From:

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND

FAMILIES

VOLUME 2

A TRAINING MANUAL

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CHAPTER THREE

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

This chapter provides an overview of how to assess and manage children's behaviours positively.
This chapter will cover the following topics:
- 3.1   Purpose
- 3.2   Expectations
- 3.3   Causes of Problems
- 3.4   Attachment Problems
- 3.5   Assessment of Behavioural Problems
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3.1   Purpose

Children need and desire boundaries to keep them safe and to feel secure enough to explore and experiment. They look to the adults around them to model what to do in different situations and to guide them in their own reactions. Without limits, children can feel overwhelmed and lose confidence in their ability to manage social situations. Positive behaviour management therefore enables children to develop into healthy and self-sufficient adults.

Behaviour management should not be viewed as a way of controlling children or simply as a means of eliminating undesired behaviours. Its purpose is to give children more control over their own behaviours, and as a result it presents ample opportunities to raise self-esteem. If a positive approach is

adopted then workers are likely to be more successful in reducing problems and in motivating children to follow directions.

Supportive behaviour management techniques help children to:

- Feel motivated to do the best they can.
- Respect themselves and others.
- Make friends.
- Have a positive self-image.
- Express feelings appropriately.
- Follow instructions.
- Increase self-control.
- Learn problem solving skills.

3.2 Expectations

Adults often have unrealistic expectations of children's behaviour. Children are not able to behave well all the time without being given some direction and time to comply, since they are still learning what is or is not acceptable in different situations and contexts. To add to this, adults give opposite requests at different times such as asking a child to be quiet and then to talk; to stay close or to give them space.   Different adults may also have diverse expectations for the behaviour of the same child, for example one parent may encourage a child to play freely, while the other prefers the child to be extremely tidy.

Children's abilities to meet such expectations will depend on their understanding of what is needed of them, their ability according to their stage of development, whether they have been taught what to do, their desire to do the action, and the environment around them.

It is normal for children to refuse to comply at times. This is part of healthy development.   Children need to assert themselves in order to become independent adults. If children obeyed instructions all the time this would result in a degree of dependence on those around them, and a lack of sense

of self. The children may develop low self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.

As children grow they need to be given choices, and age appropriate responsibilities, as well as understanding adults who recognise that a degree of resistance or rebellion is the child's way of fulfilling developmental needs. This is particularly important around the ages of 2, 5, 11, and throughout adolescence.

Child care workers need to have a thorough understanding of child development in order to recognise what behaviours are normal and what the child can realistically achieve. This knowledge helps workers to be more supportive, and less annoyed by children's actions, as they understand that these are successful signs that the children are developing as expected. The worker is then able to provide the right environment and management techniques to help the children move onto their next developmental stage.

Below is a chart which highlights normal behaviours at different ages which are frequently perceived as problems, and the management techniques most suited to each stage (adapted from Fahlberg, 1994).

Age	Behavioural Issues	Management Techniques
1-2 year old	• Shows fear or anxiety when approached by a stranger. • Actively tries to get attention. • Resistant to changes in routine. • Autonomy is expressed as defiance. • Frequently underfoot as fears being separated. • Temper tantrums common especially if physical activity is interrupted. • Unable to share.	• The carer should meet the child's needs on demand. • Provide lots of stimulation of the senses (sight, smell, sound, touch, taste) and motor development via the provision of simple toys the child can manipulate by hand. • One or more adults should be consistently available and responsive to help the child build trust. • Keep to routines.

		• Avoid sharp discipline. • Avoid reliance on words as these are poorly understood. • Model the desired behaviours as a 1-2 year old is good at imitating others.
2-3 year old	• Dawdles. • Extremes of behaviour are normal e.g. may be helpful or stubborn, dependent or independent, aggressive or passive. • Not yet ready to share. Ownership of objects is important. May hit, poke or bite over toys. • Often messy in play. • Short attention span.	• Children at this age love praise and positive attention. Give lots of opportunities to play with the child. • Workers need to provide activities where the toddler can experience success and feel capable e.g. by putting a small stool at the sink so the child can wash on his own. Give ample encouragement when the child is trying to complete tasks. • Make sure the environment is safe as children are very active at this age. • Keep the child very close when in public places as he will become very distressed if separated. • When telling a child off, get down to the child's level, establish eye contact and say no in a firm voice. Then use distraction skills to move the child onto another activity e.g. substitute a safe toy for a dangerous one. • Keep to set routines. • Avoid control battles. • Be consistent. • Accept messy play as it is necessary for the child's development.
3-4 year	• Capable of prolonged fear, jealously and anxiety.	• Give clear and consistent instructions.

old	• Uses language to resist. • Fear of loss of parents and being abandoned. • Loves to play. • Asks a lot of questions to which the child knows the answer (this helps the child confirm that they understand things).	• Use bargaining to avoid arguments e.g. When you finish all your meal, you will get dessert. • Do not use reasoning as children at this age do not have sufficient cognitive ability to understand. • Use distraction skills (see age 2-3). • Provide support and reassurance.
4-5 year old	• More independent. • Physically and verbally aggressive. Stamps feet or slams door when angry. May argue about parental requests. • Unreasonable fears are common. Fear of the dark and nightmares are prominent. • Creates alibis to avoid trouble. • Likes silly things. • Tends to be bossy and critical of others. • Talkative. • Loves to play. • Prone to magical and egocentric thinking (children believe they are the cause of problems in others when logically this is not the case, or that wishes can come true).	• Help the child to differentiate between fantasy and reality by explaining that the child is not at fault, in a simple manner. • Try to reduce fears e.g. by using a night light and reading a bedtime story if the child is scared of the dark. • Give lots of opportunity for play, including movement and other outlets for energy. • Provide clear boundaries. • Present opportunities for the child to be independent. • Be consistent in which behaviours you like or don't like and state these to the child. • Avoid getting into control battles. Say no firmly, ignoring objections or arguments.
5-6 year old	• Loves to play. • Prone to magical thinking (see above). • Poor listening skills. Will frequently interrupt as has trouble suppressing	• Use bargaining and time-out. • Encourage positive self esteem. • Help differentiate between fantasy and reality (see age 4-5). • Encourage turn taking and listening

	excitement. • Compares self to others.	skills. • Provide lots of opportunities for play and self-expression. • Help to express feelings appropriately.
6-7 year old	• Very active. • Easily frustrated. Good at starting things but not at finishing them. • Behaviour may regress to an earlier age. • Concerned with fairness. • Extremes of expression are common. • Resistant to doing chores for others or on own. • May take others belongings and later deny it. • Prone to episodes of aggression e.g. temper tantrums. May destroy things if sent to room or make verbal threats. • Will argue and resist instructions.	• Give opportunities for physical activity. • Use lots of praise, positive attention and provide closeness e.g. hugs. • Give tasks through which the child can experience success. Encourage the child to finish an activity. Provide guidance and positive direction. Be patient and give time for the child to succeed. • Praising positive behaviours is more effective than criticising negative ones at this age e.g. "well done for sitting still", rather than "stop moving around all the time". • If there is regression to babyish behaviour, explain that this often happens at this age, but you prefer if he can be more grown up. Praise any time the child uses age appropriate behaviours. • Do chores with the child, rather than expecting him to do them on his own. • Provide repeated reminders. • Encourage appropriate expression of frustration or anger e.g. by punching a pillow instead of a child.
7-8	• Becomes absorbed in tasks.	• When giving instructions, get the

