

INTRODUCTION

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

Today, in the third of four podcasts, social work consultant Jenny Griffiths looks at how you can successfully set goals and plan ahead to manage your child's challenging behaviour.

GOALS AND PLANNING

Hi, I'm Jenny Griffiths.

In the last two podcasts we've looked at types of challenging behaviour and the possible triggers and causes of behaviour problems.

Let's now look at how you can keep track of your child's behaviour as well as how you can develop goals for change and how you can plan ahead to prevent problems.

Setting goals for your child (and yourself) is a really effective way of managing challenging behaviour.

There are a few different tools you can try to help you do this such as an ABC diary.

An ABC diary or behavioural diary is a useful way to keep track of your child's behaviour.

To complete a behaviour diary you need to observe your child's challenging behaviour and record it. More specifically, you'll need to record when and where the behaviour occurred and what happened just before the behaviour occurred (the Antecedent – A).

You'll also need to describe the behaviour itself (the B in ABC stands for Behaviour) and what then happened afterwards (C or Consequence).

GOAL SETTING

Keeping a record of the problem behaviour will help you identify any patterns, like how often the behaviour occurs, how consistently you deal with the behaviour, any high risk times and situations, possible causes or triggers and possible accidental rewards.

Once you've observed and recorded the behaviour and you have a better idea of what you're dealing with, it's a good idea to set some goals for how you'd like the behaviour to change.

It's up to you to decide what behaviours need to be changed.

To maintain your sanity, I would recommend that you choose only one or two behaviours to work on at a time.

If you focus on more than two, it may become overwhelming and you won't be able to respond consistently to the behaviours to achieve effective behaviour change.

It's useful to divide all the challenging behaviours into two categories:

Stop behaviours – behaviours that you want to see less of, and

Start behaviours – behaviours you would like to see more of.

Additionally, make sure that:

- Goals are achievable and specific and that your child is developmentally ready to learn the new behaviour.
- You notice improvements over time.

If you have kept track of your child's behaviour before you implement change and continue to record your child's behaviour after change, then you will be able to see how successful you are achieving the goal.

What you can expect is that your child's behaviour will probably increase in intensity to begin with, but that should gradually decrease over time.

- You set some goals for yourself as well. It is important for you to also consider what changes you would like to make in your own behaviour.

What are some of the things that you might do that contributes to your child's behaviour occurring? What would you like to do more or less often?

PLANNING

After keeping a record of your child's behaviour, you will now be aware of the risky times and situations where the behaviour is likely to occur and you can now try and stop the behaviour happening in the first place.

The main idea is to plan interesting and engaging activities for your child in situations where they might otherwise be bored and disruptive.

By also being clear about what you want your child to do in a particular situation will help to stop the problems re-occurring.

Other things to keep in mind are the importance of routines, rules and limits, transitions and consistency.

Structure and predictability are very important for all children, especially those with special needs.

If routines are in place as much as possible, your child will learn more easily, express more interest and have fewer behavioural problems as there is predictability in their daily lives.

Routines are helpful in signalling what is coming next.

Making your child aware of rules and limits for appropriate behaviour is important, so your child knows what to expect in certain situations before they occur.

When establishing rules, it is important to include your child in the development of the rules and only have a small number of rules - about three or four is plenty.

All rules should be clear, understandable for your child and positively stated.

The rules should be consistently backed up.

Structure and routine are important, so forewarning your child that a transition is about to occur can make change less stressful for them.

Depending on your child, signalling that a transition is about to occur can be given verbally, aurally, or visually, or a combination of these.

Signalling a transition can be done just before something is going to change or may need to be given well in advance and constantly reminded in a slow and calm manner. Finally, it's important that you are consistent with how you respond to your child's behaviour.

It would be impossible to be consistent all of the time as we all have good and bad days, but if you can do it most of the time then your child will get a consistent message and learn what is expected of them.

It's vital that you maintain consistency within yourself, with your partner and across all environments and situations your child is in.

CLOSE

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

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