

Challenging Thinking on Challenging Behaviour

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Why are we interested in
behaviour?



Understanding the Problem

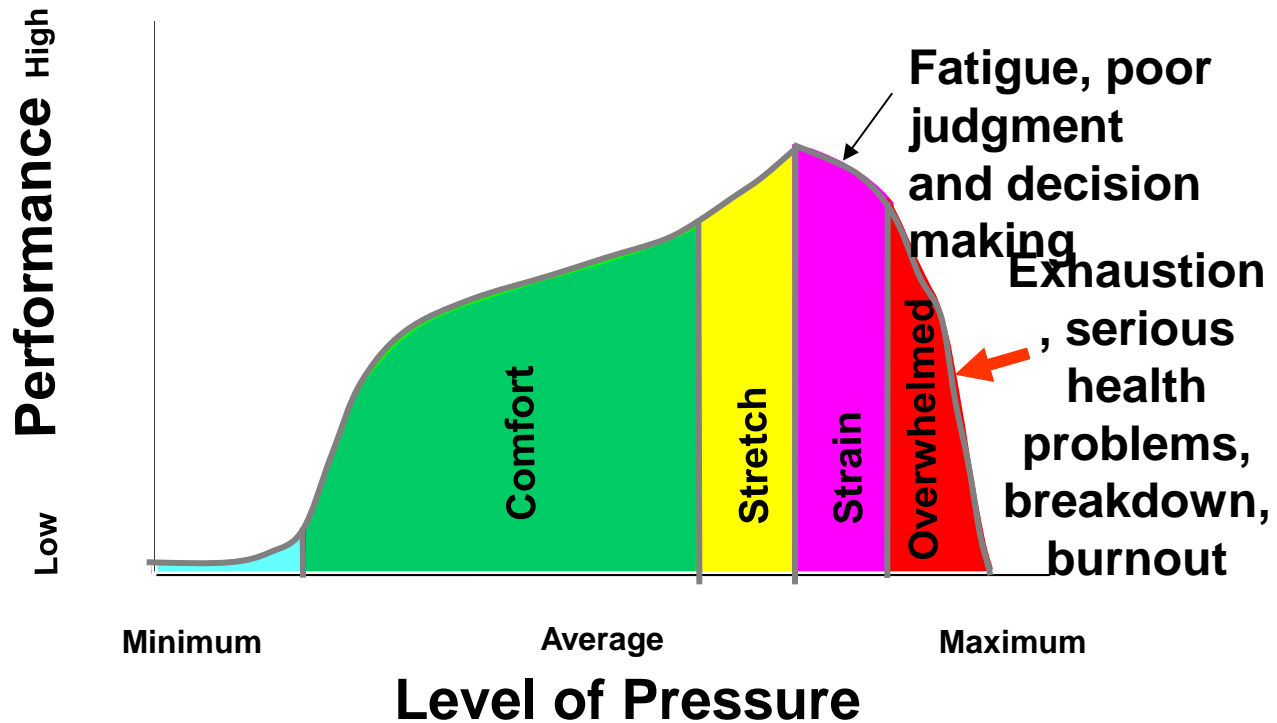
“It must be recognized that ***the area of pupil behaviour is highly sensitive***. It ***challenges teachers’ sense of their own professional competence*** and both teachers’ and parents’ self-esteem. ***Emotions often get in the way of constructive planning***”



Impact of challenging behaviour

- Students with SEBD can affect a teacher's **confidence** and sense of **competence**.
- Teachers can feel **rejected** and **disappointed** when they cannot manage the students in class.
- It can be difficult to build relationships with students who do not **trust** adults.
- It is **vital** for teachers to develop **self-care** and **self-management** strategies to be able to cope with students' difficult behaviour.
- If the adults can remain **calm** and **supportive**, the students will learn different responses as well.

Pressure Performance Curve



How can you manage your learners if you don't manage yourself?

Children come into school every day and more or less do the same thing. Sometimes they behave a little better, sometimes a little worse. What makes the biggest difference is the reaction of the adults around them.

Where do the feelings come from?

- Us ?
- How do we manage them?
- Strategies?
- What works for you?
- Remember you can only change yourself
not another person



Teacher Attitudes Towards Challenging Pupils



Vs.



Is optimistic

Thinks 'What is working, what have I got right, where can I get help with the other bits?'