year old	• May become disappointed with self. • Not learnt to lose yet, so may cheat. • Difficulty expressing feelings and may resort to acting out. • May become withdrawn if upset. • Very sensitive to fairness.	child's attention by applying a light touch to the shoulder and crouching down to obtain eye contact. • Provide lots of praise and encouragement. • Promote appropriate expression of feelings, especially through a third object e.g. draw your anger and then talk as if you are the picture. • Provide physical closeness e.g. playing alongside and hugs. • Give frequent reminders of instructions. • Provide guidance in completing tasks. • Help the child to understand winning or losing are not as important as participating. • Be fair and consistent. • Avoid using sarcasm or laughing at the child if a mistake is made, as children at this age are sensitive to being made fun of.
8-9 year old	• Often selfish. • Demands a lot of attention. • Impatient with self and others. • Interested in the past. • If criticised, may respond with hurt feelings or verbal aggression. • Noisy. • Boastful.	• Children at this age need more adult supervision in boisterous activities since they will overestimate their abilities and are liable to injury. • Avoid the criticising child. Instead explain that the behaviour is undesirable and not the child. • Give lots of individual attention, support and encouragement.
9-10 year	• If the child has not yet got basic literacy skills, these will become very	• Provide opportunities for the child to develop academic skills. At this age

old	difficult to acquire. • Appears absent minded – but often absorbed in thought. • May feel guilty. • Brief emotional swings. • Uses verbal aggression (particularly sexual words) and is critical of others. • Prone to worrying about own mistakes and school failure.	children can concentrate for longer periods. • Start group work and circle time (see chapter 2) in order to learn about self and others and to help child to be more tolerant of differences. • Give opportunities to try a range of peer related activities e.g. sports, after school clubs etc. • Give lots of praise and encouragement. • Provide help on how to express emotions appropriately.
10-11 year old	• Friendships come into competition with family time. • Boys may fight to show friendship. • Girls hold hands, gossip, and write notes to each other. • Crying is a common response to frustration.	• Do not praise or punish in front of friends, do this in private instead. • Enable the child to develop friendships while providing family stability. • Give guidance on social skills.
11-12 year old	• Similarities to a 6 year old. Emotionally unstable, curious, and talkative. • Tires easily. Dislike works. Spends more energy avoiding work than doing it. • Poorest age for getting on with brothers and sisters. • May become angry, especially verbally. • Fears are common.	• Give encouragement to complete tasks. • Avoid control battles. • Provide reassurance and support.
12-13	• Peer group is very important. • Extremes of likes and dislikes are	• If the child does not get on well at school, then he will need further

year	common.	praise and support from adults to
old	• Becoming assertive. Talks back to parents.	bolster his self-esteem.
	• Self-esteem may be low.	• Can use humour in managing behaviours.
	• Increasing interest in the opposite sex.	• Help child to express fears and worries.
	• May be verbally and physically aggressive.	
	• Worries become increasingly common.	

Adolescents

Throughout adolescence children need adult guidance and support in order to:

- talk about values, feelings and experiences
- be able to think through choices rather than seeing things as black or white
- develop empathy
- promote self-control and responsibilities
- learn social, academic, and employment skills
- explore choices

Adolescents are more likely to avoid trouble and develop positively if:

- The relationship with their carer is warm, kind and consistent.
- Their carers take a real interest in their activities; know their friends and what and what they do in their free time.
- The carers genuinely respect their child's ideas, even when the ideas are different to their own, and do not control their child via changing the subject, personal attacks, withdrawing love, or inducing guilt.
- Their carers spend time with them, doing mutually enjoyable activities.
- They are offered a degree of independence and age-appropriate responsibilities.
- Any rules or sanctions are discussed jointly.
- They are given room to rebel in a safe way. For example, if a carer does not set absolute demands on minor issues such as an untidy bedroom, the teenager can not clean his room as a means of asserting himself. This outlet reduces the risk of

the child rebelling in more serious ways, such as staying out late.

The carer can also help the teenager by

- Allowing for time with peers in a semi-supervised manner e.g. via sports clubs or in the home.
- Encouraging increasing responsibility for own actions rather than more control by the carers
- Setting limits without punishment in order to help the teenager self-regulate.
- Avoiding right and wrong control battles.

13-14 year old	- Spends a lot of time thinking. - Concerned with own appearance. - Interested in the opposite sex. - May be critical of parents and will argue a lot. - Not demonstrative. - Sulking is common. - Physically withdraws when angry.	- Avoid criticising as children at this age are very sensitive. - Avoid arguments by stating that it is ok to have differences of opinion. Save arguments for really important matters. - Wait to discuss problems when the child has calmed down.
14-15 year old	- Leaves the room while muttering under his breath. - May become locked in battles with parents. - Bodily changes occurring. - Peak age for phone calls to friends. - Swearing, name-calling, and sarcasm are common.	- Help the child to see both sides of a situation and work on empathy skills. - If the child mutters under his breath, ignore it. - Provide sex education. - Phone calls should be tolerated to a certain extent as this allows for peer interactions without leaving the safety of the home.
15-16 year old	- May seem lazy or indifferent. - Trying to sort out own potential and limitations. - May be moody and will withdraw from family interactions.	- Be tolerant of the need for space. - Encourage expression of any concerns. - Show like and approval for the young person.

3.3   Causes of problems

Challenging behaviour can be understood as a person's way of trying to sort out their inner state with what is happening around them. Aside from child development stages, there are numerous influences on the child's ability to manage in diverse situations.   These include:

- Attachment problems.
- Unresolved separation and loss.
- Personality and character traits.
- Low self-esteem.
- Damage from abuse or a history of challenging behaviour.
- Medical causes.
- Learning disability.
- Previous and current negative management techniques used by the carers.
- The physical environment.
- Difficulty communicating as a result of language or hearing problems.
- Not having learnt how to behave appropriately, particularly in a new setting.

Carers of children are usually able to cope with problem behaviours which are short-lived or minor. For example, problems which are related to child development stages will frequently resolve themselves as the child passes in to the next stage. This is facilitated by the carers modelling and teaching alternative ways of managing situations to the child, and also through the use of positive parenting techniques such as praise, ignoring skills, rewards, and logical consequences (see chapter 15, Working with Children, Groups and Families).

Extreme or chronic behavioural problems require a deeper understanding of their cause in order to provide the most effective intervention. One way to do this is to consider what children are communicating via their behaviour, what benefits the behaviour brings, or what result is achieved. If a child learns that he can get his needs met via a particular behaviour e.g. by having a tantrum

when he wants a sweet, then he will continue with this behaviour until he realises it causes him more problems than benefits.   Consider the following example of problem behaviour and the potential reasons for it.

