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Neuro Developmental Conditions Parent Treatment Group

Online All Things ADHD – Week 5: Challenging Behaviour

Produced by Dr. James Stacey (Lead Clinical Psychologist, Oxon NDC pathway)

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Outline

- Acknowledgement
- What is 'Challenging Behaviour'?
 - Definition
 - Potential examples
 - Factors influencing whether we find a behaviour challenging
- Which of your child's behaviours (if any) do you find challenging?
- Why do young people with ADHD show challenging behaviour?
- What can we do to prevent and reduce challenging behaviour in young people with ADHD?

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Acknowledgement

- Many of the ideas in this presentation come from Professor Russell Barkley's work.
- Professor Barkley is a world-leading researcher on ADHD
- See:
 - Barkley (2020) 'Taking Charge of ADHD' (4th edition)
 - ADHD lectures (<http://adhdlectures.com>), particularly 'Presentations for Parents': Lecture for Parents V - The 12 Best Principles for Managing a Child or Teen With ADHD

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Definition of Challenging Behaviour

“Behaviour can be described as challenging when it is of such an intensity, frequency or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others and is likely to lead to responses that are restrictive, aversive or result in exclusion”(Challenging Behaviour: A Unified Approach, 2007)

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Some examples of Challenging Behaviours

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graph TD; A[Behaviour that Challenges] --- B[Refusal behaviours]; A --- C[Shouting/ Screaming]; A --- D[Aggression towards others]; A --- E[Running away]; A --- F[Sexually concerning behaviour]; A --- G[Self-Injury and accidental/unintentional injuries to self];
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What influences whether we think that a behaviour is challenging?
Whether a behaviour is seen as challenging depends on the following factors, and how they interact:

- **Frequency:** how often the behaviour occurs
- **Severity:** how harmful the behaviour is when it occurs
- **Duration:** how long the behaviour lasts for when it occurs
- **Coping resources:** how (well we believe we are) able we are to manage the behaviour

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What influences whether we think that a behaviour is challenging?

Example 1: A 14-year-old boy with ADHD has an argument with his parents and gets in their face and swears at them. He never normally gets in their face or swears. His parents react calmly and direct him towards an activity he enjoys. The situation then calms quickly. His behaviour (swearing and getting in their face) can be viewed as aggressive, but would we consider this behaviour challenging? No, because it is a 'one off', brief, low harm, and relatively easily managed.

Example 2: A 12-year old boy with ADHD becomes very upset when the internet stops working whilst he is gaming. He runs up to his Mum and swears, screams and shouts at her. Despite his Mum's best efforts to calm him, he continues to shout and swear at her and ends up hitting and pushing her. This kind of behaviour happens at least 3-4 times per week. His behaviour (swearing, screaming, shouting) can be viewed as aggressive and because of the frequency and duration of the behaviour we could conceptualise it as challenging behaviour because it is high frequency, lasts quite a long time, moderately severe, and hard to manage.

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Activity – take 10 minutes to consider the following questions

Which of your child's behaviours do you and others find most challenging?

What are your emotional and behavioural responses when your child shows these behaviours?

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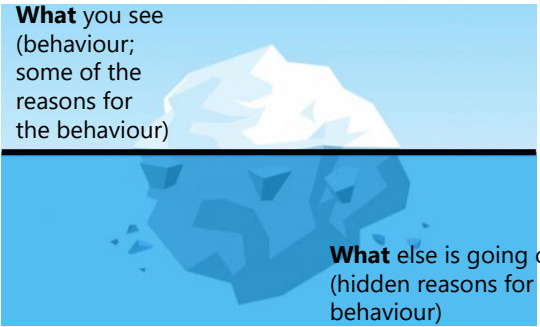
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Why do young people with ADHD show challenging behaviour?

The **Iceberg Metaphor** encourages us to think about why a young person might be showing challenging behaviour



What you see
(behaviour;
some of the
reasons for
the behaviour)

What else is going on
(hidden reasons for the
behaviour)

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Why do young people with ADHD show challenging behaviour?

ADHD-related problems:

- Because of **impulse control problems** (see week 3) and other (related) 'Executive Functioning' difficulties:
 - Visualising themselves, other people, the past, and the future (non-verbal working memory)
 - Engaging in self-talk to instruct themselves, remember what others have said, follow rules, organise themselves (verbal working memory)
 - Modifying, distracting, and/or replacing initial strong emotions (emotional regulation)
 - Problem-solving and planning (which involves analysing/deconstructing problems and synthesising/constructing solutions)

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Why do young people with ADHD show challenging behaviour?

