

Understanding Your Child's Behaviour

Understanding your child's behavior can be difficult at times, especially when your child continues to demonstrate challenging behaviours. This tip sheet will help you understand and identify the reasons behind those challenging behaviours.

Before you try to change your child's behaviour, you need to understand why your child is showing that behaviour. *Behaviour is anything a person says or does*, such as smiling, laughing, talking, crying, etc. and it *serves as a function or purpose* for something including meeting our needs or helping us to communicate whether it's verbal or physical communication.

Questions to consider when understanding the **function or purpose** of the behaviour:

- Is your child able to communicate their wants and needs verbally?
- Are they looking for connection? Your child wants to spend time with you.
- Is it frustration? They may not have mastered a skill and still need support from you to problem solve
- Do they have fears about trying new things?
- Does your child have a daily opportunity to expend their energy?
- Does your child have a daily opportunity, space and tools to recover their energy?

At times, parents often wonder why their children behave the way they do. We must remember, just like adults, that there are many factors that affect children daily. Consider these **factors**:

- Lack of sleep
- Time of day- if it is close to a meal time or there has been a long span of time between meals, your child could be hungry or thirsty
- Schedule or lack of consistent routine
 - A very busy schedule with little to no down time causes stress
 - A child who has changes in their routine frequently may not follow instructions or interact well with others as they may be coming into a different part of the daily routine (for example expecting to play outdoors when actually the group is now indoors)
- Different parent/caregiver expectations and styles
- Illness or allergies

When supporting behaviours, Childinü Oxford Resource Consultants use the *ABCs: Antecedents, Behaviours and Consequences*.

You can use the ABCs when observing behaviours as they happen or to track any reoccurring behaviours that need more support.

Antecedents

What is an antecedent? An antecedent is an event that occurs immediately before the behaviour and can act as the trigger. For example, *Child A* took a toy out of *Child B's* hands and then *Child B* pushed *Child A*. The antecedent is the toy being taken away from *Child B*. Resource Consultants and Educators often track the antecedents to help narrow down the triggers for a challenging behaviour.

Behaviours

This is the action that occurs as a result of an antecedent. You may see challenging behaviours including kicking, hitting, screaming punching, running away, biting, throwing an object and so on. When looking at the example, the challenging behaviour was *Child B* pushing *Child A*.

Consequences

This is an important part to track as consequences will impact the intensity and frequency of the behaviour. For example, if you let *Child A* continue to play with the toy, then both children are learning it is ok to take a toy. However, if you brought *Child A* over to *Child B*, explained it's not ok to take toys or push and then modelled to the child how to ask for a turn, you're teaching both children that the behaviours were not ok and that there is an alternate solution.

How Do I Use The ABCs?

Step 1: Determine the specific behaviour you are concerned about and want to better understand

Step 2: Use a notebook to write down all your ABCs. That way, your notes are kept in the same place and are easier to compare.

Step 3: Fill out your ABCs

Step 4: Compare your notes to find any common triggers or patterns

When you have determined the function behind the behaviour, then you can begin to change that behaviour.



If you require assistance in supporting your child's needs or developing a schedule at this time, please contact your Resource Consultant with Childinü Oxford. Visit <https://www.childinüoxford.com/about/meet-our-team/> for their contact information.