

Behaviour as a form of communication



Communication

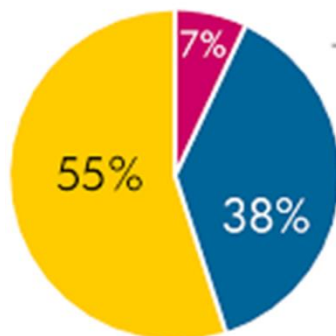
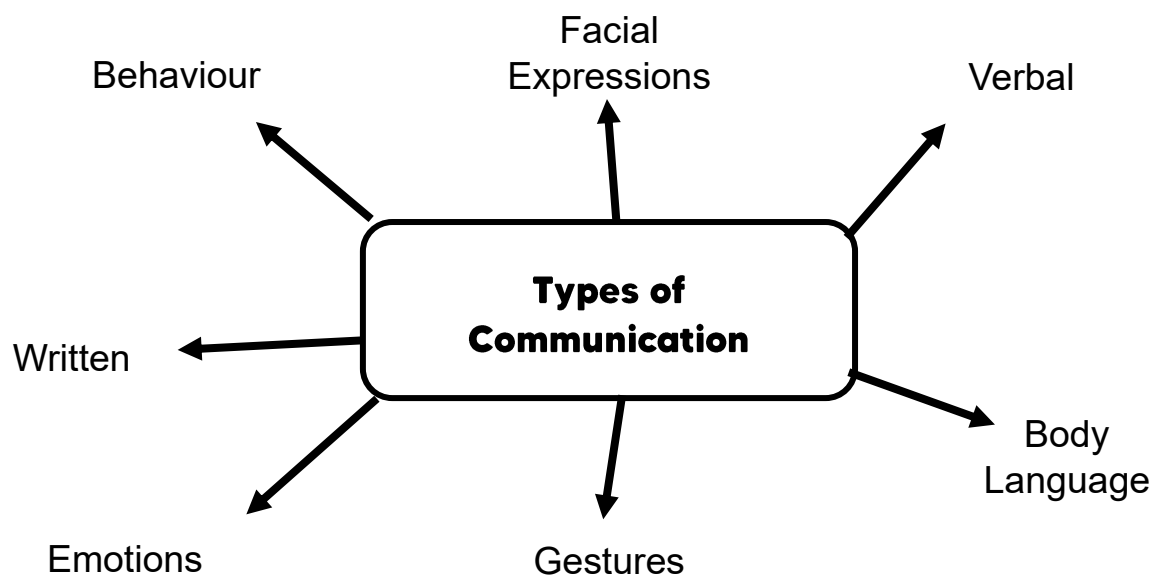


Handbook

(Exploring behaviours and emotions)

The importance of Communication:

- Communication is the imparting or exchanging of information.
- It is a process of sending and receiving messages through verbal and non-verbal methods.
- Communication is a way in which we build relationships, express ourselves and get our needs met.



Dr. Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55% Rule

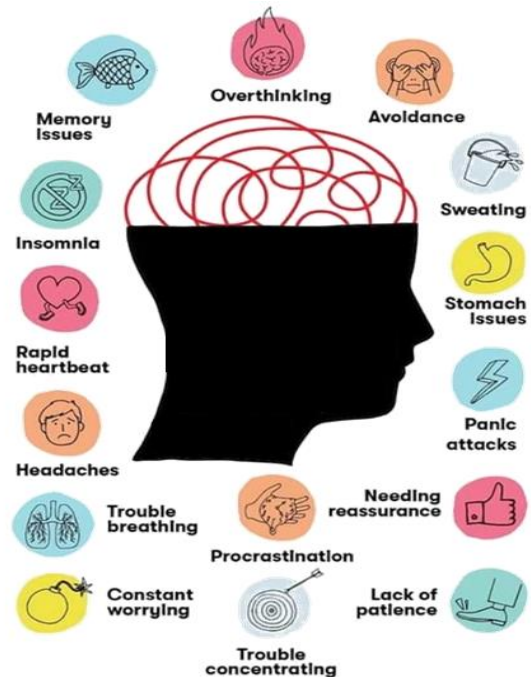
Elements of Personal Communication

- 7% spoken words
- 38% voice, tone
- 55% body language

Helping children and young people deal with strong emotions:

It can be tough for children and young people to comprehend or articulate their intense feelings. Keep an eye out for the following signs:

- Difficulty expressing themselves.
- Struggle to understand their emotions.
- Acting out or misbehaving due to strong emotions.