For the same reasons as other young people:

- Because it enables them to access something they need or want (e.g. help, support attention; tangible things such as food, toys; activities such as gaming; sensory input)
- Because it enables them to avoid or escape something they are struggling with or dislike (e.g. social or academic demands, sensory stimulation)
- Because it communicates that they are struggling internally (e.g. with anger, sense of injustice, embarrassment, feeling inadequate, insecure, rejected, lonely, misunderstood, excluded, frustrated)

There is always an interaction between these 2 areas!

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Why do young people with ADHD show challenging behaviour?

Triggers for challenging behaviour:

- Slow triggers: things which happen in the hours, days or even weeks before the challenging behaviour occurs
- Fast triggers: things that happen *immediately before* the challenging behaviour
- Triggers can be internal (e.g. thoughts, feelings, being in pain) or external (e.g. social or academic demands)

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Why do young people with ADHD show challenging behaviour?

The diagram shows a timeline from 8am to 2pm with various triggers:

- 8am: Slow trigger (Alarm clock)
- 9am: Slow trigger (Blue backpack)
- 10am: Slow trigger (Chalkboard with math)
- 11am: Slow trigger (Soccer ball)
- 12pm: Slow trigger (Person falling)
- 1pm: Slow trigger (Person with a red 'X' over them)
- 1.30pm: Slow trigger (Person reading)
- 2pm: Fast trigger (Person shouting)

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Why do young people with ADHD show challenging behaviour?

Using ABC Charts to identify patterns

- **A**ntecedent – the things that happened BEFORE the behaviour
- **B**ehaviour – In detail, what did it look like?
- **C**onsequences – What happened immediately AFTER the behaviour?

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ABC Charts

Date	Time	Antecedents (what happened before the challenging behaviour; slow and fast triggers) <i>Location, people, activity</i>	Behaviour <i>Describe exactly what happened</i>	Consequence (what happened immediately after the behaviour)	Possible Reason/Purpose
Unhelpful Example Monday	AM	Asked Tom to clean up	Temper	Told off	Out of the blue
Helpful Example Monday	9am	Tom slept poorly, struggled to get out of bed, got up late & the taxi was waiting for him. Radio was playing, toast was burnt. Dad asked Tom to finish breakfast. Tom spilt drink. Dad asked Tom to clean up mess	Tom looked confused Tom made a grunting noise & grabbed dads glasses	Dad shouted 'No' loudly & asked Tom to stop. Tom ran out of kitchen	Tom had a poor nights sleep Tom did not understand what Dad was asking him to do Tom tried to escape & knocked over glass

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What can we do to prevent and reduce challenging behaviour in young people with ADHD?

- See week 3 (Impulse Control) slides on **managing the environment at the 'point of performance'**. If we can help a young person with ADHD better manage daily demands, they will be less likely to show challenging behaviour

Replenish your child's fuel tank through:

- Increasing rewards
- Increasing experiences of positive emotion
- Talking about the future and goals much more frequently
- Providing breaks more frequently (e.g. 3 minute break every 10 minutes during mentally demanding tasks)
- PHYSICAL EXERCISE
- Encouraging positive self-statements about competence

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What can we do to prevent and reduce challenging behaviour in young people with ADHD?

- Work with your child to **identify alternatives to challenging behaviour that help them achieve what they need/want** (if this is, in your parental opinion, reasonable/safe/appropriate!). For example, if one of the functions of their behaviour is to elicit help, support, or attention, you could either teach them, and reinforce, a positive way to request support and/or you could protect 30 minutes with them every day (which they get no matter how good or bad the day has been).

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What can we do to prevent and reduce challenging behaviour in young people with ADHD?

- Provide significant **incentives/external motivation to increase desired behaviours** (as people with ADHD often cannot internally motivate themselves to do the things that need to be done when they need to be done):
 - Social and tangible incentives for engaging in desired behaviour (e.g. tokens, points, marbles that can later be exchanged for a 'big reward')
 - Need to provide clear (verbal and written/visual) expectations of what you want to happen.
 - Incentives/rewards need to be provided immediately after the desired behaviour
 - Children with ADHD receive more criticism and negative commands than neuro typical children. Need to provide 2-3 times more incentives than sanctions/'consequences' (see below)
- Provide **sanctions/consequences immediately after the behavior you want to change** (e.g. Marble Jar Strategy outlined in week 3).

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Questions

Please prepare questions about Challenging Behaviour ready for the Q & A session 😊

Many thanks

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Finally...

Please complete the feedback form

Your feedback is invaluable

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your child's care, please make contact with your child's care coordinator. If this is difficult, you can make contact with the Team Manager – Maria Bourbon.

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