Problem Behaviour	Possible Underlying Cause
Child distracts others during class.	• The task may be too difficult for the child to succeed. This behaviour helps the child to save face. • The child may have a low attention span. This behaviour helps the child to feel more stimulated. • The child may be incapable of concentrating for long periods. • He may be worrying about personal issues. • The child may not feel he matters and does not expect encouragement or recognition. • The task may be too easy and the child is under stimulated. • The child may be seeking attention in order to bolster his self-esteem.

Exercise 3a Causes of Behaviour Problems

Consider the following scenarios. What might the problem behaviour be trying to achieve?

a. Susanna is 8 years old. She is constantly getting into trouble in class for moving around and not following instructions.

b. Hafez is 15 years old. He is smoking and drinking alcohol.

c. Akif is aggressive and hits other children.

Answer 3a Causes of Behaviour Problems

a.   The lesson may be too easy and so Susanna is under stimulated, or too difficult and she is distracting from this. Susanna may have low self- esteem and is seeking attention by misbehaving. Her teacher may have too high expectations of her ability to sit still for prolonged periods.

b.   Hafez may be under peer pressure to fit in and may lack self-confidence and esteem to assert himself.   He may also be seeking attention from his parents.

c.   Akif may be hitting as a means of expressing an underlying emotion e.g. anger, sadness, frustration, loneliness, or over excitement. He may lack awareness of how to express these emotions positively.

Exercise 3b Observing Behaviour Problems

Think about the children you work with; what are the most common complaints about behaviours? What do you think the child is trying to achieve or learn through these behaviours?

3.4 Attachment Problems

All children need to have experienced a close bond or attachment with at least one primary carer in order to grow into healthy adults. Attachments develop from birth and are usually to the mother or father; however they can also be to other significant adults e.g. a grandparent, uncle, or neighbour.   The more positive attachments a child has, the more protected the child is from behavioural problems.   For children who have experienced abuse and/or are living away from home, a significant contributor to poor behaviours are attachment problems.

A healthy attachment enables the child to develop cognitively, physically, socially and psychologically. The reason for this is that when children have their basic needs met by least one significant adult, they feel safe and secure enough to explore their environment. Through exploration the children learn about themselves and the world around them; they develop motor skills via handling objects and movements, cognitive skills via observing and playing with things, and language and social skills via interactions with others. When children do not have their basic needs met, including their need for love,

attention, consistency and stimulation, they are less able to fulfil their developmental milestones. As children grow, it becomes evident that those who have not had a healthy attachment encounter a range of behavioural problems. These include being excessively clingy or distant, aggressiveness, an inability to soothe the self or to cope with stress, fears and frustration, an inability to make or sustain friendships, difficulty in expressing emotions appropriately, low self-esteem, poor or delayed academic level, lack of trust, and poor conscience development.

To assess behaviours the worker should notice signs of a healthy attachment. This is primarily examining the relationship between the child and significant carers. Ideally these relationships should demonstrate that the child and carer notice and respond to each others interactions positively. Specific attachment behaviours can be observed from the age of 7 months onwards. Below is a list of positive attachment behaviours. Please note that these are influenced by the child's stage of development.

1. The carer is sensitive to the child's signals, and initiates a variety of interactions in order to stimulate the child. This includes responding when the child talks or shares a toy.
2. The child is able to explore his environment.
3. The child notices and is upset if his carer leaves the room. When the carer returns, the child responds and is happier.
4. The child seeks affection and receives physical closeness and attention from the carer. The carer also initiates contact.
5. The carer sees the child as a separate individual with needs of his own and provides opportunities to explore and try new things.
6. The carer provides age-appropriate boundaries and discipline.
7. The carer gives the child praise and encouragement and recognises achievements and skills.
8. The child shows age-appropriate development.
9. The child is relaxed in his carer's company.
10. The child is wary of strangers and seeks out his carer when in an unfamiliar situation.
11. The carer anticipates physical danger and tries to keep the child safe.

12. The carer shows pleasure in the child's company and in his achievements.

Insecure Attachments Behaviours

Workers benefit from identifying behavioural problems which stem from a negative attachment, in order to be able to provide the correct intervention. The 3 main types of attachment problems that are frequently seen in children who have been abused or neglected result from the child not having had his needs consistently responded to by his primary care giver. These are described below (Ainsworth, 1979):

1. Avoidant attachment

This child has learnt to avoid the pain of rejection by withdrawing from close interactions. The child may resist relationships with new carers and appear self –sufficient. A child with this pattern feels he has to rely on himself as he cannot depend on the carer.

2. Anxious attachment

This child is clingy and overly attention seeking with carers. The child will become upset if attention is not reciprocated. Such a child feels that the only way to get his needs met is to cling to the carer.

3. Disorganised/Disorientated attachment

This child shows contradictory behaviour patterns. The child may gaze into space, freeze, or appear depressed. This child is confused about how to get his needs met.

Intervention with Attachment Problems

All children need positive parenting techniques in order to get their needs met. Children who have been abused or neglected are only different in the sense that they need even more of the same parenting skills (please refer to chapter 15 of the manual 'Working with Children, Groups, and Families' for guidelines on positive parenting techniques).

Children with insecure attachments desperately need an adult who they can rely on. The more extreme the attachment behaviour, the more love and attention the child needs. Children who reject love and attention are frequently testing the carer to see if they will really be there for them in the future. It is very important the carers keep trying with the child and demonstrate that they can love the child no matter how awful their behaviours may be. Only when this is shown, will the child be able to relax and reciprocate relationships, and develop more healthily.

Attachments continue and change throughout life. Most poorly attached children can develop an attachment if they receive individual, positive, and consistent attention. A child needs to experience a positive attachment by the age of 3 in order to develop well. In a residential home, children are less likely to receive the amount of individual attention from a permanent carer that they require. Children under 12 in particular benefit more from a foster or adoption placement where they can experience closer relationships.

Children with relationship problems and apparent attachment difficulties are best supported by a consistent carer who can provide focused attention. This carer can help the child by providing:

- Understanding of what the child's behaviours are communicating.
- Understanding of age-appropriate expectations.
- Physical touch e.g. hugs. (If this is absent, children will seek it out via violence or sexualised behaviour).
- Links with previous carers and other important relationships (where appropriate). It is worth noting that a child who has been abused by a parent will often have a strong attachment to him or her. The child may want the abuse to stop but would still like to be with the abuser. Supervised contact is one way of enabling a child to maintain contact in a safe way. Developing an attachment to a new carer is made easier when the parent gives explicit consent to the child to do this e.g. by showing parental trust in the carer.

- Support in understanding earlier and current separations, and preparation for any future separations with carers, siblings, friends, location, possessions etc.

- Time to listen to the child's wishes in terms of who to have contact with.

- Developmentally appropriate and stimulating activities which are initiated by the worker.

- Claiming habits e.g. by stating "this is <u>our</u> Ahmad" or by displaying photographs of the child with the new carer.

- Consistency and routines.

- Lots of praise and encouragement.

- Safety and security through supervision, consistency, routines, and support in times of stress.

- Continuing contact and support even when the child has left the worker's care and moved to another placement.

- Support in expressing emotions in a helpful way. The worker should give permission for the child to be angry, upset etc, rather than trying to suppress such feelings.

- Acceptance of attention seeking behaviours as this is the child's attempt to form an attachment. The worker should respond by giving lots of individual attention, praise, and hugs until the child feels secure enough to be more self-sufficient.

