

Promoting Positive Behaviour

Dr Dedani Dlodlo, Counselling Psychologist,
AfC Emotional Health Service



**achieving
for children**

TALKING POINTS

- Behavioural milestones
- What parents can do and provide at each stage
- Promoting positive behaviour
- Responding to challenging behaviour

BEHAVIOURAL MILESTONES

- Behavioural expectations of children should not be higher than is actually developmentally appropriate for their stage of development and be consistent with their level of understanding.
- “Behavioural milestones” are important as they support us to determine how a child's behaviour and understanding is developing
- Remember that each individual child develops in their own way and at their own rate

12 – 36 MONTHS

- Still does not consciously plan actions or have control.
- Does not have the capacity to understand, remember or obey rules.
- Sharing is developmentally incompatible at this stage.
- Begins to explore cause and effect relationships (when you are hungry, you eat).
- Begins to become interested in other children.
- Beginning to develop independence.
- Starts to test boundaries and able to do things considered “naughty” or “destructive”.

36 – 60 MONTHS

- Consciously aware of their own interests and intentions.
- Becomes easily frustrated when things don't turn out as expected.
- Begins to manipulate ideas in their minds.
- Begins to understand consequences of their behaviour.
- Able to make appropriate decisions before acting.
- Can talk through things in a simple manner.
- Wanting to please adults (feels guilty for disappointing others).
- Will follow rules to please adults.
- Able to follow simple rules.
- Becomes very competitive.
- Establishes friendships and learns how to be a friend.
- Becomes independent and finds own limits.

5 – 8 YEARS

- Asks questions constantly and becomes more critical.
- Compares selves to others.
- Makes simple judgements (good/bad, win/lose).
- Uses words to hurt others.
- Needs encouragement to support self esteem

8 – 11 YEARS

- Use problem-solving, negotiating and compromising skills with peers
- Develop interest in long-range projects
- Become sensitive to what others think of them and to adult approval
- Show interest in being more grown-up and able to begin tackling more responsibilities and routines
- Begin to develop their own point of view, which is sometimes different from parents' ideas

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

- **Aggressive behaviour:** pushing, punching, kicking, biting, scratching and threatening behaviour
- **Disruptive behaviour:** screaming, tantrums, verbal abuse, non co-operation, running away
- **Destructive behaviour:** destruction of property and the environment
- **Withdrawn behaviour:** failure to respond, or avoidance of people or activities
- **Stereotypical behaviour** (particularly with learning disabilities ASD): repetitive vocalisations, ritualistic hand movements
- **Self-injurious behaviour:** head banging, scratching and poking

REASONS WHY?

- Communication difficulties
 - Inappropriate behaviour may be used to express these needs if a child is unable to express needs or wants, because of a lack of understanding or ability to use language
 - teaching a child to use acceptable ways to communicate their needs may form part of the solution
- Attention-seeking
 - Some children may be unable to manage a particular task and may be frustrated or bored.
 - Attention-seeking behaviour can also be a learned behaviour, which has been effective in the past in ensuring that children get what they want.
 - Even negative attention can be motivating this is the only attention received.
- Socio-economic disadvantage
 - Poor social skills and language development, associated with poor parenting skills may lead to a child exhibiting challenging behaviour.
 - This behaviour may be used as a survival technique in the child's environment.
- Medical cause/reason
 - Pain, illness or sensory difficulties.
 - Some forms of challenging behaviour are particularly associated with certain conditions and disabilities such as repeated and involuntary body movements (tics) and uncontrollable vocal sounds (Tourette's Syndrome) or ritualistic or obsessive behaviour (Autistic Spectrum Disorders).

