



Understanding Challenging Behaviour and ASD

Ron Fortuna and Angela Capper



1

What is Challenging Behaviour?

Inappropriate behaviour which is socially unacceptable given the individual's age, interferes other people, and/or is likely to cause harm to the individual or others, or is likely to damage property.



2

Are these behaviours challenging?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shouting | <input type="checkbox"/> Dropping to the ground |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swearing | <input type="checkbox"/> Defiant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hitting | <input type="checkbox"/> Obsessive interests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kicking | <input type="checkbox"/> Attention seeking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scratching | <input type="checkbox"/> Pulling hair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biting | <input type="checkbox"/> Throwing objects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spitting | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding demands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uncooperative | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Injury |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temper tantrum | <input type="checkbox"/> Pinching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Damaging property | <input type="checkbox"/> Anything Else??? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grabbing | |

3

So what?

Challenging behaviour is normal - we all do it



4

How do we feel when faced with behaviour which challenges?



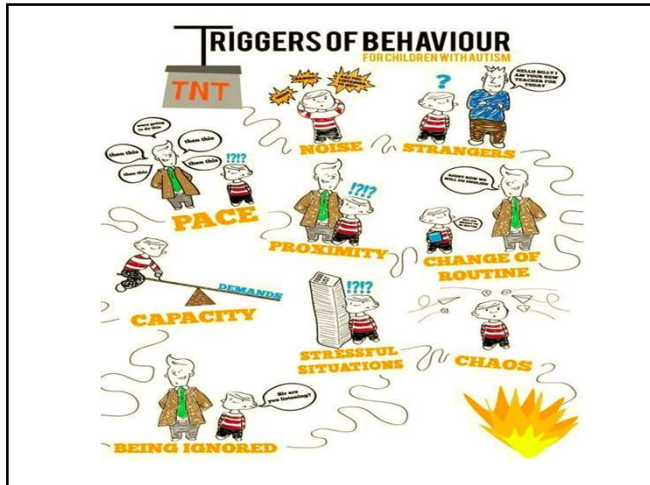
5

Triggers for Challenging Behaviour

Particular difficulties for people with Autism

- Some behaviour will be a reaction to stress.
- Not having great insight into their own feelings or being able to pick up on mounting signs of distress.
- Not instinctively knowing how to express emotions
- Coping with some environments due to sensory sensitivity
- Not automatically knowing how to behave in situations and are likely to need much more behaviour education than most.
- Not understanding why they are getting told off.
- Not usually having the insight to know how to improve / behave alternatively.

6

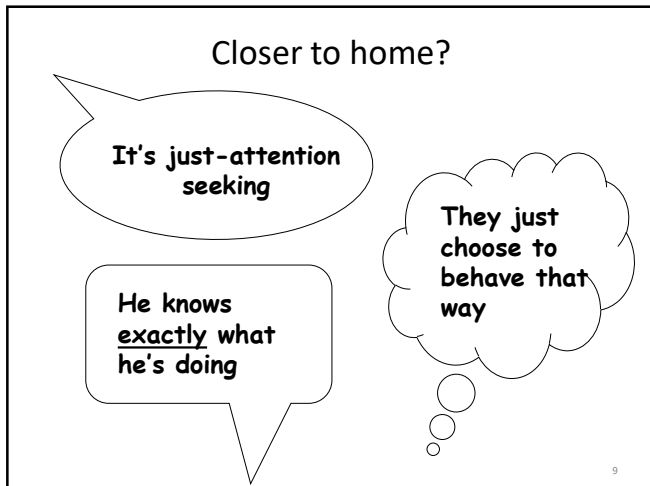


7

Don't make the mistake of assuming the child with ASD is deliberately making behavioural choices