Is pessimistic

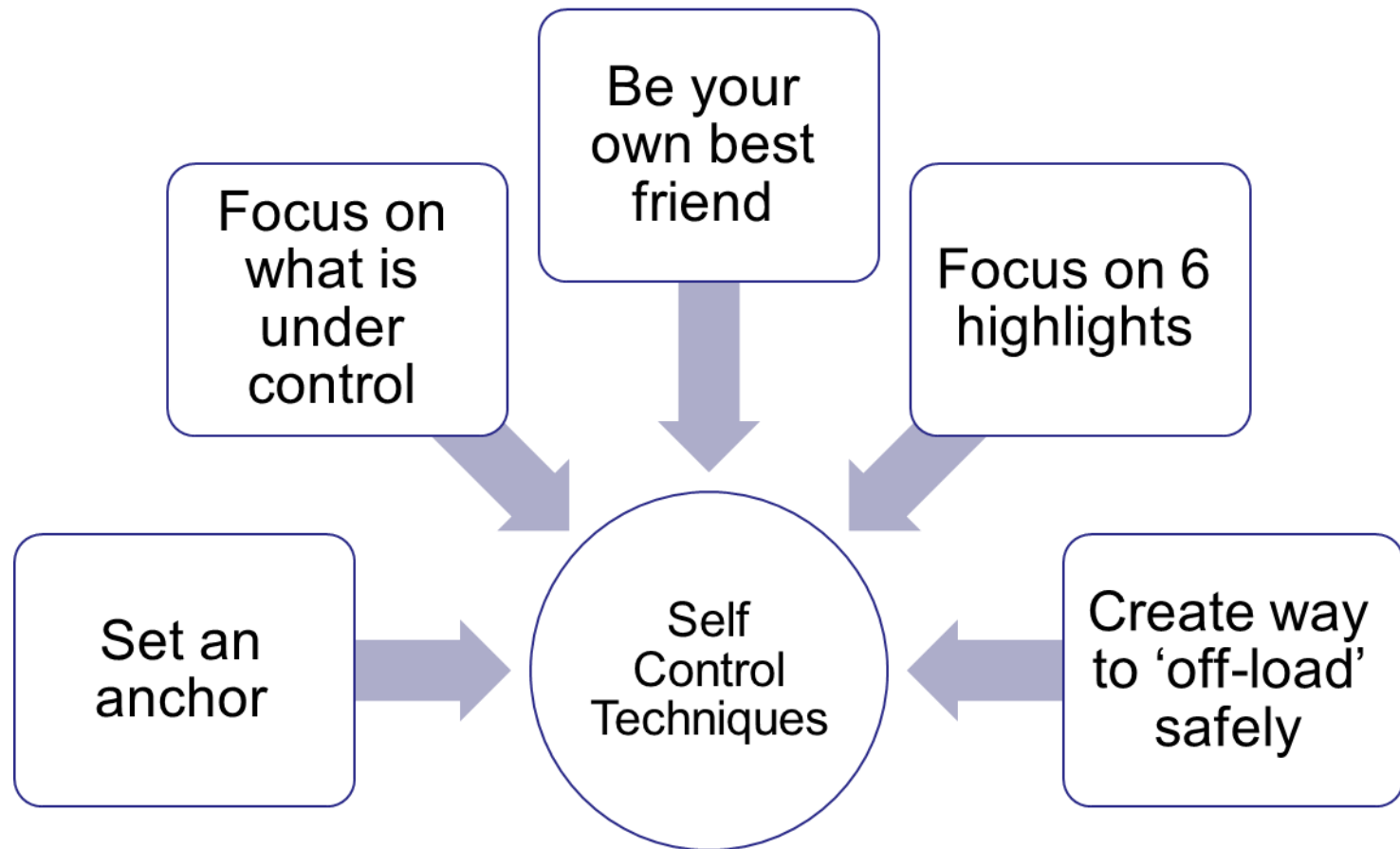
Thinks 'I got so much wrong, I don't know anything about this, it's not for me, I should give up'

Self-care strategies

Make sure you have a plan to manage your own stress levels and reactions to challenging students.

- Work with a supportive colleague. Agree to meet regularly to discuss issues and to listen to each other.
- Practise positive self-talk. Be kind to yourself and accept you are human. Catch yourself in any negative or blaming self-talk.
- Look for patterns of behaviour which are being enacted around some students. It is possible that you are getting caught up in the student's emotions and responses. Find a way to break the patterns, to react differently.
- Make sure you eat properly, exercise and get enough sleep

Managing ourselves



When in doubt....