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS

Creating a framework for good behaviour involves considering the following:

- the **expectations** adults have of how children should behave
- the way in which strong positive **relationships** are valued and promoted
- how language is used
- the organisation and routines of the setting and the emphasis which is placed on building a mutually respectful **relationship** with parents

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS

- Give positive feedback
- Use positive language
- Be consistent and fair.
- Build respectful relationships
- Pre-plan
- Prioritise what is important
- Meeting emotional needs
- Ensure there is structure and routine
- Have clear expectations
- Rules – Play safe, Play fair and Play hard
- Model behaviour
- Teach behaviour skills
- Keep calm
- Communicate – talk and listen
- Negotiate and compromise

GIVE POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- Positive feedback is the best and most effective way to promote positive behaviour and discourage inappropriate behaviour
- **Children need to know they are getting it right** through adults using:
 - Positive and warm body language
 - Tone of voice
 - Physical touch
 - Praise and compliments
 - Encouragement
 - Attention
 - Treats, rewards and privileges.
 - Specific instruction e.g. well done for picking up the lego

USE OF REWARDS

- Reward appropriate behaviour as soon as possible
- Make the pay-offs small, and attainable
- Make the rewards cumulative
- Make the pay-offs cooperative/collaborative (ie. encouraging child to work with you for a reward)
- Never take back a reward
- Use the element of surprise (eg, by giving a double reward unexpectedly)

USE OF REWARDS

- Sticker charts for School-Age Children
 - Allow your child to decorate a piece of paper and use that as your chart.
 - Increase his motivation by choosing stickers he'll love.
 - Keep the sticker chart is prominently displayed.
 - Use praise to motivate him to keep earning stickers.
 - Trade stickers in for bigger rewards
 - Explain the reward system to your child: “When you earn three stickers, we will go to the park to play. This is how you earn stickers...”
 - Allow your child an opportunity to ask questions and become involved in suggesting rewards she wants to earn.

TOKEN SYSTEMS

- **Choose up to three behaviours to address at one time.** Pick a behaviour that your child is already doing well, one behaviour that needs a little improvement, and one challenging behaviour.
- **Frame the desired behaviours in a positive way.** Instead of saying, “Don’t hit your sister,” create a goal like, “Keep your hands to yourself.” State what behaviour you want to see so you can reward the good behaviour with a token.
- **Break the day down into smaller chunks of time when necessary.** You might reward your child for meeting his goals in the morning, during the afternoon, and during the evening.
- **Physically hand a token to your child whenever he earns one.** Provide immediate reinforcement for good behaviour by giving your child a token for meeting his goals.
- **Create an appealing reward menu with a variety of items.** Offer rewards worth a variety of point values to keep it exciting. Being able to stay up late might be worth one token but choosing something from the dollar store might be worth 10 tokens, for example.

USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE

- Say what you want not what you don't want
 - Don't say: "Don't throw the truck."
 - Instead: "The truck is for driving. You may throw this soft ball."

 - Don't say: "Don't climb with a toy in your hand."
 - Instead: "I'll hold your toy while you climb."

 - Don't say: "Don't chew books."
 - Instead: "We look at books. Take the book out of your mouth."

BE CONSISTENT AND FAIR

- Set clear boundaries which are fairly and consistently applied by all.
- Setting boundaries...
 - makes it clear that limitations do exist
 - teaches children that there are consequences of inappropriate behaviour.
 - allows children to understand that adults will act in their authority, whether parents or practitioners
 - helps to develop a sense of justice and fairness.
 - boundaries provides children with a safe and secure environment, thereby promoting good mental health.

BE CONSISTENT AND FAIR

- When enforcing boundaries...
 - Verbal expressions of anger, disappointment, concern or sadness are best communicated by the prefix ‘I feel...’, rather than ‘You are...’
 - Ensure that sanctions match the ‘offence’ and are used consistently by, and between, different adults
 - Always aim to return children to the appropriate behaviour as quickly, and with as little fuss, as possible
 - make it quite clear to children that we care enough about them to act and do something to stop their inappropriate behaviour

BUILD RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

- Positive behaviour is built primarily on good relationships and communication.
 - Children have an inborn desire to please the people they love and care for and seek approval from them.
 - If the relationships are wobbly or the communication is poor, either within the home or the early years setting, then the child is likely to use negative or challenging behaviour in an attempt to have their needs met
- Consider behaviour as communication

PRIORITISE WHAT IS IMPORTANT

- Choose your 'battlefields' – some behaviours just fade away if they are ignored. Avoid power struggles
 - If children are constantly being told, 'no, no, no', then the atmosphere in the setting becomes very negative.
- Choose to insist on boundaries when they are important and in other instances consider negotiation and compromise.

