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## Challenging Behaviour

## Table of Contents

Challenging Behaviours and Aggression	3
Types of Aggression	3
Understanding Behaviour	4
Understanding the Why Behind Behaviours	4
Non-violent discipline	4
Behavioural Sensitivities	5
Impulsivity	5
Helping a child cope with BIG feelings	5
Why is calm breathing important?	5
What is Actually Going On?	6
Phases of Escalation and De-Escalation	6
Helpful Responses to Difficult Behaviour	7
Responding to Intense Emotions	7
Using a Playfulness Approach	7
Building on Positive Attachment	8
ABC's of Awesome	9
Further Reading/Resources	11
About Inspire Community Outreach	13
References	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

### About Inspire

Inspire Community Outreach Inc. is an incorporated non-profit social services charity providing evidence and culturally informed, family-centered education and programming, designed to meet the needs of those living with mental health issues and neurological/cognitive differences.

**Charity # 830697231RR0001**

Our **mission** at Inspire Community Outreach Inc. is to support the mental health of children, youth, and families.

Our **vision** is the development of a community that supports children, youth and families to recognize and celebrate their strengths and potential, and that puts them in touch with resources that benefit their overall well being.

### Connecting with us

Please see our website at [www.inspirecommunityoutreach.ca](http://www.inspirecommunityoutreach.ca) to see how we can help, or call 204-996-1547.

### Who is this made for?

This is for those caring for and/or living with neurodiversities. We see you and understand the unique challenges, as well as incredible strengths this entails. This manual is for parents and/or caregivers who are dealing with challenging behaviour.

### **Important to know**

You may learn some things below that are unfamiliar or feel hard. We understand that it is important to have compassion for ourselves, especially when looking back to times where we didn't have the information we have today. We are all learning and won't come to a day where we have all the answers. We all do the best that we can with what we know, and the good news is that we will have opportunities to learn throughout our lives.

## **Challenging Behaviours and Aggression**

### **Types of Aggression**

- Towards peers and siblings
- Towards caregiver

- Verbal and physical

### Examples of Difficult Behaviour Could Include...

- (Intense hard emotions)
- Screaming, raised voice, rude noises
- Physical Aggression
- Leaving tasks, avoidance
- Sticky thinking
- “Needy”
- Sensitivity to environment
- Justice Crusader

### Understanding Behaviour

- There are no quick fixes! Behaviours take time to learn and take time to unlearn.
- We need to *understand the behaviour* – understand what function it serves for the child. So, let’s be curious...
- There are no ‘cookie cutter’ solutions. Every child is different.

### Understanding the Why Behind Behaviours

- **Biological** (e.g. pain, medication, personality, hunger, being tired, energy level)§
- **Social needs** (e.g. attachment, boredom, attention, confusion)§
- **Sensory information** (noise, lighting, temperature)§
- **Environmental cues** and differences ( 2 people can experience it differently)§
- **Experiences in life**
- **Communication differences**



### Non-violent discipline

Most of us were born in a time where was spanking, aggression, or other punishment. The research says that other things like positive reinforcing the positive behaviours is MUCH more effective.

there types of

## **Behavioural Sensitivities**

Every person is unique, and so are their triggers, in either intensity, duration, or type.

- 52 Sight
- 62 Taste
- 72 Sound
- 82 Sensation/touch
- 92 Smell

Research shows that social and environmental inputs impact us significantly, with evidence showing that how we experience our disabilities depends on it, which shows up in our symptoms and behaviour.

## **Being Impulsive**

This involves acting before we think and not thinking about the consequences of our actions.

- Some people have it more and others have it less.
- It's normal for children to have a tough time with this.
- Our Temperament has something to do with it too
- Our Neurology: ADHD/ADD

## **Helping a child cope with BIG feelings**

- 5 steps, what to do if we're feeling stressed?
- Feelings chart/thermometer
- Celebrate achievements no matter when
- Naming feelings- role modeling and for our children "You look frustrated"  
Acknowledging feelings without taking them away.
- What is "calm breathing"?
  - Calm breathing is a technique that teaches your child to slow down his or her breathing when feeling stressed or anxious.

## **Why is calm breathing important?**

- When we all feel anxious or worried, our breathing changes. It can be short, quick, or shallow and at times people can hyperventilate. Breathing this way makes us feel worse!
- Breathing Calmly can lower anxiety and gives us a sense of control. It can be anywhere with us, and our children can do it even when we are not there.

