

4 Reasons Why Your Child's Behaviour Is Challenging and How to Help

Sensory needs

We all experience the sensory input around us in different ways. Some people have more sensitive senses than others whilst some people may have under sensitive senses, or perhaps not register specific sensory input at all. We have 8 sensory systems, processing external as well as internal sensory input. When these sensory messages become confused or are experienced in different ways, it can have a big impact on how we behave.



You may see...

A child who is sensitive to sounds cover their ears, shout or may refuse to go somewhere because of certain sounds. A child with an underdeveloped interoception sense (the sensations we get from our internal organs) may not respond to feelings of hunger, temperature or needing the toilet. A child with an under-sensitive tactile (touch) system may seek out different textures or pressure.

You can help by...

Supporting a child's sensory needs! Identify their individual sensory needs and help them regulate those sensory systems. This is done by providing them with the sensory stimulation they may be seeking, as well as ensuring they are not in any uncomfortable sensory situations. For more information on sensory needs visit '[Help Support My Sensory Processing](#)'.

Escape or avoidance

Does your child not want to do something or do they want to leave an activity? Perhaps they are not engaged and want to leave, or they see something more exciting elsewhere. Maybe the task is too difficult for them or they are not sure what to do. If a child is unable to communicate that they don't want to do something, then we will of course see this through their behaviour.



You may see...

Any type of behaviour to try to avoid or escape a situation. For example, it could be a child dropping to the floor when you sit down to work at the table with them. They may hit another child or bang their head in order to leave the room.

You can help by...

Ensuring they have a way of communicating that they want to leave or that they want a break. Ensure what they are doing is engaging, motivating and is well modelled to show the child what to do. There is no point in giving a child a maths worksheet if this is unengaging to them or too difficult. Give them a maths activity that they will be motivated to do. Always show them how to do this by modelling and perhaps feature favourite objects or activities to reach the intended learning outcome. To learn more about supporting communication, visit '[Help Me Communicate](#)'.

Tangibles or activities

If a favourite toy is taken away from a child without any warning, this is of course going to result in frustration. This is the same if an object that a child wants, is in their view. For some children depending on their age and ability, it can be difficult to understand that they cannot have something they see.



You may see...

A child getting very upset or hitting and kicking if a toy is taken from them. They may climb a bookcase to reach a toy they can see or scream and throw things because they want to go swimming.

You can help by...

Preparing children for when they can have certain activities and objects, perhaps through a visual timetable showing pictures of what is happening in the day. Ensure children have enough preparation time when an object will be removed. Sand timers are a great visual count down resource to help a child understand when an activity will be finishing. For more information about supporting understanding, visit '[Help Me Understand Transitions](#)'.

Social attention

A child may behave in different ways in order to receive attention from a person or people (and this could be positive or negative attention). A child with social communication difficulties may find it difficult to understand the difference between positive and negative attention and may seek either.



You may see...

A child hit another child to get their attention (they may not know another way of doing this). You may see a child doing something and looking at an adult straight after. They may be seeking attention from that adult. A child may try to do something that looks 'inappropriate' however is the way they have learnt to get the attention from an adult or other child.

You can help by...

Giving the child positive attention. Model and support interaction with other children and adults. Make sure this happens frequently. Redirect the child to a positive interaction. To learn more about supporting social interaction, visit '[Help Me Build Relationships](#)'.

Always approach behaviour that challenges in a calm manner. Being calm yourself will have a calming impact on the child.

Exercise

Keep a diary of any behaviour that challenges. This can be helpful in pinpointing the reason for the behaviour. It is especially important to keep a note of what happened before the behaviour. The more detail the better!

If you are really struggling to pinpoint the reason why a child is behaving the way they are, make sure to rule out any medical issues.