

Module PP-M1

Understanding children's difficult behaviour

Content

- Understanding the causes of difficult behaviour
- Factors which contribute to difficult behaviour
- How these factors link to the family and caregiver
- Understanding the situational context for difficult behaviour, and the importance of consistency and the difficulty of maintaining it.

Materials

- h Handout
 - n Practitioner notes
 - r Record
 - w Worksheet
- Behaviour rating scale [PP-1] r
 - Four factors [PP-2] w
 - ABC of behaviour [PP-3] h
 - ABC of behaviour worksheet [PP-4] w



Main steps

Track responses to previous sessions – for example, to indicate that having developed the capacity to have an enjoyable time with children through one-on-one time the approaches discussed in these modules build on that foundation.

Weekly ratings

Introduce the 'Behaviour rating scale' [PP-1] as a helpful way of obtaining a snapshot of the week and also information on the most positive as well as the most difficult behaviours.

Exploration of the last 24 hours

Go through the last 24 hours to discuss the child's behaviour.

The causes of children's difficult behaviour

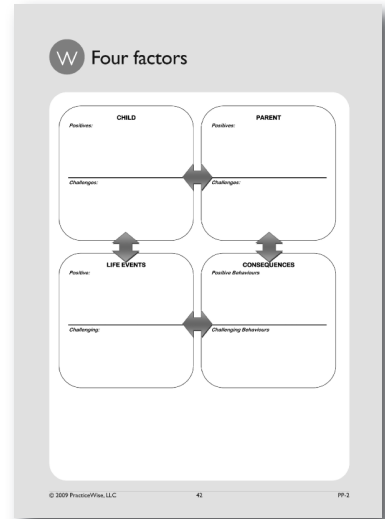
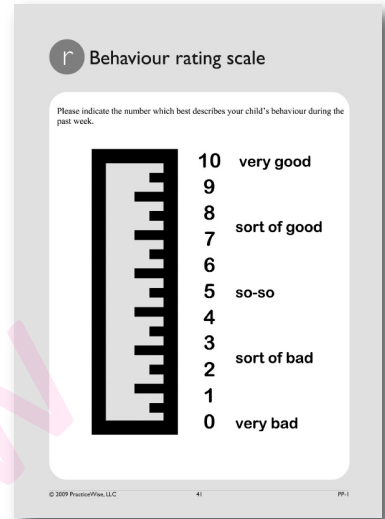
- Elicit the caregiver's perceptions regarding the causes of misbehaviour – e.g. attention seeking, caregiver's demands outside the home, child's nature from birth, including any temperamental difficulties.
- Acknowledge the caregiver's responses and explain that the causes of misbehaviour are complex, such that there is rarely one cause and it is not any one person's 'fault'.
- Introduce the Four factors model⁴ (see 'Four factors' [PP-2]).
- Summarise the parents' views.

Using the 'Four factors' worksheet, discuss each section and complete it with the parent. The script below gives some possible approaches that you can adapt to the family's context and the age or developmental stage of the child or young person.

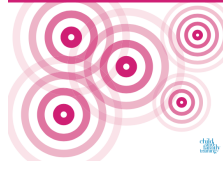


Many experts would agree with your understanding of why your child misbehaves. There are lots of different causes. It is helpful to group these together and we will work through each of them to see how relevant it is to your child.

The first factor is the nature of the child.



⁴ Chorpita, B.F. and Weisz, J.R. (2009) *MATCH-ADTC. Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct Problems*. Florida: PracticeWise, LLC.



Factor 1: Child characteristics

Temperament



Each child is different, and we describe these differences – the basic building blocks – as temperament. They include how active the child is, their attention span, whether they are irritable, sociable, get along well with others, their enjoyment of routine, how they react to particular food stuffs. Many of these factors are fairly clear from the earliest days of the child's life and continue to show themselves.

Are any of these factors relevant for your child? Sometimes, their temperament can bring them into conflict with other children or with adults or teachers.

Attachment patterns⁵



Another factor is the type of attachment pattern that children show. Children can be described as 'secure', 'insecure' or 'disorganised' in their attachment patterns. As a result, some children can go on being clingy and controlling, others very avoidant. Sometimes there can be a combination of both, which can be very difficult. When these characteristics are all joined together they can make some children very challenging and their behaviour difficult, both at home and at school. Does that make any sense to you? Has your child been described as having attachment difficulties? What do you understand this to mean?

Physical development



A child's particular capacities, their appearance, how well coordinated they are, their strength, how good they are with language and their responsiveness can all play a part, so that a child with good language can put their point of view well. A child without these skills might be explosive and angry instead, indicating a degree of frustration.

A child who has difficulties catching or throwing can get very frustrated when they are with other children or playing games.

Let's see if we can construct the patterns that your child has that may contribute to their behaviour difficulties.

⁵ See also *Promoting attachment, attuned responsiveness and positive emotional relationships*.