

I would like to hear some advice on how to handle challenging behaviour

- This is a very big subject and it largely depends on the age of the child, situation the behaviour occurs in, any special needs the child may have, their cognitive ability, and what it is that is challenging to those around. **Try to objectively look at your child's behaviour. What is happening before the incident, and after the incident. This information will allow you to start being more specific on what challenging behaviour you are dealing with.**
- It would be necessary to know whether we are talking about behaviour in the home or in the community, or when you are out with them, or trying to manage them indoors.
- One would need to try to understand what it is the young person is trying to communicate with the behaviour. If their communication is good, they can often tell you what the issue is.
- It is important to bear in mind the developmental age of the child in comparison with their actual age, make sure you are responding to them at a level they can understand.
- There are some basics; rules need to be in place – a few simple ones about safety, thinking about others, their conduct.
- Consequences applied should be achievable and followed through. Adults need to be consistent – say what they mean and mean what they say. If you tell a child you will take XX away, then don't do it, they will learn that the threat is empty and potentially increase the behaviour as they seek further boundaries. **It is important to note though that the use of punishment has been shown to not work and can make problems worse. It is better to reinforce good behaviour than punish bad behaviour.**
- What can you teach them about getting what they want in an acceptable manner; teach to ask nicely, wait their turn, and listen to others. This is best done through modelling rather than lecturing. 'This is how we behave here.'
- When child is calm spend time building up positive relationship/doing nice things together. **This use of reinforcement makes them more likely to engage in these behaviours as they get more out of them.**
- Build routine into their day
- Teach them how to explain/communicate. Use visual methods if talking is hard.
- Avoid asking them 'why they did that.' They are not likely to have the right answer. If you want to know, come at it from a different angle, again it depends on how old they are. Something like 'tell me what happened,' is much better. Try to avoid telling them why they did it in your opinion, let them tell you what it was. Avoid quick/ratchet punishments/judgements until you have a clear picture.
- **Be careful not to rehash incidents with a child, demanding they apologise or wanting to unpick the incident when they do not is likely to create more behaviours.**
- It will take a bit of time to turn round – don't give up. **Consistency is paramount in managing challenging behaviour. Your approach should be positive not punitive and should be the same every time. This way children learn.**
- Stuck record – if other adults help you, all stick to the same script. **This mimics the advice on consistency. Might sound silly to always say the same thing but it is important.**

My 13 year old son had ASD and ADHD and is always randomly grabbing my daughter - not to hurt her but he often does. How can I stop this without rewarding / giving attention to him for this unwanted behaviour? My daughter (10) is actually scared of him! Whenever I say no to him he gets aggressive and has started lashing out. I'm a single mum and am struggling - he's now bigger than me.

- Use classic AS strategies – visuals, other ways to communicate, social stories, help him develop his imagination with play, find concrete ways of helping him express his feelings. Look for advice and ideas on the National Autism Site.
- Classic ADHD strategies – one sufferer told me it is like having a Rolls Royce brain but bicycle brakes. They tend to rush headlong into things without thinking.
- Give him acceptable outlets for energy, give him visual ways to slow down – teach hand signals – use distraction strategies.
- Even within that neurodiversity it is possible to learn to manage – help him understand other people’s needs in a safe fun way. There are loads of ASC resources for developing this understanding of others feelings etc online. I would advise searching Autism emotional literacy worksheets
- What could his intention be? Not to hurt, so does he want to communicate his feelings to her? He may also be looking to try and initiate some form of interaction but cannot work out how to do this appropriately. Some social skills training can be helpful here about appropriate touch and ‘safe hands’. This needs to be done when he is calm as he will be able to take this on board at this time.
- ‘Rewarding’/‘giving attention to’ can sometimes be the same thing – the attention IS the reward. Reward = outcome – what is the actual desired outcome? He wants her attention? In other words is it his way of saying ‘hey, I’m here?’ Work out what it is he is trying to do and give him an acceptable way of doing it. Then give LOADS of reinforcement for the acceptable behaviour and minimal/no reinforcement for the difficult behaviour.
- Remember that if it is attention he is looking for from his sister or an adult, bad attention is still better than no attention. Being scolded is still a form of attention and can be reinforcing.
- The relationship with his sister will need some reparation now – it can be hard living with someone who is neurodiverse – she may also feel different in that she doesn’t have the same condition as he has. When doing some social skills training, give the sister a role in this, doing some role play that is facilitated by a parent gives both children a role, makes them feel valued and your daughter will start to build her relationship back up.