## The ZONES of Regulation®

			
<b>BLUE ZONE</b> Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	<b>GREEN ZONE</b> Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	<b>YELLOW ZONE</b> Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	<b>RED ZONE</b> Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control

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### What is

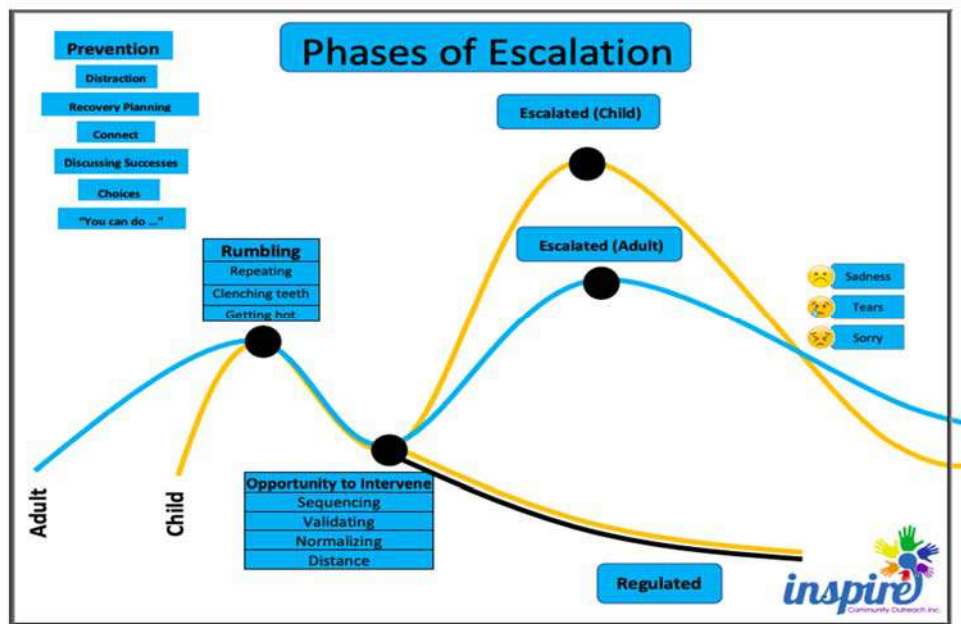
#### Actually Going On During a Child's Difficult Behaviour

Expectations for children are often that of an adult: Self-regulating/being calm, understanding consequences, using excellent verbal communication, problem-solving. But, this part of the brain is not yet developed.

We tend to focus on the behaviours that frustrate or confuse us instead of the child's needs that are not being met. Behaviour is an expression of a root cause.

Finally, behaviour is information. There is always a reason, even if the child or those around them don't understand it yet.

### Phases of Escalation and De-Escalation



## Helpful Responses to Difficult Behaviour

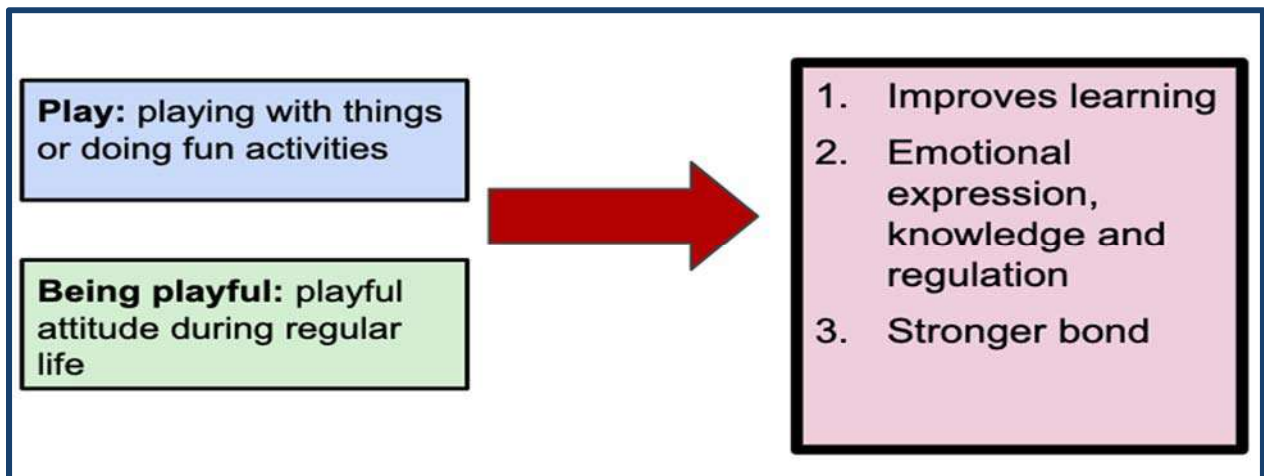
- Low and Slow Technique
- Agree, validate, and provide choices (AVP)
  - First/then
  - Yes, when...
- Soothing ourselves to then help soothe our child's nervous system
  - Curiosity
  - Knowledge/Understanding

## Responding to Intense Emotions

When a child has intense emotion/s, try matching their intensity...

