

Challenging Behaviours

Challenging behaviour can be defined as culturally abnormal behaviour of such intensity, frequency, or duration that own physical safety, or that of others, is seriously jeopardised. It is behaviour that would prevent access to community facilities.

Types of Challenging Behaviour

Aggressive challenging behaviours can be categorised by the focus of the aggression:

- *aggression towards others*: Aggression towards others includes behaviours that physically harm others, such as hitting, kicking, biting, and pinching others, as well as verbal aggression, which includes screaming, cursing, threatening others, yelling insults at others.
 - Intrinsic (i.e. inborn) and/or extrinsic (i.e. induced) tantrums are often included in definitions of challenging behaviour and have been defined as stamping on the floor and screaming.
- *aggression towards oneself*: Self-injurious behaviours include head banging, hitting body parts, banging other body parts into objects, self-biting, self-pinching, self-scratching, pulling finger or toenails, stuffing items into body orifices, self-induced vomiting, teeth grinding, pica (eating non-food things like paper or hair), drinking an excessive amount of liquids, and aerophagia (swallowing too much air).
- *aggression towards objects*: Finally, property destruction is commonly defined as behaviours that damage objects.

Addressing Challenging Behaviours

Keeping a log of the challenging behaviour can help identify the scale of the issue. A log should contain details of the frequency, duration, and intensity of the challenging behaviour. Here is an example of a log:

Briefly describe the challenging behaviour:

1. Over the past week how frequently has the challenging behaviour occurred? *Please circle a number*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost never	Seldom	About half the time	Usually	Almost always	Always

2. Over the past week how intense do you think the target behaviour has been? *Please circle a number*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No intensity ←			→ Maximally intense			

3. Over the past week, how much time would you estimate the child has spent engaging in the challenging behaviour (and any of its consequences, including worrying about it)?

_____ minutes, _____ hours

Many professionals agree that it is crucially important to try to understand WHY the child is engaging in the challenging behaviour.

Understanding what the function of the behaviour is called a *functional analysis*. It is possible that whilst the behaviour is challenging for a parent or teacher, it is not challenging for the child.

A clinician may do a more thorough functional analysis, but one way of you thinking about this could be to complete the following table:

WHY do you think the child engages in the challenging behaviour? (place one tick per row)

	Never	Almost never	Seldom	About half the time	Usually	Almost always	Always
To gain attention from others							
To get something they want							
To get away from something they don't want							
Because they get pleasure from it							

Have a look at the video on the resources page about challenging behaviour and positive behaviour support from BILD (British Institute of Learning Disabilities).

The video explains that all behaviour happens for a reason, and challenging behaviour is no different.

It introduces 'Positive Behaviour Support' (PBS), a person-centred and values-based approach. The aim of PBS is to understand why the challenging behaviour is being exhibited (for example, someone may be lonely or overwhelmed) and the triggers which may lead to the challenging behaviour (for example, loud noises).

With this knowledge, a plan can be created to help improve quality of life.