<http://www.stopbreathethink.org/>

<https://www.stopbreathethink.com/kids/>



Unconscious defence mechanisms

Projection

- **Implications**
- How you are feeling when with a child might give you an indication of what they are feeling. The task is to recognise which feelings are our own and which are projected.
- Feelings need to be contained, 'digested' and withstood.
- If they are projected back in the same way and with the same intensity, they cause terror and 'nameless dread'.

Introvert or extrovert?

Transference/countertransference



one more

- Displacement =
- taking out our frustrations, feelings, and impulses on people or objects that are less threatening than those who caused the feelings - often **aggression**.

How can we work together

- Accept that the well-being of the adults affects the young people
- Be prepared to recognise and name what is ours
- Separate behaviour from interpretation
- Be aware of unconscious defence mechanisms
- Reframe your language

I behave badly when ...

I cannot hear

I cannot remember

I cannot understand what to do

I cannot focus

I cannot make myself understood

I cannot write as well as I speak

I cannot see properly

I do not feel safe

I do not know what is expected of me

It is the only way of behaving that I know

Key questions

- What is the UNMET NEED the child is trying to fulfill with this behaviour?
- What has this child NOT had experience of?
- What is it that this child CANNOT believe about the teacher and the classroom?

Students with SEBD will usually:

- React very negatively to changes in routine or teaching staff
- Be often physically or verbally aggressive to staff or other students
- Become aggressive or very withdrawn when under pressure in class
- Have a limited concentration span and spend little time on-task.
- React inappropriately to correction or praise,
- Find it difficult to form and maintain friendships
- Have excessive mood swings
- Often lose their temper with their work, tearing it up or throwing it away
- Go to extreme lengths to attract attention
- Provoke and distract other students from their work
- Leave their seat without permission
- Refuse to follow instructions, move or leave the room when asked
- Refuse to do work/homework
- Behave in a way which is unsafe and likely to injure themselves and others.

WHY??

Understanding behaviour

A child's current behaviour often reflects an essentially sane response to..life circumstances.

Bray 1997 (Quoted in Visser, J and Rayner, S (1999) Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties : A Reader. QEd.)

Does punishment work?

First reaction in school is to apply stronger discipline and more severe punishments.

This usually does not work if it is the **only** strategy used.

Students with SEBDs are more vulnerable and troubled than they appear.

Their own behaviour often frightens them.

They want adults to understand and help them.

Causes of SEBD

The effects of environment

- Learned patterns of behaviour and thinking in reaction to the environments they have been living in.
- Some have lived in uncertain, inconsistent and perhaps dangerous environments.
- They may not have experience of adults who can care for them in a safe way.

Effects on the brain and the body

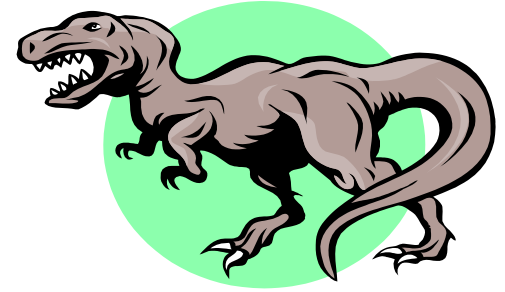
- If a child does not get consistent, sensitive care, that child will learn not to trust adults.
- High levels of stress hormones in their bodies > **cortisol** > a negative impact on growth and development of the baby's brain and body.

The triune brain



Fight or flight?

Reptilian Brain



- Constant state of fear and anxiety.
- Brain programmed to expect attack and will very quickly go into a flight or fight response.
- Makes rational thinking impossible.

This can happen in class when:

- Work seems too difficult
- The teacher corrects the student
- Routines are changed without warning

Hypervigilance

- Some children have learnt that they need to pay attention to every mood and action of adults. In class this type of child will not be able to focus on one task or activity for any length of time. They are always looking around, checking the safety of their environment and the mood of the people in it. We call this behaviour **hypervigilance**. .

“Dysregulated children in school will not learn”: Dr Bruce Perry

Three step process

1. Regulate
(you & them)
2. Relate
3. Reason



A good learner

- Feels safe and is willing to take risks
- Has good self-esteem
- Can seek help when needed without expecting criticism or ridicule
- Is able to concentrate and be what Gardner calls 'in the flow'
- Is able to manage frustration, anxiety and disappointment
- Has the capacity to bear the powerlessness of not knowing
- Is optimistic and has a positive attitude to a problem
- Can wait for attention.