What is a behaviour?

- Behaviour is a form of communication. We all use behaviour to let people know how we are feeling.
- The moment we are born, we use our behaviour to communicate what we might need.
- When we think about behaviour being a form of communication, do we always think about “bad” behaviour?



- Behaviour in children and young people is Goal-Directed: Children's behaviour tends to be driven by emotional needs rather than rational or intellectual ones.

Behaviours of a concern...

The term ‘behaviour of concern’ can be misinterpreted, we do not mean that the person is being purposely ‘defiant’ or ‘difficult’.

The term does not imply that the child is ‘a concern’, but certain behaviours that they display may require more careful thought, consideration, and management strategies.

When behaviour shifts to a “concern”?

Hitting

Dropping to the floor

Smearing

Screaming/shouting

Spitting

Throwing items

Kicking

Damage to property



Touching others

Inappropriate sexual
behaviours

Theft

Self-injury

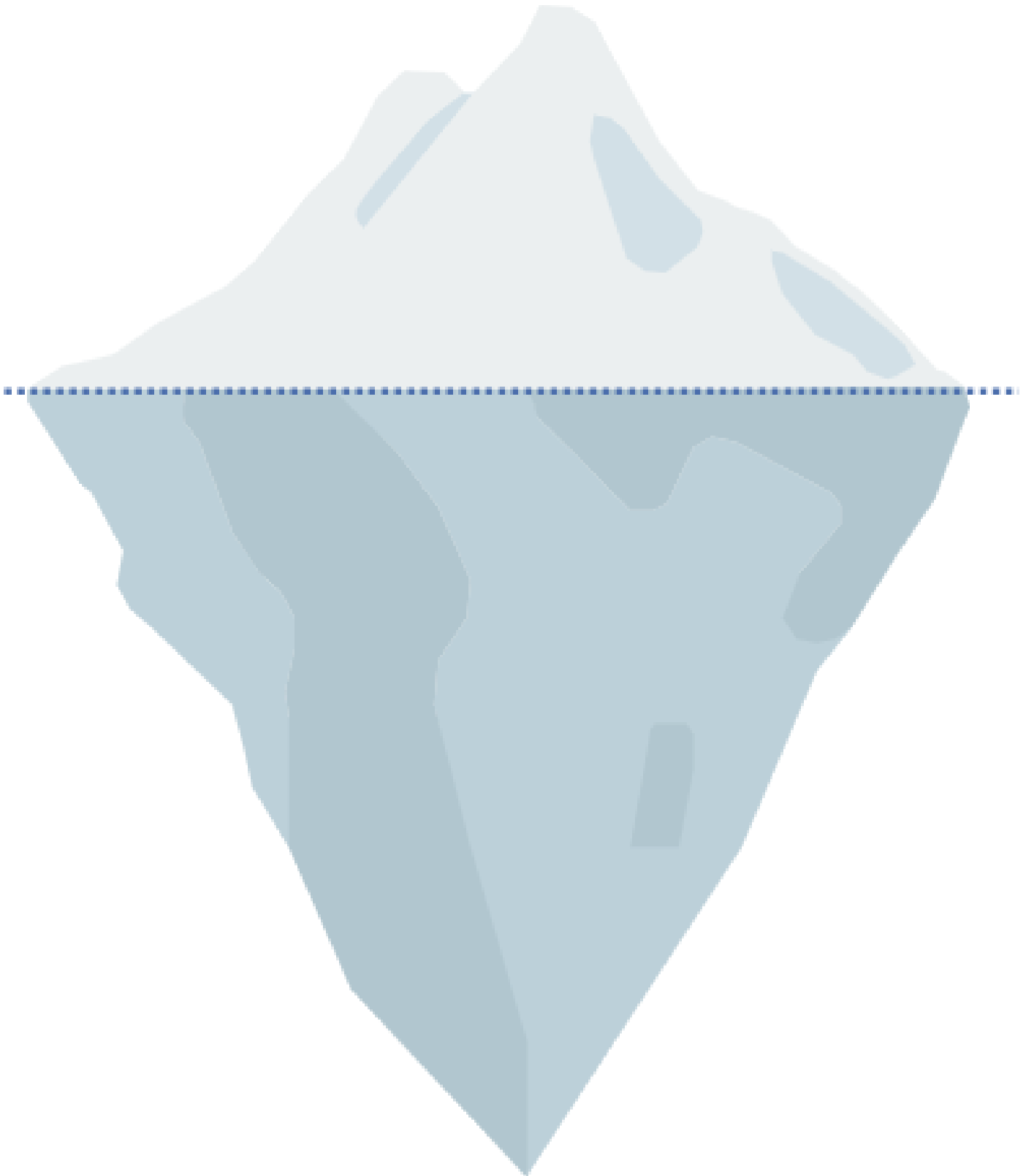
Running away

Teeth grinding

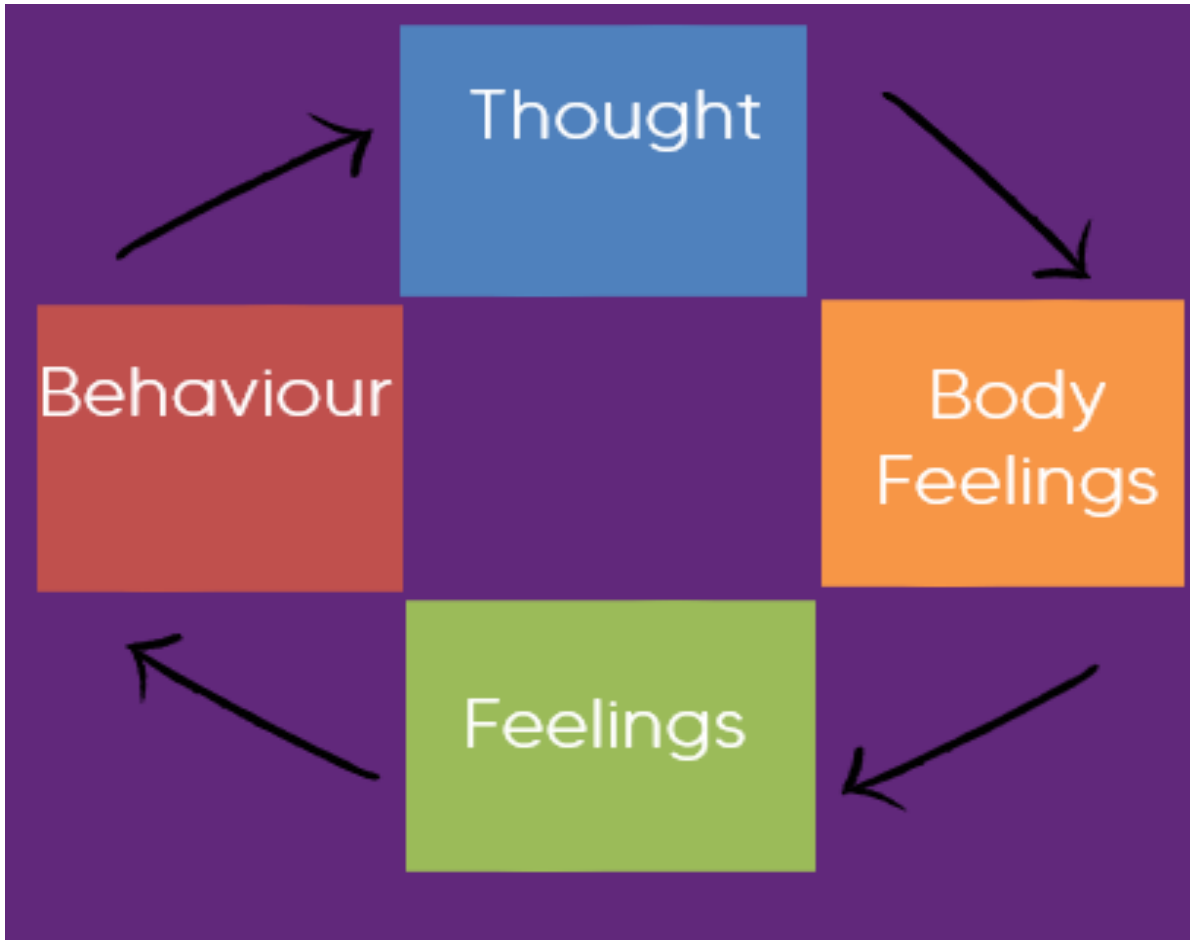
Behaviours of a concern & Additional Needs:

- Children who have additional needs may behave in a way that feels challenging more frequently, or their behaviour may be more extreme.
- This is often because they can't express what they want or feel at the time, or it is difficult for others to understand what their needs are.
- Some children also have certain situations that they find hard to cope with, which can show in their behaviour.
- Children with learning disabilities are at a much greater risk of exhibiting behaviours that challenge.