MEET EMOTIONAL NEEDS

- Human relationships are built on meeting the emotional needs
 - We need attention, acceptance, approval, comfort, security, encouragement, support, respect and affection.
 - When our primary needs are met we feel happy and secure. When they are not met we can feel anxious, insecure and unhappy.
- ‘Acting out’ through poor behaviour in order to demonstrate to others that their needs are not being met.
 - Inappropriate behaviour is a message: ‘I have a need and no one is meeting it.’
- If a child is misbehaving, it is worth reflecting on what the child needs before putting other strategies into place
 - e.g. if a child has trouble sitting during a circle time activity, why might that be? It could be because that child is too young, is bored, needs the toilet, is hungry or thirsty. There are many reasons that need to be considered.

MEET EMOTIONAL NEEDS

How to develop children's vocabulary around feelings?

STRUCTURE AND ROUTINE

- Routines and structures underpin a framework for good behaviour
- They...
 - allow behaviours to become habits or just ‘what we do’
 - reinforce rules
 - create an opportunity to practise responsibilities and exercise rights.
- Young children find routines safe and reassuring and are more likely to behave appropriately within structures they feel comfortable with.
- BUT routines also need to be flexible to allow for individual children’s needs.

STRUCTURE AND ROUTINE

- Many disruptive behaviours occur at transition times, for example when children are moving from one activity to another.
- It is, therefore, essential to plan for routines and transitions. Give warnings eg, “In five minutes, we will finish this activity and eat our lunch.”
- A verbal or visual clue about what will happen next can, therefore, help with transition

HAVE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- The purpose of rules is to:
 - clarify expectations and create limitations and boundaries
 - teach appropriate behaviour
 - provide security and safety
 - protect rights and encourage responsibilities
 - underpin morality/law/social order and make the link with ‘real life’ outside the setting
- Rules/expectations that are just and fair are an important part of the daily life and routines of any community.
 - They set the parameters which will ensure respect for the rights, duties and responsibilities of others as well as for oneself.

RULES

- It is important for children to suggest and be part of establishing these “rules”,
- Children and parents can “sign up” to three rules (hand prints is a good way) that are displayed creatively, prominently and permanently to be referred to.
- Reduce instruction when anxiety increases

MODEL BEHAVIOUR

- Some theorists would argue that all behaviour is learned and we certainly need to consider what children are learning from us as adults.
- When parents and practitioners model appropriate behaviour, children will pick this up and copy it.
- For example do you say please and thank you to your colleagues in the way that you'd like children to?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JrtpCM4yMM>

KEEP CALM

- We can feel ashamed and anxious a child's behaviour can't be managed
- Do you have support and a sounding board to talk our feelings through?
- Sometimes our behaviour towards a particular child can become a problem and it is important that we focus our concerns on the behaviour, not on the child himself.

COMMUNICATE

- Words are only a very small part of the communication process
- How much children hear, or feel that they are being listened to, is more dependent on our body language messages than the words we say or the speaking space we give to them.
- Be aware of the impression you are giving to children through your actions and expressions.

NEGOTIATE & COMPROMISE

- Negotiation and compromise become more of a possibility from about 3.
- Children are less likely to resort to tantrums or stubborn refusal if they are given some chance to gain 'power' through negotiation and choice

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

- Problem solving
- Conflict resolution
- Quiet time
- Planned ignoring
- De-escalating
- Behavioural
analysis

PROBLEM-SOLVING

1. **Approach Calmly:** Breathe. Use a calm voice and gentle touch. If an object is involved in the conflict say something like “I’m going to hold this while we talk about the problem.”
2. **Acknowledge Feelings:** Give recognition to the feelings children are expressing by using simple descriptive words. For example “You look upset”
3. **Gather Information:** Ask the children open ended questions that will help you find out what exactly the problem is. Questions like “What’s happening?” or “What’s the problem?” or “What’s going on?” are useful at this stage. Repeat children’s words back to them to help them clarify their thoughts.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

- 4. Restate the Problem:** Say exactly what the problem is. Use words like “so the problem is...” Use the needs and details the children have described.
- 5. Ask for ideas for Solutions** and choose one together. Say something like “What do you think we can do to solve this problem?” Listen and let the children come up with their own ideas. Respect and explore all of the ideas even if some of them seem unrealistic. If children say they can “share” explore this idea further so that everyone is clear how the sharing will happen.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

- 6. Be prepared to give follow-up support:** When children have reached a solution check that they are both OK with it. Summarise what is going to happen by saying something like “so you’re going toand you’re going to.....” Then acknowledge the children have solved their problem by saying words to the effect of “You did it! You solved the problem!” This helps to build children’s confidence in their capabilities as problem solvers. .

