

Module 7

Module 7 is to understand what's behind the 'behaviour' so we can try and figure it out and work out what we as teachers need to do to help. Understanding the child's behaviour is key – how would you go about "unpacking" the behaviour? What tools would be helpful?

Understanding Distressed Behaviours

Understanding Both Sides

From the teacher's perspective, the child demonstrates problem behaviours by:

- Not complying with instructions.
- Disrupting group times.
- Throwing tantrums.
- Destroying property.
- Being aggressive.
- Not participating, (such as sitting in a corner following their own interest).

From the child's perspective, the teacher demonstrates problem behaviours by:

- Making demands that the student does not understand.
- Communicating in ways that are difficult to understand.
- Expecting them to communicate back.
- Expecting them to engage in social activities, where the demands are far too great.
- Expecting them to stay in highly arousing sensory environments.
- Limiting their interests.

• **Positive Behaviour Supports**

- Many of the strategies discussed in previous topics can be used to help prevent or minimise problem behaviours.
- These include:
 - Teaching the child alternative behaviours or appropriate behaviours in different settings.
 - Increasing their ability to communicate their needs through augmentative systems.
 - Providing regular physical activities or providing a quiet space for the student.
 - Supporting the child through everyday transitions.

What you see

"Your attitude is the paintbrush of the mind, it colours everything you see"

Barry Prizant



Distressed Behaviour



Why?

- **What should we do when it happens**
- **Why is more important**
- **Understanding the why can lead us to prevention**
- **Getting the wrong why gives us the wrong solution**

What to think about when 'unpacking' the behaviour?

Here is a simple tool to gather as much information as possible about behaviour and determine the function or purpose of that behaviour from the child's perspective.

1. Describe the behaviour in detail
Describe the behaviour accurately, but in non-judgemental terms. Is this a challenging behaviour?
2. Describe the setting
What environmental and sensory demands may contribute to the behaviour occurring? From what you know about autism and the individual child, how do you guess the child might be feeling?
3. Describe the trigger
Identify, if possible what occurred just before the behaviour happened.
4. Describe the results
What are the results of the behaviour? Include positive, negative, social, sensory, and material results.

Support Plan

Understanding why the behaviour happened is always the starting point. A support plan should reflect two principal areas; strategies that are going to be used to **prevent or minimise** the occurrence of the behaviour and creating a plan **to teach new** behaviours.

Some tips to creating a support plan:

1. Discover the function

From all the information gathered, what do you think might be the function or purpose of the behaviour for the child?

2. Assess impact of possible changes

Can you change the settings or the trigger of the behaviour?
How might these changes affect the behaviour?
Can you re-design or alter the environment?
How might you be able to change the way your child feels about the situation?

3. Teach a new skill

What new skill or more effective communication strategy could you introduce to prevent the behaviour or negate the trigger?
What types of visual supports might help reduce the child's anxiety?

4. Individualise

Remember that any intervention should be child-centred and consider the individual child's characteristics.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

It is certainly true that emotions can be directly linked to a child's ability to learn. There is a close connection between a child's state of arousal and their capacity to learn and play.

Put simply if a child is frightened, anxious, frustrated or depressed, that child will find it nearly impossible to participate within the centre.

What Is Emotion Regulation and Why Is It Important?

Emotional regulation is the ability to recognise, manage, and respond to your emotions. When you don't know how to regulate emotions, these can get hold of you and impact the way you relate to yourself, others and the world in general. Helping autistic children to learn self- regulation strategies can make a big impact on the wellbeing of children and their families. If someone is not well regulated or is becoming dysregulated, they are not going to be able to learn and engage socially. We must learn to recognise the signs of dysregulation and support the child to regulate again – maybe by offering a break (trampoline, climbing, etc.) before attempting to re-engage them, or by modifying what you're asking them to do.

