

Functions of Behaviours

Behaviour is anything a person says or does, such as smiling, laughing, talking, crying, etc. and it serves as a function to meet our needs. When you understand the function of a behaviour, you understand why that behaviour is happening. When you understand why that behaviour is happening, you are able to determine strategies to decrease the behaviour and support your child in using a more positive behaviour.

Four Functions of Behaviour

1) To “Escape”

A child may be trying to avoid, delay or withdraw from a situation. These situations can include a specific task, activity, demand, person and environment.

Examples:

- A child dropping food on the floor in order to avoid eating
- A child engages in self-injury in order to avoid going outside

2) To Seek Attention

A child may use this behaviour to receive positive attention such as praise and affection OR to receive something undesirable such as a verbal argument.

Examples:

- A child throwing their toys while their mom is on the phone and not watching them
- A child engaging in a behaviour they know is unacceptable but wants attention because they typically do not receive attention for their positive behaviours

3) To Acquire Something

A child may demonstrate this behaviour in order to get something they want such as a toy, food item, some kind of activity and so on

Examples:

- A child pushes their sibling in order to take a toy from the sibling who was already playing with it
- A child screaming and shouting in a store until a parent buys them a toy they want

4) Sensory Stimulation

A child may be demonstrating behaviour in order to either avoid or obtain a sensory stimulation through their senses

Examples:

- Consistently removing a winter hat because it is scratching the child's head
- A child rocks back and forth as a way to comfort themselves

If you require assistance in supporting your child's needs, please contact your Resource Consultant with Childinü Oxford.

Visit

<https://www.childinüoxford.com/about/meet-our-team/> for their contact information.

Strategies to Support These Behaviours

To Seek Attention

BEFORE THE BEHAVIOUR

- Provide attention and praise throughout the day when your child is engaging in positive behaviours
- Engage in activities with them

AFTER THE BEHAVIOUR

- Remain calm and avoid showing your reaction as this reaction can reinforce a child's challenging behaviour
- Provide praise when they engage in appropriate attention seeking behaviours
- Teach your child appropriate ways to seek attention
 - Use phrases such as, "play with me" and "come see" or have them call your name
 - Use gestures to grab the attention of an adult such as taking you by the hand, tapping you on the shoulder
 - Encourage them to wait. Begin with only a few seconds and increase the time slowly. Ensure you follow through in giving your attention after they wait!

To Acquire Something

BEFORE THE BEHAVIOUR

- Provide the child warnings before removing the item or activity if needing to do so
- Provide two choices to replace that item or activity
- Include a daily schedule of the child's day so they can see when they get something such as snack, rest, outside time, etc.

AFTER THE BEHAVIOUR

- Offer two choices that replace the previous item or activity
- Teach your child appropriate ways of gaining something
 - Use phrases such as, "help me" or "can I have that"
 - Use visuals to help your child show what they want by pointing to a picture
 - Encourage your child to think of a solution on their own. For example, if an object is out of reach, ask them if they can use something to stand on and reach it

To "Escape"

BEFORE THE BEHAVIOUR

- Offer choices and stick to them. Do not negotiate as you offer them
- Provide clear expectations
- Start with easy demands and increase to more challenging demands
- Provide breaks frequently
- Adjust the difficulty and frequency to meet the needs of the child
- Consider whether the task is required or not

AFTER THE BEHAVIOUR

- Follow through with your expectation
- Remain calm and don't react
- Teach your child an appropriate strategy to express their desire to avoid something
 - Use phrases such as "all done," "break time,"
 - Remind them they can ask for help and ensure you follow through

Sensory Stimulation

BEFORE THE BEHAVIOUR

- Determine if there is too much or too little sensory input
- Change the environment or play materials for your child

AFTER THE BEHAVIOUR

- As you make changes to your child's environment, monitor your child's reaction to see if they need more or less of a stimulation. For example, turning the music higher or lower.
- If you feel your child's needs are higher, please consult with an Occupational Therapist.

Thames Valley Children's Centre- Occupational Therapy
Please visit, <https://www.tvcc.on.ca/intake-referrals>