Behaviour Iceberg: Take time to begin to make sense of behaviours you may see using the iceberg below to identify what we may see and talk with the child to see how they feel. Think about what else may be under the water such as stress at home, although we often try to protect children from stress, they are often more aware than we think.



Understanding children's communication through emotions:



One way in which children communicate is through their emotions.

Emotions are mental states that arise from neurophysiological changes and are linked to our thoughts, feelings, and behavioural responses, as well as a sense of pleasure or displeasure.

Use the following page as a discussion tool with your child should you feel this helpful to pick apart situations and how a child is feeling in that moment to help create a shared understanding.

Making sense of the cycle of response to a situation can begin to help us understand What is the child thinking, what emotions are they feeling, are they experiencing feelings they can't verbalise in their body such as a fast heart beat / palpitations and as a result what behaviour are we seeing. Use the cycle below to map out a situation you have been in with your child, where they have displayed a behaviour of concern.

Situation:

Thoughts

What am I thinking? What thoughts are going through my mind?

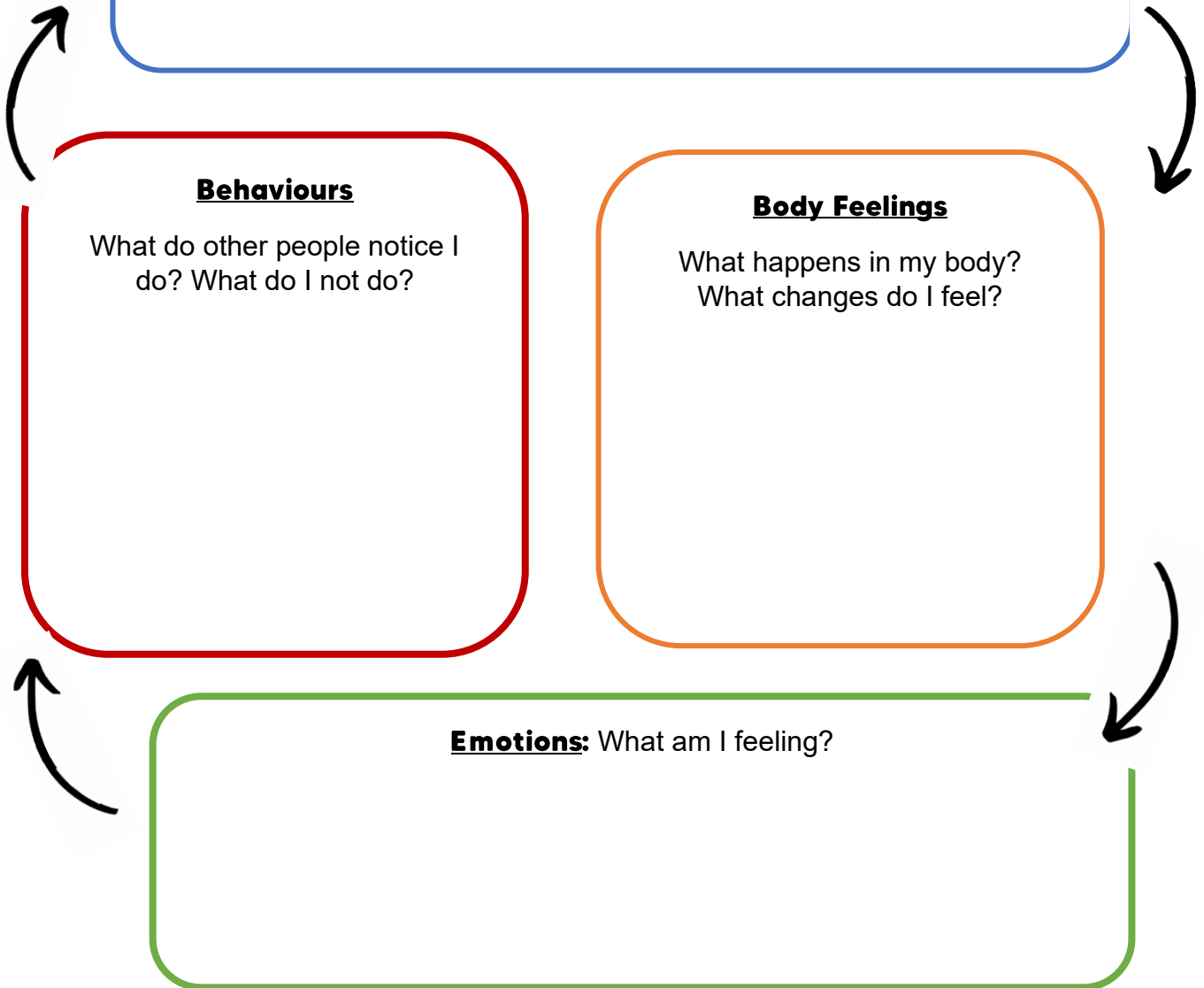
Behaviours

What do other people notice I do? What do I not do?




Body Feelings

What happens in my body?
What changes do I feel?

Emotions: What am I feeling?



Why do children display behaviours of a concern? It is important to understand the reasons why the behaviour may be occurring, in order to **prevent** the behaviour of a concern.

<p>Pain or health reasons</p> 	<p>Is it a reaction to something that hurts e.g. banging their head on the wall due to earache?</p>
<p>Social attention/care-seeking</p> 	<p>Everyone needs care and attention and showing 'behaviours of a concern' may be a good way of getting other people's attention, especially if a child does not know how to gain care attention in more appropriate ways. They still gain attention even if it is negative, e.g., shouting.</p>
<p>To get something</p>	<p>A child may learn certain behaviours to get them things they want, e.g., crying for food, iPads, etc.</p>
<p>Escape</p> 	<p>It may help to avoid things a child doesn't like e.g. screaming at the dentist and then leaving.</p>
<p>Sensory</p>	<p>Sometimes people enjoy the feeling that certain behaviours give them, i.e. rocking, humming, etc.</p>

Behaviours of a concern are **NOT**:

Something to be ashamed of: Your child and your family have the right to be out and about as much as anyone else.

Something that only you are experiencing: There are families in similar situations and opportunities to share experiences and advice.

