

The Challenge of Challenging Children

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Why are we interested in
behaviour?



Understanding the Problem

• “It must be recognized that ***the area of pupil behavior 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”***



• Peter Gray and Sue Panter, Support for Learning, Vol 15, No 1.

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

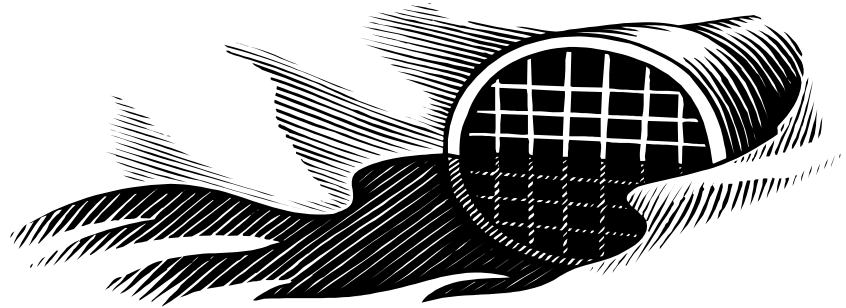
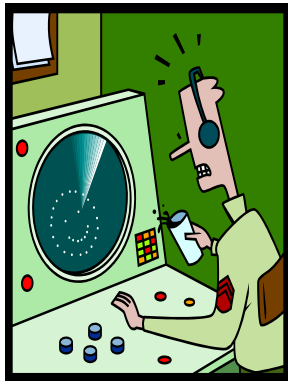
What do you choose to pay attention to?

In your control?

Draining or energising?

Focus on highlights ?

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Unconscious Defence Mechanisms

- A sign that a child cannot manage their overwhelming feelings and have not had experience of an adult who can do that
- Can give us an indication of how a child is feeling
- Can be thought about and named if appropriate
- Can help us to feel better about ourselves and our actions
- **Tip** : Remember ‘ It’s not meant for me’

Transference

- Where feelings and attitudes from a relationship with main carers in the past are 'transferred' and re-experienced in a later relationship, for example, a teacher.
- **Implications**
- A child's seeming inexplicable reaction to a member of staff may be triggered by who they are reminded of. We can be caught in the counter-transference.

Counter-transference

Ever had the desire to adopt

- to murder
- to hit
- to rescue
- to give up
- to run away?

Behaviour has a meaning

- “A child’s current behaviour often reflects an essentially sane response to an untenable set of life circumstances.’

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



Mind your language

- 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

Some tips

- Build in time to acknowledge feelings
- 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?'

A final thought.....

‘We cannot solve the problems of today with the same level of thinking that created them.’

- Albert Einstein

Want to know more?

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- Teaching the Unteachable, October 2008, Worth Publishing,UK
- What can I do with the kid who....2010. Worth publishing,UK
- Into the Classroom: Special Educational Needs OUP 2016
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