- Sanctions which give the child the message that they are wanted but the behaviour is not. If a child with an attachment problem misbehaves, avoid distancing him e.g. by sending him to time out. This reinforces emotional barriers and reminds the child of being rejected. Instead the carer can advise that the child must sit next to the carer for closer supervision. This helps the child feel that he is being supported in managing the behaviours while still being close. In addition, punishments should not restrict those activities the child does well in. Do not remove rewards for earlier good behaviour – keep rewards and punishments separate. Another discipline method is to tell the child off for no more than 30 seconds, and then spend

the rest of the minute telling the child that you care about him (Fahlberg, 1994).

- Clear labelling of emotions to highlight how they manifest in behaviours, and giving advice on how to express this emotion in a healthy way. E.g. you are fighting because you are hurt by what the other boys said. When people are hurt it helps to …….

- Closeness after any stressful events since children are most open to developing an attachment when they are in a relaxed mood or following an episode of tension e.g. after a tantrum.

3.5 Assessment of Behaviour Problems

When a child's behaviour is causing problems, the worker needs to consider the context and the possible causes before taking additional action.   In particular, it is helpful to consider whether the child has had time to settle into the routines, if he is aware of what is expected of him and taught what to do, and if he is at a developmental stage where this is possible.   The effectiveness of the management techniques used by the workers and carers should also be reviewed.

If the child has had time to settle and is not responding to encouragement and boundary setting approaches, then a formal assessment of the behaviour is usually necessary. It is particularly important that the child is not labelled with having a particular problem, particularly when it may be incorrect. Instead differentiate between the person and the behaviour.

There are several tools which help the worker assess and plan how to intervene and these are described below. (Workers will frequently require an additional learning assessment of the child to rule out hearing, speech, or other learning difficulties).

a. Ask key questions.

The worker should discuss the following questions with the child's carers, other workers, and the child himself, in order to analyse what is the exact problem and the cause.

- What is the behaviour in detailed, concrete, visible terms?

- When does it happen?

- How long does it occur for?

- How often does it take place?

- Where does it take place?

- Are others involved?

- What is the child trying to achieve or communicate via this behaviour?

- How do the workers and carers manage the child in detailed, concrete, visible terms?

- How does the child respond to attention, praise, and behaviour management?

- What changes or improvements in the behaviour have taken place.

On assessing the child, the worker should consider what information needs to be passed to others immediately regarding risk, need, or potential solutions, and what can wait until a review meeting. The worker should also consider what issues need to be raised with her supervisor. It is very important that workers think about their own feelings in order to enable an impartial assessment. It may be that the worker has personal opinions which are influencing her ideas about the behaviour or the child.

b. Observe

Another important component of assessment is observation of a child when behaving poorly.   In addition this helps set a baseline against which improvements can be charted. The worker should not only observe the child's behaviour but also note the child's general appearance, mood, thinking processes, language, motor skills, play, and relationships.

In order to observe a child the worker needs to take into account her role and how it may affect the observation. The following guidelines from Mortimer (2002), are helpful:

Observe the target child for part of a session, at a time when the child is most prone to misbehaving. When you enter the room tell all the children that you

are there to observe the group and want the children to imagine you are not there. Tell them that although you would like to, you will not join in and the children should not talk to you or approach you. Sit at the back of the room and allow the workers to continue as they normally would. Do not take over the worker's role in any way.   If children approach, do not engage in conversation; instead encourage them to go back to the group. During the observation make detailed notes of everything the target child does. Although you are focusing on one child, make sure to glance at all the children, in order not to make anyone aware of who you are observing.   Keep a running record of everything the child does. Do not write your impressions, but write down exactly what you can see and hear, so that anyone reading your notes would have a mental picture of what was going on. In the margin write the time every 5 minutes so that you have an idea how long the child spent on each activity.

The observer also needs to examine the carer's management of the children as she may unknowingly be encouraging behavioural problems. The observer should assess the following:

- Are all the staff using the same management methods?
- Does the carer present as calm, positive, and caring?
- Does the carer treat all the children the same or are there noticeable favourites?
- Are the children given positive individual attention?
- Is there more use of praise than criticism?
- Is support and encouragement given to those children who need it?
- Is the activity manageable for the child's developmental stage? Is it stimulating? Are the children given choices and opportunities for responsibilities?
- Are the children given enough freedom to express themselves or are they overly monitored or controlled?
- Are the children adequately supervised?
- Does the carer engage in control battles or is she able to state an instruction calmly and firmly, without succumbing to arguments or tantrums?

- Is there excessive use of punishment?
- If punishments are given, are these appropriate? Do they focus on increasing the child's self-regulation? Do they compensate for the damage caused? Are they fair and consistent?

c. Keep an ABC diary

It is helpful to note the **a**ntecedents (what led up to the behaviour), the actual **b**ehaviours and the **c**onsequences of behavioural problems, on a regular basis via the use of a diary. This highlights what is motivating the child to continue the behaviour. It assists in developing an action plan for resolving the situation since the workers can effect change by either altering the antecedent, the behaviour, or the consequence.   The worker can decide with colleagues which behaviours to measure, defining them in clear terms e.g. phrases such as 'naughty' are too general. The diary should note the time of day, what the child did, what led up to it, and what happened as a result. Select one behaviour at a time to work on.

An example follows:

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
Worker tells child to go to bed	Temper tantrum	Worker gives in and child gets to go bed later

ABC chart (Gelfand and Hartman, 1984, in Douglas).

You can also record how often incidents happen:

(Douglas, 1989).

Behaviour	5.00-6.00pm	6.00-7.00pm	7.00-8.00pm	8.00-9.00pm
Tantrum	-	-	1	2

In this example the first chart indicates that the child is motivated to have a tantrum as it helps him get what he wants, since the worker ultimately

concedes.   The second charts highlights that he is more likely to have a tantrum later in the evening. One reason may be that the child feels tired and is less able to tolerate not getting his own way.

d. Behaviour and reaction chart

Another method for understanding a child's behaviour is to ask staff to complete a form which details what happened and the effects of any management techniques used (Hewett, 1998).

<u>Behaviour and Reaction Chart</u>

Date:

Time:

Place:

Member of staff making evaluation:

Description of incident: What took place and why (think about factors and triggers).

What procedures were used to manage the incident?:

What did staff do that was effective? (List examples of this even if the event was ultimately unmanageable).

Thoughts for the future:

Consider what the person was doing before the behaviour, the environment, what triggered it, what was going on around the person when it happened.

Signature and date:

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e. Child interviews

All children have the right to know about any plans involving them and should have a say in potential intervention strategies. This is especially vital when dealing with behavioural problems, since it enables the child to make steps in the right direction towards learning alternative ways of managing situations.