8



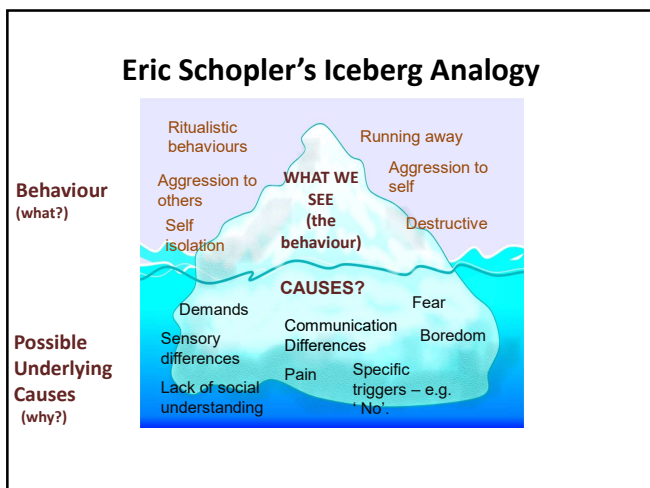
9

To change behaviour, it helps to understand the behaviour

... and if the person has autism ...

To understand the behaviour, it helps to understand the autism

10



11

At the shopping centre: 10 year old Jack

Behaviour

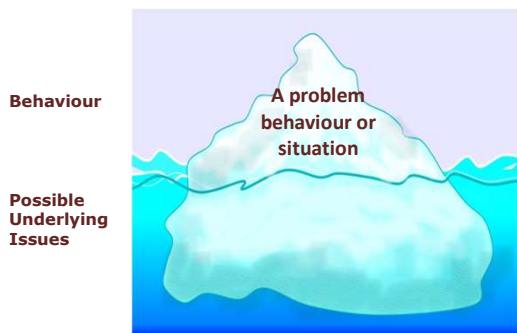
Possible Underlying Issues

Shouting "I want to go home" and trying to drag you out of a shop towards the car park

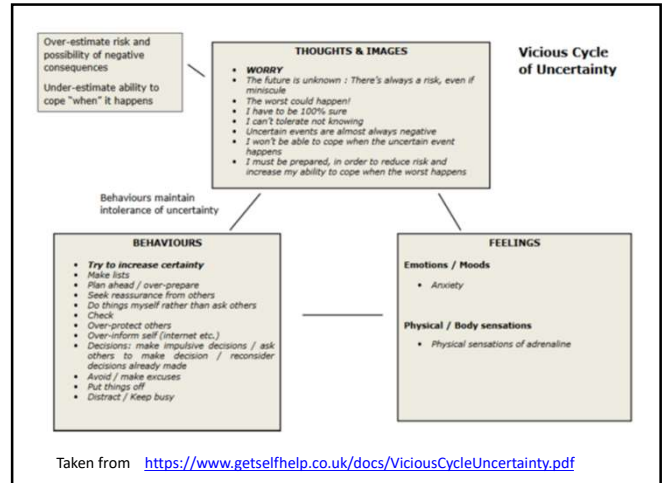
Sensory overload (noise, lighting, proximity of people)
Uncertainty over length/purpose of trip
Crowded shops, anxiety over social interactions
Mounting stress leading to inability to communicate and process verbal information

12

So, what about your child?



13



14

Replace the problem: What do you want him to do instead?

We're pretty good at knowing what we want them to **stop** doing but what do we want them to **start** doing?

Replace the problem behaviour with:

- New and better skills that get the same results
- Coping skills
- A less challenging behaviour

15

15

Replacing the problem:

Teach better ways to get needs met:

- Asking for what he wants/needs
- Saying "no" in a socially acceptable way
- Asking for help

Teach better ways to play/interact with others:

- Explain visually (Comic Strip Conversations, Social Stories)
- Model and role play

Teach better ways to pass time, play or have fun

16

16

Replacing the problem: coping skills

Learning to tolerate.....especially change

- Build up in small steps
- Develop positive associations

Exit strategies

- Tuning in to 'red lights' - knowing **when** to get out
- Agreeing and practicing **how** to get out

Develop an 'emotional toolbox'

- Develop emotional awareness
- Tools for mood management

17

17

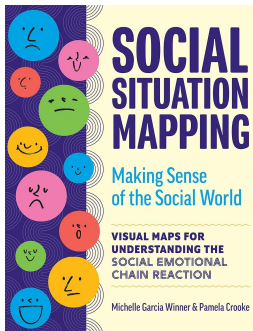
Maintaining Wellbeing



- Sleep
- Diet
- Physical Activity
- Relaxation Techniques

18

Social Situation Mapping



Social Situation Mapping clearly sets out the consequences and results of expected, and unexpected behaviour. Situation maps of school, community and home situations are all included.

