Challenging Behaviours

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Challenging behaviours? It’s as easy as ABC to deal with!

Children diagnosed with autism or related disorders are usually placed in “Behavioural therapy” or better known as an “ABA program” (applied behavioural analysis). Through years of research, ABA has been proven to be a successful intervention for children on the autistic spectrum. That said, ABA works in more fields than just autism. Simple principles of ABA can be used with any child (or husband!) in order to produce change in challenging behaviour.

The ABC model:

The ABC model stands for antecedent, behaviour and consequence. This model suggests you can change any behaviour by either changing the antecedent (what happens before the behaviour occurs) or the consequence (what happens after the behaviour occurs).

Determining the function of a challenging behaviour:

There are typically four functions of challenging behaviours, namely attention, access to tangible (toy/motivating item), escape and automatic. If you know the function, you can determine how to manage the behaviour. Ignore behaviours with an attention, escape or tangible function and persist through a task. If a child shouts for a toy, it's better to NOT pay attention to the shouting. Remember any attention, good or bad, is attention.

The secret ingredient = reinforcement!

Parents call it bribery, professionals call it reinforcement! The truth is it’s a bit of both. As a professional behavioural specialist I’ve noticed parents and professionals focusing on managing challenging behaviours and ignoring the positive behaviours. If you ask your child to take a bath, you have to give them something (whether it be five minutes with your iPad or reading a story book) as being clean is not always of utmost importance for our youngsters!

Implementing the ABC model into your daily lives:

Even though this might all seem like a foreign language, it is instinctual to us all. With a bit of practice we

can all manage any challenging behaviour our children come up with.

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