The worker should let the child know why the behaviour is a problem, what is desired, and what the plan is for improving it, including any assessment. Every explanation should identify the behaviour as the problem, and not the child. This should be done in a supportive fashion e.g. by telling the child that they are loved but the behaviour is not acceptable. An example of what might be said to the child regarding an assessment follows:

"Your teacher has told me that you are a very outgoing, friendly boy but that you have not been happy recently and have started to hit some of the other children. I know this has been making you sad and I want to help you so that you can get on even better with your classmates. Hitting is not acceptable and so we need to figure out a plan to stop this. In order to help I will need to get some more information from you, your teacher, and your mum, about what ideas they have, then we can agree on the best plan. Would that be ok with you? I also want to visit you in school to find out what your class is like so I can get an idea of how school is for you. This would mean that I would come to your school one day and your teacher will introduce me as a visitor to the school who is interested in seeing what this class is like. I won't indicate that I know you, unless you want me to. I will sit quietly and observe the whole class, not just you. It is really important on that day that you try to be how you normally are, and not be extra special because you have a visitor. This is because I can't help as much if I only see you when you are perfect! Is there anything you would like me to do or not to do when I visit or meet with other people?"

The child should be kept updated and involved throughout the assessment. While this process may be difficult for the child, not including the child can raise more anxiety. Wondering about what is happening and what people are saying is usually worse than hearing information first hand. In addition, it is disempowering for children to be excluded for something which is about them.

3.6   Individual Behaviour Plans

Once a child's behaviour has been analysed, a strategy can be devised for intervention. All those working with the child and the parents should meet to

discuss the results of the assessment. Consideration should be given to inviting the child for all or part of any meeting. Ideally the analysis should produce information about the problem behaviour, what triggers it, what makes it better, and what makes it worse. It should also provide some indication of potential solutions.

Before an intervention plan is produced it is worthwhile for the team to consider the child as an individual with a problem behaviour, rather than as a problem child. This also helps to devise solutions which will suit that child better, making the intervention plan more personalised. To assist in this, the team can discuss the following questions:

- What do we know about the child e.g. family composition, support systems, friendships, hobbies etc?
- What is the child's stage of development?
- What are the child's strengths – what does he do well?
- What are the child's weaknesses – what doesn't he do well?
- What are the risk and protective factors for the child?
- What does the child like?
- What does the child dislike?
- What is the child's point of view of what the problem is and what should be done about it?
- What strategies for managing the child have worked well?

From this information an individual behaviour plan can be designed. This plan should outline clearly the following information (Mortimer, 2002):

- Who will do ongoing observations and assessments? And when?
- Who is responsible for managing the behaviour?
- What is the inappropriate behaviour you wish to change?
- What behaviour do you want to encourage instead?
- What antecedents lead up to the inappropriate behaviour?
- What are the consequences of this behaviour for the child?

- What will you do to encourage the new behaviour? Consider how you will change the antecedents and consequences of the behaviour in order to change the behaviour.
- What will you do whenever the inappropriate behaviour occurs?
- What are the targets for this term?
- How will you measure whether you have achieved these?
- What is the date of the next review meeting and who is to be invited?

The plan should be consistent in its application and focus on one key worker to provide monitoring. The behaviour management strategy should be reviewed regularly by the worker, her team, the family, and the child.

The child can be supported in creating change via guidance from the key worker. This worker should help the child to (Geldard & Geldard, 1994):

- Identify signals which will warn him of the problem behaviour.
- Learn how to deal with the poor behaviour.
- Learn to be assertive.
- Practise in a role play.
- Experiment at an easier time with a suitable person e.g. not at a stressful time of day with the hardest person.
- Adjust the new behaviour in response to people's reactions.

3.7   General Management Principles

Behaviour management is essential in helping children to relate to others, their environment and themselves, and is an integral part of caring for, teaching, and supervising children. The focus should be on creating an environment where good behaviour receives more attention than bad. In this way the worker encourages the children to be the best they can, rather than dominating or controlling them.

Successful behaviour management requires the children to care about what the adult thinks about them, and therefore work on establishing and developing positive relationships with each child is crucial. Many children who

behave badly do not feel happy with themselves, and paradoxically use their bad behaviour to test out how others feel about them.   If the worker demonstrates the children are liked for who they are rather than what they do, they will probably feel less need to behave badly. Every carer of children has an opportunity and responsibility to:

- Provide education on social, life, and self-care skills.
- Model and teach appropriate expressions of feelings.
- Enable discussions on morals and values in order to promote conscience development of what is right and wrong.
- Create a safe, secure and stimulating environment.
- Establish routines.
- Provide activities which are within the child's capabilities and are fun.
- Give ample positive attention, praise, and encouragement.
- Reward positive behaviours.
- Be consistent.
- Offer guidance, support and empathy.
- Promote age appropriate responsibilities.
- Set boundaries and provide adequate supervision.
- Give simple explanations of what is and is not expected of the child.
- Send a clear message that the child is liked.

Exercise 3c Parental Management
In pairs describe how you were when you were a child to your partner. What would your parents say was your worst behaviour? Why do you think you did this? How did your parents handle this, and did this work?

3.8   Avoiding Behavioural Problems

An environment which is positive, safe and structured greatly helps in reducing the number of behavioural problems. In order to achieve such an environment there needs to be adequate staffing for supervision, provision of individual attention, and the meeting of the children's needs. Without this the guidelines below are very difficult to implement.

There are certain principles which help to motivate children to regulate their own behaviours. These are as follows:

Principle 1 Children love attention

Children who cannot get attention for being good do not want to be ignored and so will misbehave as a means of getting noticed. When children are praised and encouraged regularly they are more likely to repeat those behaviours which are attracting your admiration, and to see themselves as helpful and kind. This therefore enhances a child's self-esteem and coping abilities.

Principle 2 Children need an outlet for their energy

If children are bored, or asked to sit still for too long, they will create their own outlet for excess energy, usually by misbehaving or daydreaming. Workers should recognise the need to run around and be active as part of childhood. Play times, movement activities, creative activities, games, competitions, and errands all help to introduce an energy outlet in a structured and safe way. For example, if a worker notices a child moving a lot in his seat, she can ask him to help her, send him on an errand, or praise him for staying in his seat. This will help him to reduce his movement, while still feeling good about himself.

Principle 3 Children mirror other people's expectations of them

Children learn who they are through other people's beliefs of them. Significant adults in the child's life set the bench mark for what the child can achieve, and the child is likely to work towards this. Carers need to make sure that positive expectations are communicated to the child and that these expectations leave room for growth.   If a worker has low or negative expectations of children then they will make them a reality. For example, if a child is labelled as a trouble maker and the teacher states at the beginning of class that he specifically should behave, that child is more likely to fulfil the teacher's expectation by misbehaving.

We often label children or expect them to behave in a certain way based on our past experiences of the child, or children like them. Workers pass these labels onto new colleagues who then treat the child with preconceived opinions.   Labelling a child makes it likely that a misbehaviour will be responded to more than is necessary, or differently to other children, and increases the likelihood of a negative pattern of interaction with the child.   In order to be able to see and encourage positive change it is important to reframe labels into positive attributes. For example:

Misbehaviour ⟶	Positive Attribute
Shouts out	Confident
Runs around	Energetic
Fights	Passionate about what believes in
Plays in a gang	Team player
Completes tasks quickly and untidily	Results orientated
Acts before thinks	Takes risks
Quiet	Thoughtful
Plays on own	Spends time in his imagination
Cries when hurt	Sensitive
Rude	Courageous
Devious	Clever

Reframing in this way helps the worker to be more positive toward the child and enables a more appropriate response.   Another way to avoid labelling is to make it clear it is the behaviour that is not liked, rather than the child e.g. "I like you very much, but I do not like it when you tease other children".