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- **Stop! - Say and sign the word**
 - Stop vs. No
 - Don't get into an argument, speak with a quieter voice and stay calm. Try to stay relaxed and be aware of your body language. Give parallel eye contact at the child's level, be direct and be clear – 'I said "stop" and I meant it.'
- **Choices:** Give a clear choice, 'You can choose, either tidy up now or when everyone else has heard the story – which would you like to do?'
- **Four-part challenge**
 - Describe the offending behaviour: 'When you do...'
 - State your feelings: 'I feel...'
 - State the effect: 'When you do that it...'
 - Ask for input: 'What can we do about it? 'How can you help...?'

QUIET TIME

- Quiet time should not be confused with naughty spot or naughty step!
- It is based on the premise that all children seek approval and have a need for attention from the adults around them. If children are threatened with losing this approval and attention, albeit only temporarily, it can support them to modify their inappropriate behaviour
- Quiet time involves removing the child from whatever they are doing and insisting he/she sits alongside you in a safe place for a short period of time.
- Quiet time is not about making a child feel bad but an opportunity to be taken away from the situation as a consequence of unwanted behaviour.

QUIET TIME

- This is an opportunity for the child to calm down – to possibly think and reflect on his/her behaviour but you should not say this
- Ignore the child during quiet time and offer no eye-contact or conversation.
- Match the length of time to the age of the child, for example, for a three-year-old child use three minutes.
- Use quiet time consistently for unwanted behaviour and as part of a behaviour management plan. Apply the approach fairly and consistently
- You may find you are using it several times a day at first, but this will become less frequent as a child adjusts to this approach.
- If a child tries to leave quiet time, or gets upset, take their hand and put him/her back into quiet time, for the first time you can say, you will need to sit in quiet time, but any time after that, don't speak to him/her, just take him/her back.
- When quiet time is over you can tell the child that quiet time is over and add 'thank you for sitting so nicely'.
- Direct the child to what you want them to do, which may be to do what you asked them to do before quiet time.
- If this child then behaves appropriately in the next few minutes offer clear affirmation and praise.

PLANNED IGNORING

- If your child receives plenty of praise and positive reinforcement for good behaviours, ignoring will be an effective way to reduce the behaviour
- **Gradual reduction** in the amount of attention given to a child's anxious/undesirable behaviour designed to obtain attention/an object. The rationale behind this strategy is that attention serves as a **behavioural reinforcer**.
- “Planned” refers to **thinking ahead** about how to respond to a child's anxiety the next time it occurs. **Children should be informed** of your plan so that they know how you are going to react before their anxiety recurs. Make it clear what can be done to get your attention again
- “Ignoring” refers to **stopping any interaction** with the child for as long as they are enacting the undesirable behaviour.
- Ignoring misbehaviour will only work if you have a positive relationship with your child and your child receives lots of “time in” the rest of the time

DE-ESCALATING

- The child should be spoken to calmly, assertively and respectfully.
- The teacher should stay at a safe distance.
- It should be made clear that you are listening to the child. In this way it may be possible to find out how the situation has developed, or how it may be resolved.
- The child should be asked to consider possible positive outcomes and behaviours.
- The child should be given space and time to cool off and to respond to requests.

ABCs

- Antecedent: what went on before the onset of the problematic behaviour
- Behaviour: what did the child do? Could it be broken down into steps?
- Consequence: what happened afterwards? Did the initial response cause the situation to escalate

TEENS

- Don't overreact.
- Be clear about the rules.
- Listen before you act
- Let the punishment fit the crime.
- Follow through.
- Remember the power of praise.
- Set Limits - pick your battles.

QUESTIONS



THANK YOU