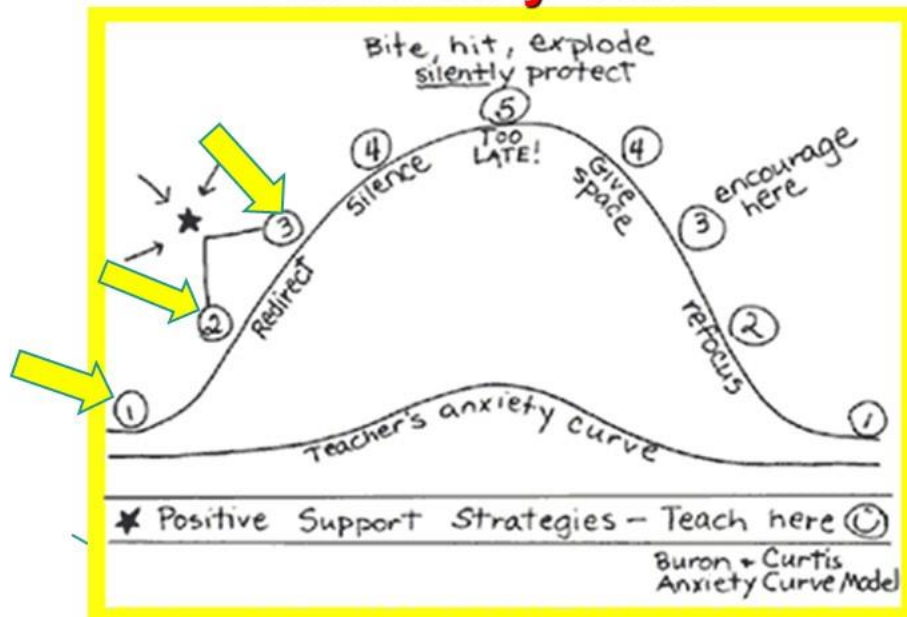
Video references:

Links to short videos from:

Twinkl EYFS: https://youtu.be/Ejv_1botGpw

Autism little learners: <https://youtu.be/rhRQTnWLokk>

The Anxiety Curve



The Anxiety Curve shows us how and when we can support our autistic child to stay regulated and calm.

- **Level 1:** This the foundation of your plan. Where positive and valuing relationships are built. This is when you teach skills needed for more challenging situations (e.g. teach social skills, relaxation or a calming activity, using schedules, social stories).
- **Level 2:** The first red flag where you may observe subtle signs of distress. At this stage try to redirect the child away from the stress or focus on proactive strategies (e.g. calming activities, more visual support, a quiet place to work, reframing the demand). At this stage children may still be able to communicate their choices.
- **Level 3:** It is time to leave the anxiety producing event if possible. Attention should be on refocusing the student in a relaxed way. Last hope prior to near explosive level 4. You might be able to move yourself and coax person to quiet place. This is not a good time to teach and use lots of language.
- **Level 4:** Delicate level. It is often too late to redirect but you may be able to remediate the situation by being quiet. Try and calm the situation by backing off as much as possible and refrain from asking the student to make choices. Try to remain calm and show this in your body language and breathing.
- **Level 5:** Extremely out of control. The student might be hitting, throwing, crying, biting etc. Not a time to direct, talk or analyse. Focus should be on never getting here again. Revisit your preventative plan.

- **Level 4:** Person should be encouraged to relax rather than redirected.
- **Level 3:** Use encouraging supportive words here. Don't yet discuss the incident if possible.
- **Level 2:** Use calm redirection here.
- **Level 1:** Success

How to support emotional regulation

It is vital that adults are responsive and recognise the child's emotional states throughout the day and validate how the child is feeling (e.g. if sad, adult says 'sad' and shows it on his/her own face and body language). This is the start of teaching the child to recognise emotions in themselves and in others. It is important to liaise with the child's family to come up with a list of activities/objects that will support their emotional regulation (e.g. playdough, jumping, chew toy, singing). Share this list with your team so that everyone is aware of how to best support the child in your centre. Many of the activities and objects will help to redirect the child and make them feel calm and/or alert.

Video references:

Links to short videos from:

Level up puppets: <https://youtu.be/b1cnNsTPRaA>

Resources:

<https://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html>

<https://sensorysam.co.nz/>