Behaviours of a concern are therefore part of the way a child interacts with the world and with the right support they can be reduced, or more adaptive behaviours can be learnt.

Parent/carer well-being:

It is always important to think about your well-being.



5 ways to wellbeing

Describes some of the key components of a healthy emotional or social 'diet'. All five of these suggestions are free, easily achievable, and applicable to anyone's life regardless of their circumstances.

Many of us will already be doing some of the '5 ways' without even being aware of it....

1. Connect

Connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.

Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and **invest time** in developing them. Building these connections with support and enrich you every day.

2. Be Active

You don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.

Exercising makes you feel good and there's a reason for this! It releases endorphins (hormones) into the body, which are linked to positive mood and an overall enhanced sense of well-being.

3. Take Notice

Be Curious, remark on the unusual, notice the changing seasons, be aware of the world around

4. Keep Learning

Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike?

Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.

5. Give

Give to others – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental well-being and help you build new social networks.

Participant activity:

Parental Wellbeing promise:

Take a moment to complete this page to promise to prioritise your needs, we cannot pour from an empty cup.

I would like to try:

Barriers that could get in the way of my wellbeing promise are:

I can overcome these barriers by:

My promise is to:

Seeing yourself, and your happiness, links to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is a mental state of awareness, focus and openness - which allows you to engage fully in what you are doing at any moment.
- Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.
- Practicing mindfulness regularly has been shown to help alter the brain structure so that you are less likely to become stressed when faced with difficult situations. It can help reduce anxiety, improve mood and bring a more meaningful experience to life.

Functional Analysis:

- **Functional Analysis (FA)** works on the assumption that all behaviour in all cases serves some kind of function and works to find the relationship between trigger and response.
- FA helps us to identify the function of behaviour by understanding motivation and triggers behind it.
- The aim is that this helps us to understand what is maintaining it.



ABC Charts:

- Solve “why” together.
- ABC charts allow you to see how often the behaviour occurs and if there are any factors that make the behaviour more or less likely to occur and if anything happens to reinforce the behaviour.
- Once the cause of the behaviour is clear we can start to think about working with the individual to find ways to reduce it.