19

Expected...

A Social Situation is highlighted on the top of each map.

In the Expected Behaviours map, expectations are clearly outlined.

The positive consequences as a result are also clearly mapped – this is important because no one ever tells you what you get when you do the right thing... It often is just expected!

INITIATING PLAY WITH OTHERS Behaviors That Are EXPECTED			
Expected Behaviors	How They Make Others Feel	Consequences You Experience	How You Feel About Yourself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the people you want to play with. Do you really want to play with them? Do you like them? Do you like how they play? Do you like how they talk? Do you like how they act? Do you like how they look? Do you like how they smell? Do you like how they taste? Do you like how they feel? Do you like how they sound? Do you like how they look? Do you like how they smell? Do you like how they taste? Do you like how they feel? Do you like how they sound? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others will see that you are thinking about them and that you are trying to play with them. They are likely to be happy to play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proud
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the people you want to play with if they want to play with you. Do you want to play with them? Do you like them? Do you like how they play? Do you like how they talk? Do you like how they act? Do you like how they look? Do you like how they smell? Do you like how they taste? Do you like how they feel? Do you like how they sound? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others will see that you are asking them if they want to play with you. They are likely to be happy to play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proud
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait until the people you want to play with are ready to play with you. Do you want to play with them? Do you like them? Do you like how they play? Do you like how they talk? Do you like how they act? Do you like how they look? Do you like how they smell? Do you like how they taste? Do you like how they feel? Do you like how they sound? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others will see that you are waiting until they are ready to play with you. They are likely to be happy to play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proud
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk up to the people you want to play with and say hello. Do you want to play with them? Do you like them? Do you like how they play? Do you like how they talk? Do you like how they act? Do you like how they look? Do you like how they smell? Do you like how they taste? Do you like how they feel? Do you like how they sound? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others will see that you are saying hello to them. They are likely to be happy to play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proud
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add your own ideas. Do you want to play with them? Do you like them? Do you like how they play? Do you like how they talk? Do you like how they act? Do you like how they look? Do you like how they smell? Do you like how they taste? Do you like how they feel? Do you like how they sound? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others will see that you are adding your own ideas. They are likely to be happy to play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proud
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be ready. Do you want to play with them? Do you like them? Do you like how they play? Do you like how they talk? Do you like how they act? Do you like how they look? Do you like how they smell? Do you like how they taste? Do you like how they feel? Do you like how they sound? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others will see that you are being ready to play with them. They are likely to be happy to play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proud

20

Unexpected...

The types of behaviours that are unexpected are then highlighted.

Consequences are clearly outlined.

This helps the child to make the correct, informed choices about their behaviours.

INITIATING PLAY WITH OTHERS Behaviors That Are UNEXPECTED			
Unexpected Behaviors	How They Make Others Feel	Consequences You Experience	How You Feel About Yourself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking up to others and grabbing them without you want to play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher may bench you or ask you to stand on the wall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embarrassed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrupting or going first. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will not understand your plan. They will think you are not really ready. They will not want to play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embarrassed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking or talking to others when they are not talking to you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will not understand their conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lonely
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not adding people to the game when they are not adding people to the game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will probably ignore you or leave. They might leave you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confused
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not listening to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will not play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lonely
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not appropriately responding when you are thinking about them and they are not thinking about you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will not play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lonely
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking to play with people who have been asked to stop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will not play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lonely
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying if you lose the game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will not play with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lonely