Trust = a safe learning environment

Learning involves taking risks:

Making mistakes

Asking for help

Being the focus of attention

Not knowing





A mistake is a
gift to the class



Problems in class

- Not following instructions – working memory
- Reading comprehension – internal voice
- Reading mazes - problem-solving difficulties
- Cannot recall facts learned recently – working memory
- Shouting out loudly that the lesson is boring – difficulty regulating emotion

Working memory impairment

Affects:

- Following instructions
- Copying from the board
- Sequencing
- Reading comprehension
- Mental arithmetic
- Following directions

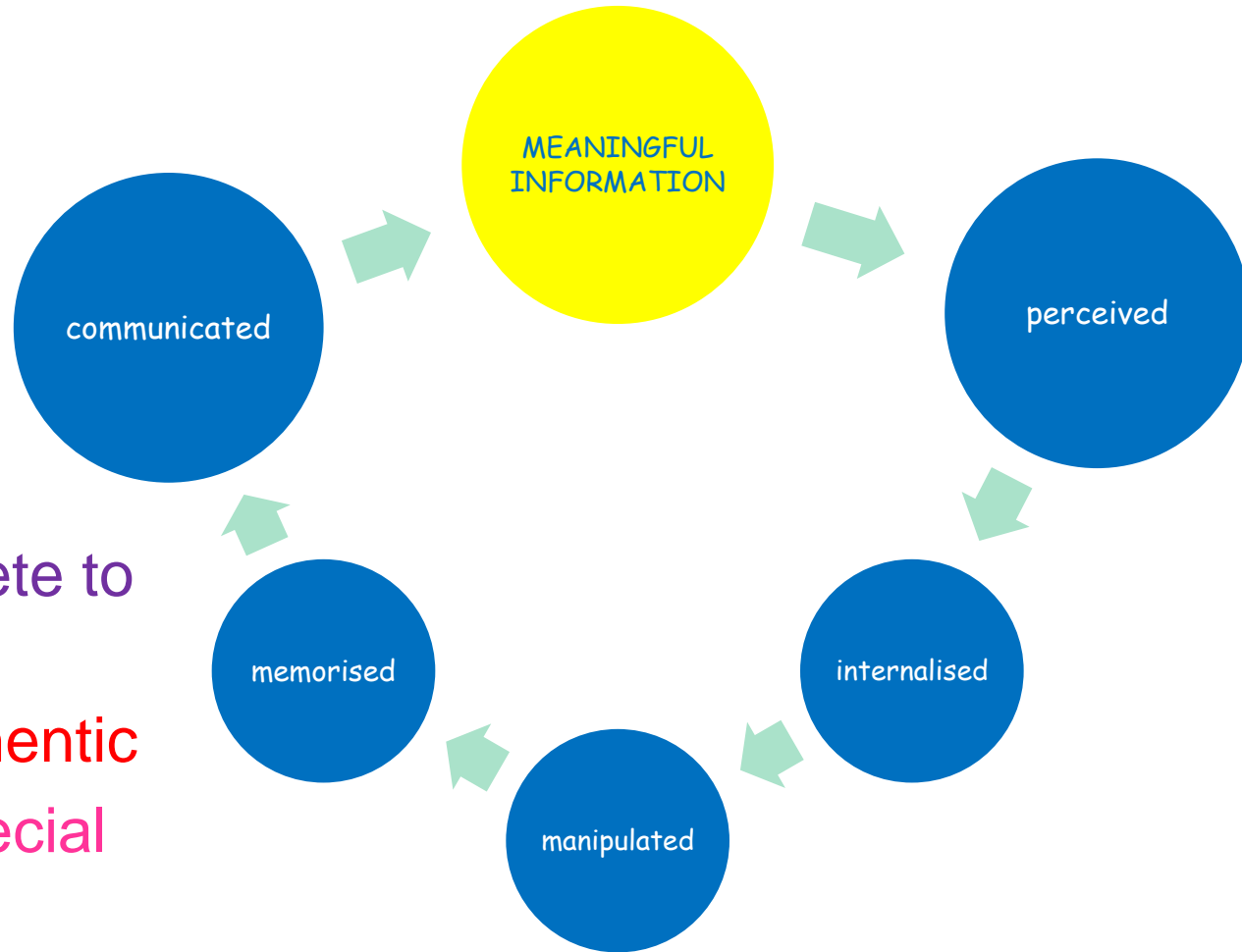
Because.....3 ways

Because

Because

Big Elephants Can Always Understand
Small Elephants

Motivation



Teach from concrete to
abstract

Relevant and Authentic

Use learner's special
interests

2-Footed Questions

www.mantleoftheexpert.com



Learner's own experience

Target learning

Communicating on line

Teach chunks of language

lol

brb

omg

wtf?