1. Agree
2. Validate
3. Low and Slow: Body and Voice
4. "I want to help. I'm here when you're ready." Power sharing

## Try Using a Playfulness Approach



It is still important that these levels of attachment are met. This can help the child feel safe, and thus less reactive in challenging ways.

## Levels of Attachment Includes:

- Proximity
- Sameness
- Belong or Loyalty
- Significance
- Love
- Being Known

## Calming Activities to Try Can Include

- Being near animals
- Walking/movement/upside down
- Drawing/creativity
- Writing/journaling
- Lego/building
- Music (on repeat)
- Reading/audiobooks
- Eating/chewing
- Smells
- Nature

### **How Can We Reframe Positively How We View Behaviours and Sensitivities?**

*“The child is driven who knows what they like and don’t like, they read people well.”  
Kids cannot do this/be “difficult” or press your buttons if they can’t read you.*

### **Building on Positive Attachment**

#### **Invite them to do something with you**

Any way in which you invite them into your presence sends the message that you want to be close and connected: read a book, play a game, build something, hold hands during a walk, or tell jokes (You are pretty funny).

- Let them see your delight in them.
  - Smile at them. When they come into the room, let them see your face light up without a reminder or request. Look happy. Nod ‘yes’. Make eye contact as you think, “I like you,” “You are great.” When things are hard, we can do these little things often and our family will feel a difference.
- Be close by.
  - If they don't want to do something with us, we can move close to them. Make sure it's a distance they can handle. Watch them play, participate in sports or after school activities, be present when they're doing homework or an activity. This can be encouraging for them. We don't have to hover, or say anything.
- Invite them to depend on you.
  - This is hard to understand in our society, because we are taught to be independent. It seems everyone wants to be in charge. How can you invite our children to be dependent on us?
- Decide for them.
  - In those times when stress takes over, we can say, “I’ll figure this out” or “Let me think about it” if you’re not sure what to do. Then take care of it. Or later, take time to brainstorm with them, so it becomes a shared responsibility. This is helpful when you notice frustration and challenges building, or during transition and change.
- Be on their side.



- If they're having challenges with friends or school, or have big or hard feelings around other areas of their lives, let them know we're here to help them rather than blaming, shaming or judging. When they start to share their truths, listen without interrupting. Show them you hear what they have to say. For example, saying "That sounds really tough."

### Let kids know you're listening (They ALWAYS Know)

- When children are talking about concerns, stop whatever you are doing and listen. Express interest in what they are saying without being intrusive.
- Listen to their point of view, even if it's difficult to hear. Let them complete their point before you respond. Repeat what you heard them say to ensure that you understand them correctly.

### Respond in a way children will hear

- Soften strong reactions. Express your opinion without putting down theirs; acknowledge that it's okay to disagree. Resist arguing about who is right. Instead say, "I know you disagree with me, but this is what I think." Focus on your child's feelings rather than your own during your conversation. I allow myself 1 DEEP Breath. Okay 2...
- Praising for the *process* a child used increases motivation and confidence by focusing children on the actions that led to success. It might be effort, strategies, focus, persistence in the face of difficulty and taking on challenges.

### Examples

- "I like the way you tried a lot of different strategies on that math problem until you finally got it."
- "That was a hard English assignment, but you stuck with it until you got it done. You stayed at your desk and kept your concentration. That's great!"



### When Can This be Tried?

During: routines, helping, toys or games, songs, books, being creative. So...All the time!

### ABC's of Awesome

#### Attitude

- Things to Consider:
  - What are the barriers this person faces?
  - How would I feel in this person's situation?

- Why do I think that?
- What are my assumptions?