21

Prevention: build in 'good stuff'

- Schedule obsessions
- Give 'down time'
- Provide positive experiences
 - Physical activity
 - Expand interests
- Schedule what he needs - before he takes it

Aim to keep stress low and mood positive



22

Prevention: build in structure

Add structure + predictability

- The environment: what to do where
- Time: first...then....
when things start, finish and what next
- Routines for key tasks and activities in the day



1. Where have I got to be?
2. When have I got to be there?
3. What have I got to do?
4. What happens next?

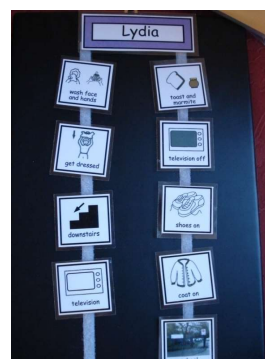
23

23

schedules

doing what and when

Examples:



24

24

Two very different visual support examples:



25

Punishment: when and if?

Consider punishment only when:

- Preventive strategies are in place
- New skills and behaviours are being promoted

Use only if the child:

- Has the skills to behave differently
- Is likely to understand and remember the link
- Has something to lose



26

26

Rewards



Pitching demands

- Start generous - increase demands slowly
- Proportional systems better than 'threshold' systems
(A few stars= a few rewards; a lot of stars=a lot of rewards)
- Include a 'roll over'
(Today's stars count for something tomorrow)

Use visual systems

- To remind of the choices available
- To remind what he is 'working towards'

27

27



28

Supporting Social Interactions

- Try and provide regular face to face opportunities for social interactions with relatives, family friends and if possible, peers from school.
- Have household "social times" scheduled into each day when your child is expected to take part in activity/game with others in the household.

29

Supporting Social Interactions with Peers

- Practice asking "Can I play?", "Would you like to play cars?"
- Role-play scenarios
- Test skills by asking 'What would you do if...?'
- Structure friendship situations
- Identify appropriate conversation topics
- Use visual prompts, if needed



30

Coping with Social Situations, such as Birthday Parties and Family Gatherings

- A Social Story may be a good introduction
- Be realistic in your expectations
- Have an 'escape plan' and/or "chill" area
- Don't be tempted to extend longer than they can cope with – build on their successes slowly



31

Playdates

- Keep first visit to a short length of time (an hour or less). build on success!
- Identify in advance activities that both children enjoy
- Create a "schedule"
- Stay nearby to children to supervise/move on when needed
- Consider inviting 2 friends so that they can play together if your child needs a short break
- Consider sharing your child's difficulties with the other parents so that they can discuss with their children how they can help their friend



32

Focusing on Positives

- Shift the focus from the negative thought and turn into a positive e.g. "The swimming pool is shut today but we can go to the swings at the park".
- Positive, repetitive mantras can sometimes help.
- It can sometimes be helpful to blame something that is outside the household control e.g. "It's not Mummy that says "no", it is the rules from The Government"

33

Crisis Tips



- Reduce your language to an absolute minimum
- Try to use visual prompts
- Don't escalate the conflict
- Remain calm!
- Remove (or remove from) audience
- Deflect or distract

34

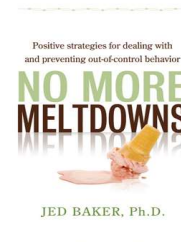


When it all goes pear-shaped...

- Withdraw to a quiet area
- Time to be quiet
- Try a routine of breathing/ relaxation
- Explore the trigger **later** in the day (maybe through a comic strip conversation)

35

No More Meltdowns by Jed Baker



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pH98UraqjG8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlqKlrcWaN8>

36

Remember:

- All behaviour is a form of communication
- Try and “unpick” the underlying reason for the behaviour and put in place preventative strategies
- Reward and focus on positive behaviours
- Try and present expectations visually and consistently
- Finally, act on your gut instincts and your parental intuition... every child is different and unique.

37

What about your child?

What challenges are you facing at the moment?

38