A lot of emotional breakdowns with him in the past few days the routine change is a very big factor.

- Reassure him – adults are also finding it difficult – we are all in the same boat. There are a lot of resources on Bradford Schools Online if you have access to that. Use of social stories (of which there are many) are usually a child friendly approach to explaining how everyone is anxious at the moment but it is okay to feel a bit worried!
- Work out the new rhythm of family life in this time – what are your new routines – security in routines. Set these routines clearly, using visuals if needed. We have all had to shift our routines, but for some children, they don’t understand the change or why. Explanation and consistency is key here!
- Build in some lovely points for him during the day applicable to your family – a regular slot in the day for; nice food treat, shared activity such as a game, daily exercise with social distancing – a walk in the park, round the block, a good film.
- Include some activities that are just for him too, organise his routine for him.

I'd like to ask how children known by schools to have anxiety issues without any diagnosis can be helped.

- One would tend to put in place strategies to reduce the anxiety that they person is feeling. In school, for example, they could be observed carefully to ascertain what it is that causes the additional anxiety and stress. **Even without a diagnosis, taking a therapeutic approach to a child can be adopted. We all have days where we are anxious, but without a diagnosis, people can still change the way they are with us to make us feel safe.**

At home they're shielded to the outside world. There's no social distancing so how will this be explained to children prior to school?

- If this is a question about explaining social distancing, there is a lot on line to support this, a lot on TV, a lot of adverts where young people are showing how they are doing it. **The school will also be likely to have explanations and visuals in place on return to school to further support this. Preparation is important here though and using some of the online resources, you can help prepare your child for this new way of life at school.**

How can explaining what when how, when parents don't know the answers?

- See above? Is this still about social distancing? The scientific fact underlying this is that the organism can only spread when people are near to each other. If they are not near to each other its spread will be reduced. It can be picked up from surfaces, hence the cleaning and protective clothing being advised. **Sadly it is very difficult to give advice on the unknowns as professionals often do not know the answer either if it is around when the government will lift X etc. We can only work with the information we know at this point.**

My husband and I are key workers. I chose not to work from home due to reducing space to move for the kids. We chose to keep them at home. 2 of my 3 kids will transition to new primary and secondary school settings.

SALT, ASD team are involved as well as Socrates with 1 son transitioning to Secondary. All keeping in touch by phone. Bradford KA rejected the EHCP but have implemented further strategies recommended by the Education Psychologist which in turn will be added to his my care plan BUT no one is tackling the anxiety of returning back to school.

- My understanding is that professionals such as those mentioned above are highly aware that there will be a lot of anxiety about going back after this lockdown and will make plans to support young people with needs in that area when the time comes.
- There would ordinarily have been additional transition plans in place for your children given your description of their needs. These will not be forgotten when the time comes to return.
- The plans will start to be made when there is a secure date for returning to school. This will be tricky if it is a new school the young person is transitioning to, but every effort will be made to look after young people whose conditions mean that they are more likely to find it distressing.

Which professional body is responsible for the anxiety watch when the child is undiagnosed as yet?

- Every adult connected professionally with a young person has a duty of care as regards their safety. So schools are obliged to monitor the wellbeing and safety of the child, as is the parent when they are at home.

- If the anxiety is a feature of the diagnosed condition of autism, then support would be available through the variety of autism services that exist.