Exercise 3d Reframing Negative Labels:
Write down the labels you use or hear about the children you work with. How can these be reframed into positive attributes?

Principle 4 Children need their self-esteem reinforced

Self-esteem centres on a person feeling capable. Children are particularly vulnerable to low self-esteem since they are constantly doing new things which they may not be able to manage as well as their peers. Children therefore need a lot of be encouragement and praise to try fresh experiences and should be given tasks which push them but are ultimately within their capabilities. If a child feels bad about himself as a result of failure, he is likely to show difficult behaviours as this confirms to him that he is unsuccessful.

Principle 5 Children are learners

Children are learning constantly about life, relationships, habits, values, morals, and behaviours, and rely on the adults around them to model and teach what to do in different situations. If children are not given this guidance then they cannot be expected to know how to behave in a socially acceptable way.

Principle 6 Children need routines

Experience tells us that appropriate behaviour is most likely if children know what is expected of them. Children respond best to a consistent structure where there are established routines and the environment is calm and purposeful. It may take new children a while to become familiar with routines, and therefore allowances should be made for this.

Principle 7 Children need consistency

Make sure that praise, rewards, and punishments are given with consistency. Children hate unfairness and will protest loudly if they feel that a punishment was given to one child and not to another. Make sure you have time to reflect on whether you treat all children the same. It is not uncommon for a worker to have a favourite child who is treated differently.

Principle 8 Children need responsibilities

Tasks such as tidying up, passing messages to staff, taking care of a pet, or looking after younger children, force children to regulate their own behaviour more since they enjoy the achievement and recognition that comes with responsibility.

All children should be given age-appropriate and achievable responsibilities regardless of their level of behaviour. In fact, children who frequently get into trouble are even more in need of times when they can prove to themselves and others that they can be responsible.

Principle 9 Children are limited by their capabilities

All children are different and have their own strengths and weaknesses. When the worker observes, records, and assesses these she will be able to design activities according to what is realistic. For example, if the whole group are expected to sit still for 45 minutes and 1 child is usually only able to sit for 10, avoid a behavioural problem of the child fidgeting, distracting others, or disengaging, by planning for this issue. Solutions may be to give him a task e.g. to hand out materials, to run a brief errand, or to write on the board. This can be done at ten minute intervals initially e.g. ten minutes sitting, errand, another 10 minutes sitting, write on board etc. This way the child still experiences success and is able to concentrate with mini breaks involving movement. Try to extend the time between errands gradually and praise the child for any ability to concentrate for longer.   This also helps the rest of the group as the worker will be available to provide her full attention to everyone.

3.9 Praise and Rewards

Frequently carers reserve praise and rewards for extra-special behaviour, and will give less positive feedback the more a child is naughty. Ideally the opposite system should be in place since the more children misbehave, the more love, attention, and support they need if they are to be able to feel good about themselves and motivated to improve. This is particularly so for children living away from home, since they may be as naughty as possible as a way of testing whether their new carers will love them and be able to manage them, or if they will send them away like a previous carer. Such children fear they are not loveable and therefore desperately need praise and attention. The most effective way to give praise is to do it before any trouble happens.   Positive behaviour in every child should be noticed and

commended as often as possible.   This means any time children are doing the action you would like to see, reinforce it by giving specific praise.

Children who feel insecure may also demand a lot of attention by being clingy, following the carer around, or demanding one to one time. Carers may not want to give the child additional attention in order to promote more independence. Again, the opposite tactic is more effective. Children who demand attention, need attention. The more attention you can give on a consistent basis, the more likely the child will feel secure enough, over time, to do things on his own. In this way the child is able to reduce his dependency behaviours. (Please refer to section 3.4 in this chapter on attachment problems, for more detail).

When praise and positive attention are not enough to reduce a problem behaviour, rewards can be effective since they give the child an additional incentive to improve.   Rewards should always be accompanied by verbal praise so that eventually the child will find praise gratifying in itself and no longer need the reward.

The best rewards are those which are attention getting, easy and immediate. Try to make rewards non-monetary. Children often prefer a reward which involves individual attention e.g. playing a game together. This also gives the worker an ideal opportunity to praise, develop the relationship, and to work on other skills. Where possible it is helpful to give rewards which use up energy, e.g. outside play, or going on an errand. This is enjoyable for the child and also makes them less likely to have the energy to misbehave. If a reward is given, it should not be taken away for bad behaviour.   Praise and punishments should always be kept separate since no matter how much a child is misbehaving, he will always need support and encouragement. (Please refer to chapter 15 in the manual 'Working with children, groups and families, for more detail on giving praise and rewards').

3.10 Creating Rules

Rules which are implemented consistently create a secure environment in which children can understand what is expected of them and others. Such an environment helps children to feel safe and empowered.

Rules are most effective if:

1. Children are included in designing them.

2. They are limited in number.

3. They are stated positively e.g. 'keep hands and feet to self', rather than a negative command e.g. 'don't hit'. Negative statements are suggestive in that a person has to conjure up the image, before they can reject it. With this image in mind, a child is more likely therefore to hit.

A set of positive rules might be stated as follows:

- Be honest

- Be polite

- Share

- Listen

- Be kind

- Look after property

- Work hard

- Keep hands and feet to self

Or simply: Respect yourselves, others, and property at all times.

4. Rules are best posted on the walls, ideally in picture and word form in order to help children absorb the rule. All the children should know the rules, what they mean, and what is expected of them. E.g.:

Take care of yourself and others

5. Rules should be explained and discussed.   Children benefit from practising the target behaviours in role-plays and other activities e.g. circle time (see chapter 2).

6. Praise all children who adhere to the rules, more than punishing those who do not.

7. Apply them! There should be known consequences for not following the rules and these should be implemented consistently.

8. And finally, make sure the workers set examples of the rules themselves through their own behaviours.

Applying rules

Expect that rules will be broken at times, as a normal part of a child's development. Plan with your colleagues how you will respond in order to create a fair and uniform behaviour management system. Some suggestions are:

- Give limited, positive commands.

- If possible, demonstrate the desired behaviour.

- Use a silent message to indicate a rule e.g. a finger to the lips to ask for no talking.

- Praise all those children who are doing as instructed.

- Give time for the children to comply.

- Show that the rules belong to the agency and are not personal e.g. it is the rule here that swearing is not allowed.

- Do not shout over children.

- Get their attention and then talk calmly.

- If you have to tell a child off, do not shout and if possible do it in private to avoid humiliation. After a child has been told off, drop it.

- Avoid asking too many questions when there is bad behaviour e.g. 'Why', 'who', or 'what', as these can evoke defensive responses. Rely more on stating what you would like to happen e.g. I would like this cleaned up by the time I come back.

- If you need more details then ask an open question e.g. what happened? What's the matter?