### **Behaviour**

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- [ lex \$ i \$ s \$ C \$
  - Ask
  - Be Kind
  - Speak Slow and Low
  - Be Curious: What is their experience?
- What Might It Feel Like For Them?
  - Fear
  - Isolation
  - Confused
  - Overwhelmed
  - Blamed
  - Misinformed


### **Compassion**

- The awareness of, understanding and felt sense of suffering, its causes, and the motivation, and intention to alleviate it.
- Getting in Touch with Our Own Feelings:
  - Seek out information, like stories (personal or written) films, art, poetry, etc, that share about the vulnerability of every human.
  - Experiencing a degree of identification with the person's experience.
- Acknowledging the Person:
  - That sounds hard/frustrating (name it to tame it)
  - This can be hard. I will do whatever I can to help.
  - What do you need right now (2 options)?
  - How can I help?
- Knowing Them:
  - Tell me about what makes you feel calm/safe/happy
  - What do I need to know to help you best when things feel hard?
  - What are the things in your life that are most important?
  - What worries you the most?
- Repair:
  - I am sorry I X. I should've done X. (Not focusing on what they did to make you upset)
  - I intended to do X, but I forgot. I'm sorry. I will do X now.

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	<b>Attitude</b> Our history affects how we see and experience our life.	
<b>Behaviour</b> Our actions impact us and the lives around us.		<b>Compassion</b> Kindness and understanding not just to others, but also to ourselves.
	<b>Discussion</b> Communication impacts our relationships.	

### **Dealing with Challenging Behaviour is a Continuing Process**

There will never be a time when we completely have it or have all the right answers. We will make mistakes because we are only human, and that is okay!

### **Further Reading/Resources**

#### **Mindfulness Tools for Caregivers**

10 Mindful Techniques for Everyday Life: <http://www.spring.org.uk/2014/04/mindfulness-meditation-8-quick-exercises-that-easily-fit-into-your-day.php>

The Art of Mindful Living Techniques:

<http://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/>

Digital Therapeutic Mindfulness Course for Better Mental Health:

<http://bemindful.co.uk/>

### **Books for Caregivers**

Full Catastrophic Living – Jon Kabat Zinn

A Path with heart – Jack Kornfield

Peace is every step – Thich Nhat Hanh

Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames - Thich Nhat Hanh

When things fall apart: Heart advice for difficult times – Pema Chodron

How to talk so your kids will listen & listen so your kids will talk – Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

**How to Build Family Resilience** <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj20/family-resilience-and-good-child-outcomes-20-pages98-118.html>

### **How to Help Children Handle Big Emotions**

<http://childhood101.com/2015/03/helping-children-manage-big-emotions/>

### **Mindfulness Resources for Kids**

Search: 'www.amazon.ca › Books › Parenting & Relationships › Family Activities'

Calm Breathing Techniques: <http://www.anxietybc.com/parenting/how-teach-your-child-calm-breathing>

Guided Meditation for Kids with Instructions:

[www.annakaharris.com/mindfulness-for-children/](http://www.annakaharris.com/mindfulness-for-children/)

### **Mindfulness Books for Kids**

Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children - Thich Nhat Hanh

Ahn's Anger – Gail Silver

Moody Cow Meditates – Kerry Lee Mac Lean

What does it mean to be present – Rana DiOrio

No Ordinary Apple: A Story about Eating Mindfully – Sara Marlowe

A Boy and a Bear: The Children's Relaxation Book - Lori Lite (Ages 3-10)

Peaceful Piggy Meditation - Kerry Lee MacLean

### **Mindfulness Resources for Teens**

How to Teach Mindfulness to Teens: <http://leftbrainbuddha.com/teaching-mindfulness-to-teens-5-ways-get-buy/>

### **Mindfulness Books for Teens**

The Mindful Teen – Dzung X Vo

Mindfulness for Teen Depression- Mitch R Ablett and Christopher Willard

## **About Inspire Community Outreach**

Inspire Community Outreach (Inspire) is an incorporated non-profit social services charity providing evidence and culturally informed, family-centered education and programming, designed to meet the needs of those living with mental health issues and neurological/cognitive differences.

At Inspire, we **support youth and families with unique challenges, while celebrating strength**. Programs are designed to meet the needs of those living with mental health issues or neurological/cognitive differences. Inspire's support is created by the

community; from children who grew up with differences, families that include children with differences, and evidence from a clinical perspective.

**Compassion. Inclusion. Education.**

## About the Founder

**Angela Taylor** is our Founder and CEO. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Manitoba, with a major in Psychology and a minor in Sociology and a Post Bacc in Education, focusing on inclusion. She has her Master's in Disability Studies from the University of Manitoba and is currently completing her PhD in complex families and wraparound care. She is a Mental Health and Accessibility Expert with an eclectic therapeutic approach that includes attachment, cognitive behaviour therapy, positive psychology and CPS model (Collaborative & Proactive Solutions) supports.

**We'd love to hear from you!**



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