviour include a toddler being unable to sit still, or a 7 year old unable to contain their excitement and wait their turn.

Where Does Challenging Behaviour Come From?



Learning appropriate ways to communicate feelings or express needs is one of the many challenges children face. Children's evident behaviours, the "tip" of the iceberg can be driven by a variety of emotions that lie "underneath the surface" and are driven by their social and physical environment. These behaviours are a way of communicating how the child is feeling as they are often unable to verbalise this.

There also are a number of environmental factors that can increase the likelihood of a child presenting challenging behaviours. These can include exposure to violence, experiences of disadvantage and surrounding social conditions, and various parenting styles or family factors. Children living in abusive or complex environments often focus on staying safe rather than reaching developmental goals. They can experience delays in learning key skills such as the ability to reason, self soothe, regulate their emotions, and even feel empathy.

Perceived 'naughty' behaviour might be a sign that a child hasn't yet learnt what behaviour is appropriate in your household. They might also be experiencing feelings they don't understand or know how to express.

Children who have experienced multiple forms of trauma and adversity sometimes have difficulty with organisational tasks, managing change, and negotiating relationships.

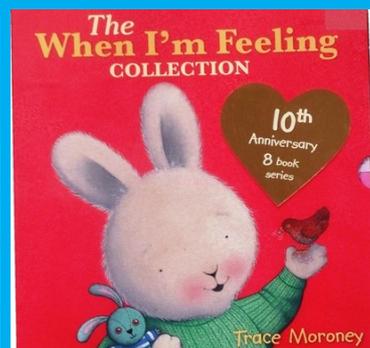
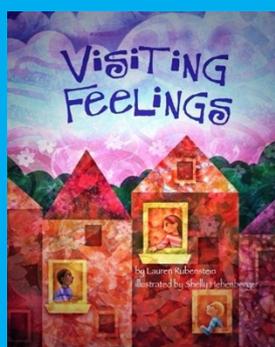
They often:

- Have trouble expressing or managing their emotions in appropriate ways.
- Have trouble de-escalating from stress.
- Have trouble recognising and naming their feelings.
- Fear showing or communicating their emotions because previous experiences may have taught them it is unsafe to do so.

Children are able to develop these skills with help from patient and supportive adults. Modelling appropriate behaviours based on boundaries and respect is one of the most beneficial things you can do as their carer.

Resources for Children

Time for Kids has a range of resources for children of all ages available at our Enfield office. Please feel free to contact your support worker or call in to the office to have a look and borrow something for free.



Time for Kids' carer resources are available to download from www.timeforkids.com.au.

To discuss any issues raised in this resource, please call us on 8245 8100.

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