3.11 Resolving Problems

Once a negative behaviour has started, the worker needs to find tactics to address it positively. There are several ways of doing this:

a. Accept and embrace the bad behaviour

There are some situations where you can turn negative actions into positive ones by adding some structure and boundaries. For example, if the children are always climbing onto things during playtime, then a playground can be built with climbing apparatus and flooring. If the children are always fighting, bring in a karate instructor to teach them how to use self-defence and develop self control. If the girls are always talking, have a 5 minute talk time at the end or start of every lesson.   This helps the children to express their needs in a way that does not cause them harm, or the worker undue distress. It is also more effective than applying punishments.

b. Involve children in finding solutions

Children can be very insightful and creative regarding solving issues and should be involved in discussions about how to create positive changes. This can include brainstorming, role play, case studies or debates. Please refer to chapter 2 on circle time activities since these include discussions as part of the activity. Workers can teach new skills to assist the children in managing difficult situations e.g. conflict resolution techniques.

c. Effective punishments

Behaviours which break established rules will require some form of sanction. This is especially so for those actions which cause harm to others e.g.

- Stealing
- Lying
- Hitting
- Damage to property
- Severe or repeated name calling

The purpose of sanctions should be to teach self-discipline and encourage social behaviour, rather than to punish the child. Children respond best to non-confrontational approaches to discipline and to being rebuked privately. Public humiliation may increase a child's resistance.

Consistent, small sanctions are more effective in changing behaviour than more severe, occasional punishments. The most effective sanctions are those which attempt to compensate for the damage caused. For example, if a child writes on a wall, it is better to get the child to spend his free time and pocket money cleaning or repainting it, than to ban the child from the centre or ground him.

Exercise 3e Suitable Punishments
In the following situations what punishments would fit the action?
1. Stealing money from another child.
2. Hitting a child.
3. Name calling.

Answer 3e Suitable Punishments
1. To give the object back or pay twice the amount.
2. Give a private or public apology (depending on the wishes of the child who was hit).
3. Write a letter describing all the child's positive qualities.

If there is no obvious compensation the worker can design a punishment which requires physical energy e.g. push-ups, collecting litter, or cleaning. This is effective since it uses up the excess energy which frequently causes a child to misbehave.

d. Timeout
Children who are very wound up may need a cooling off activity before they can undertake a sanction. When children are upset or angry they are not in a co-operative state. Talking about the problem, asking the child to do an energetic activity to release their pent up aggression, or a compensatory activity e.g. apologising, is best done after a period of calming down. The

worker can tell the child to sit quietly until he feels calm enough to resume the activity or to go to a designated quiet area for time-out for a maximum of 5 minutes. This helps children to manage their own behaviours.

The time-out space should be to the side of the play area where the child can sit safely and calm down if over excited, upset, or aggressive. The worker needs to be able to supervise the child during this time, and so ideally the area should be within sight of the main group. It should not contain a lot of distracting objects, and instead may have soft flooring where the child can lie down and listen to relaxing music.

e. Ignoring skills

If a child is trying to get attention by misbehaving then it is best to ignore it, unless the behaviour is causing harm to the child, others or property. To use ignoring successfully, the worker has 2 options – to return attention as soon as the child stops the behaviour by giving praise, or by giving an instruction, ideally with a choice, which focuses on the desired behaviour. For example, if a child loudly refused to join in an activity, the worker could give him praise as soon as he stopped shouting and started the activity - " thank you, George for talking to me in a quiet voice. Good for you for getting on with the task. I am proud that you made that decision on your own".   If the child did not calm down and still refused to comply the worker could give a direct instruction – "George, can I help you start the activity or can you manage on your own?" Both of these options avoid the need for chastising the child and increase the child's ability to self-regulate.

3.12   Management of Specific Problems

The following table highlights intervention strategies for behavioural problems which commonly cause concern in carers.

Behavioural Problem	Assessment	Intervention
Anger	• Is the child expressing	• Accept the anger and label the

	another emotion such as sadness? • Has the child learnt self-control skills? • Does the child have opportunities to express anger safely?	emotion the child is trying to express e.g. you are very frustrated with this task. • Remain calm and do not respond with anger as this will escalate the situation. • Encourage the child to relax by sitting down, having a hug, going to time-out, or taking deep breaths. • If the child has hit someone or damaged property, he should be sent to time-out immediately to cool off. Time-out should be for a maximum of 5 minutes and there should be adult supervision. The child should be expected to apologise and undertake a sanction for hitting (see 3.11c, above). • When the child is relaxed, talk to him about any problems and teach ways for the child to express the underlying emotion is a better way. For example, anger can be safely vented by the child going to his room and punching a pillow, blowing bubbles, tearing up pieces of paper, scribbling, writing a diary, or doing exercise.
Attention deficit problems	• Has the child undergone a formal learning assessment? • Is the environment supporting the child or	• Reduce the amount of distractions in the room e.g. by limiting the amount of toys on display, turning any background music or the TV off. Create an additional space where

	distracting him further? • Is the child worried or anxious and unable to concentrate as a result? • Are the activities stimulating? • Does the child have sufficient opportunities to expend energy? • What is the maximum period the child can focus for? • Is the child able to be successful?	the child can calm down in. This space should be quiet (or with relaxation music), and contain some soft cushions only. • Make sure there are clear and consistent routines for the child to follow. Help the child by preparing him for his next activity e.g. "lets sit here for a minute and think what we shall make for lunch", "Let's lay out your clothes for school tomorrow". • When giving instructions, get down to the child's eye level, if he is moving around, hold the child gently on his shoulders, give the request and ask the child to repeat it back. Make sure this is done in a calm manner. Give time for the child to complete the task. • Ensure the child has frequent opportunities to expend physical energy e.g. sport, art, play, or dancing.
Attention seeking	• Are there any attachment problems? • Does the child receive positive attention from carers? • Is this behaviour developmentally appropriate?	• One carer to spend 15 minutes per day playing with the child on his own. During play the carer should give the child complete attention via the use of commentary on the child's actions and praise. Avoid asking too may questions and do not direct or take over the play. • Provide the child with ample praise, hugs, and individual attention.

		• Reassure the child that you are there for him.
		• Reinforce the child's self-esteem.
		• Encourage age-appropriate responsibilities and ensure tasks are achievable.
Lying	• Is the child fantasizing, or believes the lie to be true? • Is the child lacking in positive attention? • Are there attachment problems? • What level of conscience development does the child have? • Is the child lying as he fears a punishment?	• If the child is fantasizing or believes the lie to be true, do not chastise the child, but explain that it is make-believe. • If you know who has done something wrong, focus your attention on the compensatory sanction. Do not ask who did it. E.g. "I saw you take the money on the table. You will return it and pay the same amount again out of your pocket money next week". • If you do not know who is lying, invite the children to tell what happened. If no-one owns up, apply a sanction to the whole group. • Make sure a child is rewarded for telling the truth. If a sanction is given for doing something, whether the child was honest or not, there is no incentive for the child to own up. • When the incident is over, explain to the child that you love them but that lying is not acceptable. Encourage the child to be as open as possible. Reassure the child that he will not be rejected or physically hurt if he

		does something wrong.
Over eating	• Does the child eat too fast? • Is the child substituting food for a lack of love? • Is the child aware of feelings of hunger or being full?	• Encourage the child to chew the food well. Give small portions and refill the plate rather than one large serving. • When the carer feels the child has had adequate food, offer a hug or individual attention (Fahlberg, 94).
Soiling	• Is there enough fibre in the child's diet? • Is the child repressing anger? • Is the child worried or anxious? • Is the child aware of the sensation of needing the toilet?	• Increase the child's intake of high fibre foods. • Encourage the child to go to the bathroom immediately after eating and sit on the toilet for a few minutes. Give positive reinforcement each time. There should be no punishment for soiling or not going to the toilet. If the child soils his clothes or bed sheets, show him where to put his laundry and where to find clean clothes (Fahlberg, 94).