tbh

tmi

np

imo

cul8r

Mind your language

- Don't think of a blue tree



Inclusive Language

1. You are very lazy.
2. I don't think you tried your best on this piece of work.

Before you open your books I want you to
look at the example on the board

Look at the example on the board....now
open your books

You're not listening

I need you to show me you are listening

You did the first part well **but** you need to go faster

You did the first bit well **and** you need to go faster

What are **you** going to do about this?

What are **we** going to do about this?

Help with the behaviour

- Tell students what you WANT them to do
- Separate descriptions of behaviour from your interpretation of behaviour
- Acknowledge objections and feelings, it is not the same as agreeing with them
- Replace 'but' with 'and'
- Use open-ended questions to discuss a problem, avoid 'why'
- Avoid sequencers in instructions, give action words in the order you want them done

Class contracts

- We respect each other and school property
- We always do our best
- We are kind to ourselves and each other
- We listen to each other
- We celebrate diversity
- We use our words to discuss problems
- We give people extra time if they need it..

Classroom routines and rules

- Have a few positively phrased rules and clear sanctions
- Involve the class in drawing them up eg a contract
- Appoint behaviour monitors , use a card system eg red, amber, green
- Develop non-verbal signals for stopping and starting
- Create non-verbal routines eg barometer for noise
- Remind always of the positive ethos 'In this class we are listen to each other' 'What rule are you breaking?'
- Make good use of your space, think about how you are standing, what energy are you creating?
- Have routines for entering and leaving the room, about bags,coats etc
- Have a cooling down space if possible



Dealing with conflict

- Stand tall, own your space
- Match the energy
- Speak in an assertive voice, loud but not shouting
- Breathe!
- Give clear direction on what is wanted
- Acknowledge the feelings
- Stack up yes responses
- Distract if possible
- Keep the focus on learning
- Remove from audience if possible
- Praise as soon as possible after conflict

Developing self-regulation

- Use individual laminated whiteboards for learners to show their answers rather than shouting out
- Allow the learner to work with headphones on or to imagine wearing headphones to cut out distractions
- Create parallel experiences – think of a time when you do focus
- Think, pair, share
- How well did I listen, wait, sharemark myself

Activities to meet a need

- Joining things up with a line e.g match the word and meaning
- Putting in order/sequencing stories and tasks
- Finding things e.g Find Wally
- Stories which allow all feelings e.g Where the Wild Things Are
- Films with good/bad in one character eg. Incredible Hulk
- Activities with frames, enclosed eg. Word snake
- Boxes – to contain work and feelings

Some tips

- Build in time to acknowledge feelings
- Use activities which create empathy eg guess about your partner, information gaps
- Find a positive intention and acknowledge it eg 'You are very funny, you can be funny without being unkind'
- Set an expectation with your language 'Juan, move over there, thanks'
- 'Anita, you are not unkind, so I don't know why you are being unkind today'
- Focus on need 'You don't need to do that in here'
- Praise those who are doing the right thing 'Great, this table is ready, who else is ready?'
- Keep the focus on learning, bring it back to the task 'Is there a problem with number 2?'
- Ignore secondary behaviour
- Label the act, not the child 'That was unkind.. .not.. You are unkind'
- Give a future focus 'How can we make sure this doesn't happen again... what needs to be different?'

Want to learn more?

- Sally Farley: Student Support and Wellbeing, University of Kent, CT2 7NZ
- Email: s.e.Farley@kent.ac.uk
- Marie Delaney: The Learning Harbour, Crosshaven, Co Cork, Ireland
- Email : the learningharbour@gmail.com
- www.thelearningharbour.ie
- Teaching the Unteachable, October 2008, Worth Publishing,UK
- What can I do with the kid who....2010. Worth publishing,UK
- www.worthpublishing.com
- www.caspari.org.uk
- British Council online SEN course
- www.teachingenglish.org.uk/webinars
- OUP 'Into the Classroom : SEN'

Exploring emotional and body experience

Our experience is first and foremost bodily, yet our recognition of this reality often recedes and in times of stress and anxiety and as a result of earlier experiences emotions and feelings become unconscious and unruly.

We can encourage greater awareness of our bodily and emotional experience to support resilience and self regulation.