

Behavioural Issues: Information for Parents

Children behaving in difficult or disruptive ways from time to time can be a normal part of the developmental process. However, some children have extremely challenging behaviours that are outside the norm for their age. You may have noticed your child reacting with aggression to reasonable directions or frequently refusing to obey rules or authority with little regard for consequence. This behaviour can be problematic as interferes with functioning, schooling, friendships/relationships and development of social skills.



What sort of problems are common?

- Frequent temper tantrums and low frustration threshold
- Argues with adults, particularly parents or teachers
- Refuses to obey rules and may deliberately annoy people
- Low self-esteem
- Acting impulsively and shows little remorse or empathy for others
- Seems to deliberately try to annoy or aggravate others - bullies, threatens, or intimidates others and may initiate physical fights
- Use of weapons that can cause serious physical harm to others (e.g. a bat, brick, knife)

What can help?

The earlier problems are identified and addressed, the better the long term progress. It is much harder to change behaviours once they are well established and set in a routine. Therapy needs to be done in two ways:

1. Individual therapy one-on-one with the child to increase their motivation for behaviour change and have behaviour change occur internally
2. Behaviour management plans to support positive behaviour and reduce negative behaviour. This should be implemented in all environments where behavioural issues present



Rule out other underlying issues?

It is possible that your child may have additional underlying issues affecting their behaviour. Other potential issues may include: auditory processing issues (difficulty listening and understanding material being presented in class), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD – problems with focus, sustaining attention, becoming easily bored and frustrated), perfectionistic behaviour and emotional difficulties (signs of low self-esteem, depression or anxiety).

A more wholistic assessment may be more appropriate for children that may display other underlying issues, and this should be discussed with a psychologist.