3.13 Agency Strategies

Anyone working with children, benefits from having clear agency guidelines on how to support children's behaviours.   This helps staff respond with confidence and in a consistent manner. Parents and outside professionals should be made aware of the approach used, so that they can adopt it also. This co-ordinated strategy is particularly essential since a lack of team work is likely to be a prime environmental factor in the production of challenging behaviour (Hewett, 1998). There should also be clarity on who is responsible for what action and which children. Therapeutic staff should not be involved in disciplining or rewarding children as this will negatively affect any counselling work.

Positive behaviour strategies in an agency such as a school or residential home, generally support children in 3 ways.

1. Children receive immediate praise and recognition for behaving well.
2. Children work towards individual goals to further their development and potential.
3. Children work as a team to support each other and to resolve problems.

Agency strategies should reinforce a child's self-esteem and confidence via setting firm boundaries with consequences that are respectful, and which enable children to regulate themselves.

While strategies which focus on punishments as the main method of controlling negative behaviours are likely to result in less misbehaviour in the short term, in the long run they will lower self-esteem and confidence, and reduce problem-solving abilities.

Below are activities which enhance positive behaviour management on an agency level.

a. Post box

A post box can be installed to encourage the children to post anonymous notes regarding any worries they have or suggestions. This enables children to express their concerns privately. The letters can be reviewed by a member of staff to consider what action to take e.g. a written response, circle time, a group meeting or workshop.

b. Children's Council

A children's council is a committee made up of children who represent their peers, in order to discuss issues which affect them. It is a democratic forum, through which opinions are heard and collective choices made.   It also provides an opportunity for the children to take on more responsibilities, and to develop problem-solving and communication skills.

Representatives can be selected through a voting or rotational process. Those who are chosen are responsible for asking their peers which issues need to be discussed and bringing these to the council. The council works through an agenda of such items, considers what options are available, and votes on what action to take. If the children want to have more freedom in a certain area, then this also brings with it responsibilities. The council should agree on any rules that are needed in order to make sure a new idea will work. It is helpful if new actions can be put through a trial period. Any agreed actions are made known to the other children via their representative or through minutes of meetings placed on a notice board.

Workers can chair and minute the meeting if needed, but their role is only as a facilitator and they should not take over the discussions. Actions agreed at the council, should be implemented and supported by staff.

c. Peer Mediation

Usually when children have problems, it is the role of the adult to find solutions. In peer mediation, the children are referred to two peers who have been named as counsellors. The counsellors undergo some training in how to help others by listening to both sides of a problem impartially and eliciting solutions from those involved. They are encouraged not to take sides, blame or give advice in order that they can be fair.   All the children are advised of how mediation works and any rules. Common rules for a mediation session are:

- No swearing.
- Don't get in a temper. Keep calm.
- Don't fight.
- One person talks at a time. No interrupting.
- No name calling, accusing or blaming. No threats or saying nasty things about each other.
- Keep it private. Do not tell others unless it is so serious we need some other help.
- Tell the truth.

The counsellors start a mediation session by going over the rules and checking if both parties agree to abide by them and want to resolve the conflict. The children are then thanked for coming to talk about the problem. One child is invited to tell his side of the story. This is then repeated back to check for accuracy. The next child gives his version. Both children are asked how they feel and how they think the other person feels. The children are then asked to consider what might have caused the problem, what they can do to solve it, and how they can avoid the same problem in the future. Finally, the children are reminded of what they have agreed to do and are thanked for their participation and honesty. A follow-up meeting can be arranged to check that the agreed actions are underway.

d. Circle Time

Circle time enhances children's ability to empathise, self-regulate, and support others, while raising self-awareness and confidence. The circle time process as an activity model is discussed in chapter two. Circle time can also be used as a method for resolving behavioural problems.   It is an opportunity to:

- Share concerns, ideas and feelings
- Ask for help
- Learn alternative ways of managing situations
- Get feedback on each other from peers
- Get praise for achievements
- Receive rewards
- Decide on their goals for the coming week

The children meet with their worker once or twice a week for 30-45 minutes and sit on chairs in a circle to discuss what each other have done well that week, any problems, and their targets for the following week. During these discussions the children are encouraged to come up with supportive and creative ways to help each other. For example, a child who is having a hard time with his behaviour might be invited to try something new and if successful might be given a reward by the group.   Parents, staff or other children can

also be invited to circle time in order to help resolve a problem or to hear about successes.

Chapter two provides a detailed description of the circle time rules and activities which develop skills. Below is a suggested agenda for a behaviour management circle time session.

Agenda:

a. Ground rules (see chapter 2)

b. Warmer (see chapter 2)

c. Agenda setting

d. Review of positives

e. The children take it in turns around the circle, using a talking object, to comment on what each other has done well that week. This includes improvements in behaviour, school and sport successes, or other good news. The children are encouraged to praise each other and to recognise positives in themselves. The worker can also add her thoughts and observations.

f. If the group are using a system of rewards, then this is an opportunity to review what rewards should be distributed.

g. Open forum

The children are given an opportunity to raise any concerns or problems they are having. The other children can brainstorm potential solutions and offer support to the child.   A child who is frequently getting into trouble for poor behaviour can raise this issue himself or the worker can highlight the concern. The worker should stress that positive things about the child should be stated first and then to make it clear that people like the child, but not his choice of behaviour. In this way the child gains insight from the others about their perception of what helps or hinders the problem and can reflect on his own feelings. The group can help him by coming up with ideas on how to avoid sanctions. The child can then decide what he would like to try next week and ask a peer to encourage him during the week.

h. Any other business

i.   Closing activity (see chapter 2)

e. Guardian Angels

Children who are trying to improve their behaviour benefit from someone to support them in this process. A guardian angel is a peer whom a child can nominate to help him in situations that he cannot handle. The angel gives the child advice, encouragement and support when needed.

If a circle time process is being used (see above), the angel reports on the child's progress to the circle, and the circle rewards the angel. The children can make friendship bracelets that can be worn by a child who is a guardian angel.

3.14 Summary

When working with children, behavioural problems should be expected. Behaviour management skills therefore are a fundamental tool for anyone looking after children. Behaviour management is a tool for raising a child's confidence and esteem. This is achieved via positive strategies which focus on the children's ability to control their own actions. The adult's task is to teach skills and inspire personal growth, and not to just get rid of inappropriate behaviour.

Children who have been abused or neglected will require additional understanding and support. Carers must have a solid knowledge of how trauma affects young people, child development, and attachment theory, since any behaviours must be fully understood in order for the right intervention plan to be put into place.

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