Patterns we may notice:

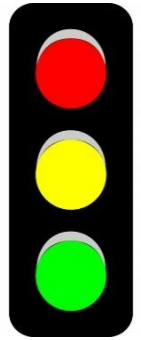
Attention/Care received	Escape/Avoid	Rewards
<p>Your child is trying to get your attention by hitting but you want to teach them how to communicate that they need you in a more appropriate way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to notice when they want your attention and respond as soon as you can. • Interact with them regularly to give them plenty of opportunity to get positive attention. • Where possible ignore the hitting. 	<p>Instead of your child hitting and then being removed from their activity (which they don't like anyway):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give them an effective way to stop something they don't like, such as signing "finish" or "home", using a photo card, or a traffic light system. • Introduce them to a situation gradually so that they can get used to it. • Notice early warning signs that they may be becoming unhappy or anxious. • Distraction. 	<p>If a child wants a toy which is usually a reward, they scream and shout and are given the toy to distract them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach them how/encourage them to use appropriate ways of communicating. • Where possible, teach them how to get something for themselves e.g., putting cups somewhere they can reach so they can get a drink.

Things that can help...

Traffic light system:

Develop with your child ways of recognising when they are:

- **“Green”**: e.g., calm, happy, in a good mood.
- **“Amber”**: e.g., an early warning that might escalate into a behaviour that challenges. In this situation you might encourage them to slow down, try breathing, distraction etc.
- **“Red”**: e.g., when the behaviour needs to be stopped. This will be when you use the reactive strategies that you have outlined.
- Should be individual to your child and for the behaviours that you are trying to encourage/discourage.
- It can be very visual or somewhere that the child can reach e.g., on the fridge so the child could point to it, on a wristband, on picture cards etc.

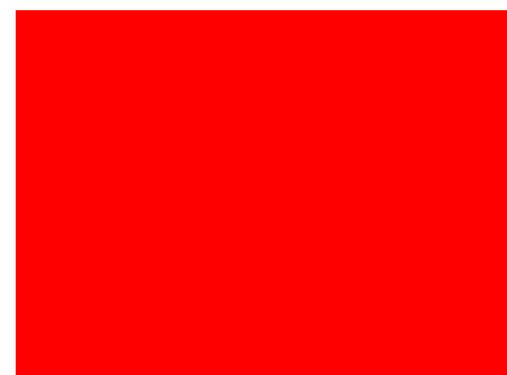


How am I feeling?

What does this look like?

What can I do?

What can others do?



Sensory Stimulation:



- Each child has a unique set of sensory needs and by exploring these sensory needs we can ensure that these are met.
- Activities that perk up your child or calm them down are not only effective in the moment but can help to change the child's nervous system over time so that they are better able to tolerate distress, regulate their emotions and handle transitions.

Some examples include:

- **Sensations from the muscles:** things such as pushing or pulling or hanging from monkey bars, vacuuming, carry books to another room etc.
- **Movement:** spinning, swinging, hanging upside down or using playground swings.
- **Food and drink:** e.g., experiencing bubbles from sparkling water in their mouth, frozen food.
- **Textures:** playing with sand, slime, foam, barefoot on sand.

Preparing for situations:

- Telling your child what is happening and what to expect.
- Making sure places are safe and appropriate.
- Choosing the times, you go to places.
- Having activities with you etc.
- Discuss any worries before activity- not reassuring but getting the child to think. What may happen? How likely is that to happen?



Breathing and Relaxation:

Breathing techniques can help you to feel calmer within a few minutes. These techniques can be practised anywhere to help you relax.

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Finger Breathing

Balloon Breathing

Square Breathing

Distraction:



- Sometimes when your child is displaying a behaviour of concern it can be useful to try to distract them!
- Quick, enthusiastic change of topic or focus.
- E.g., “Look at that bus!”, change of activity, singing a song!
- **BUT!** If your child is shouting and screaming, do not try and distract them with the iPad as this is likely to teach them that shouting and screaming leads to rewards!



Reading Material:

Whole Brainchild - Dan Siegel

Say What You See - Sandra R Blackard

My Hidden Chimp - Professor Steve Peters

Don't Worry Be Happy - Poppy O'Neil

Therapeutic Parenting - Sarah Naish

Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties - Dan Hughes

Websites:

Hull Sensory Processing Hub: <https://sensoryprocessinghub.humber.nhs.uk/>

Services/Useful Contacts:

CAMHS Crisis Team – 01482 259400.

Contact Point – to contact to request further support- 01482 303688

Hull and East Yorkshire MIND - 01482 240200/ Freephone: 08001380990

Feedback

We would appreciate your honest feedback on how you felt the 'communication' workshop went.

