

INTRODUCTION

Hi and welcome to the Cerebral Palsy Foundation's ParentWise Podcast series. I'm Robyn Cummins.

Today, in the first of four podcasts, social work consultant Jenny Griffiths talks about the often challenging topic of behaviour management and how it can be implemented successfully with your child.

In Part One, Jenny explains what behaviour management is and the factors that need to be considered when working with a child who displays 'challenging' behaviours.

WHAT IS CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR?

Hi, I'm Jenny Griffiths.

Given that you are listening to this podcast and interested in this topic, I am sure that I don't have to tell you what challenging behaviour is.

I am sure that you would be able to give me many examples of challenging behaviour that your child is displaying if I asked you right now.

But I think it's important to define what is considered challenging behaviour and the different types of behaviours children can display.

Challenging behaviour is defined as:

- 1) any behaviour that limits a person functioning in the community
- 2) any behaviour that poses a risk to a person or others, or
- 3) any behaviour that limits a person's rights, dignity and quality of life.

TYPES OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

What I normally find is that challenging behaviour usually results when a child feels anxious, frustrated or confused.

When a child feels this way, their challenging behaviour can fall into the following categories:

- 1) Repetitive movements – behaviours that are done over and over, such as rocking, flapping hands, grinding teeth and making odd noises
- 2) Self-injurious behaviour – injuring his/her own body, such as head banging, scratching, biting, hitting self
- 3) Self-isolating behaviours – difficulty being around others, such as running away, and being preoccupied with their own activities

- 4) Non-compliance – uncooperative behaviour such as refusing to obey or follow the rules, or acting defiantly
- 5) Being aggressive towards others – causing physical pain to other people or animals such, as hitting, kicking, biting, spitting, and
- 6) Destroying property – deliberately breaking or destroying things, such as hitting walls and throwing toys.

If you see your child displaying some of these behaviours, instead of panicking, it's important to remind yourself that some of these behaviours are normal and expected for certain developmental stages.

For example I expect to see a baby trying to put everything they touch into their mouths and I expect the usual non-compliance and tantrums as a child goes through the 'terrible twos', but seeing the same behaviours in a ten year old would be of concern.

Despite your child's developmental stage, learning to effectively manage these behaviours while they are young will help to prevent more serious behaviours later on.

CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY

Recent studies have found that children with development disabilities are three to four times more likely to develop behavioural and emotional difficulties than children without disabilities.

Another study has found that more specifically, children with cerebral palsy are 5.3 times more likely to have behaviour problems.

There are several different explanations about why this could be the case.

Parents often set expectations for their children with disabilities based on 'normal' categories of development.

However, for children with special needs finding out their developmental stages can often be a process of trial and error.

If expectations are set too high or too low children can become frustrated, bored and non compliant, leading to challenging behaviour.

Additionally, we know it takes many children with disabilities time to learn new skills and behaviour, and behaving in an appropriate way is a skill that a child needs to learn.

Be prepared that if you start teaching your child with a disability a more positive way to behave, expect it to take longer than with a child without a disability.

Depending on their disability, your child may also only have a limited set of skills that they can use, because they may find communication or mobility difficult.

Therefore the child might not have a range of different ways they can use to express their thoughts and feelings. So for example, rather than being able to use words they 'act out' to convey that they are upset about something.

If you are uncertain about what to reasonably expect from your child, it's always helpful to get feedback from therapists, teachers, or a psychologist and to check in with other parents of children with similar disabilities to guide you.

CLOSE

Thanks for listening. We hope you've found these strategies and ideas useful.

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