

Functions of Behaviour: Why Behaviour Happens

The **function** of a specific behaviour is **why** the behaviour happens. Knowing why a behaviour happens makes it easier to:

- Think of strategies to decrease the challenging behaviour
- Teach the child/youth a more appropriate way of getting their needs met

The 4 Functions of Behaviour (EATS)

Escape Behaviour

Used to avoid, delay or withdraw from any of the following:

- tasks, activities, demands, certain environments, attention, people

Attention Seeking Behaviour

Used to get either of the following:

- something desirable from someone (like praise or affection)
- something undesirable from someone (like a reprimand or verbal argument)

Tangible Seeking Behaviour

Used to get any of the following:

- food, activity and/or object

Sensory Reinforcement

Used to get:

- Internal stimulation from information through senses (touch, visual, auditory, movement, taste, temperature)

The following pages outline things you can try **before** the behaviour, **after** the behaviour, and suggest **replacement behaviours** for each function. As a general rule, we like to focus on **changing the environment before the behaviour happens**. This is a preventative measure.

**Remember, your child/youth is engaging in this behaviour for a reason. He/she must be taught an appropriate "replacement behaviour" in order to still have his/her needs met.*

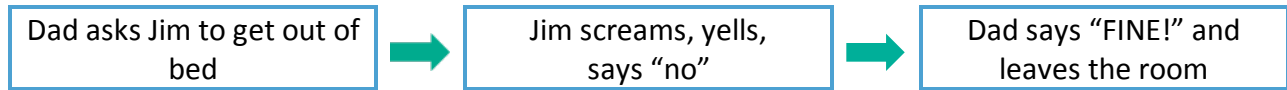
We help kids be kids!

Escape Behaviour

Used to avoid, delay or withdraw from any of the following:

- tasks, activities, demands, certain environments, attention, people

What Might It Look Like?



Before the behaviour, try:

- ✓ Visuals (first-then board, visual schedule)
- ✓ Offer choices
- ✓ Provide clear expectations
- ✓ Shorten duration or decrease size of demand
- ✓ Start with easy demands before asking something more difficult
- ✓ Ensure your child/youth can do what you are asking, or give help
- ✓ Provide breaks frequently throughout the day
- ✓ Mix easy and hard tasks/demands
- ✓ Make changes to tasks/demands to promote success

After the behaviour, try:

- ✓ Follow through with expectation
- ✓ Stay neutral when challenging behaviour happen

Replacement Behaviours (Remember to always reinforce!)

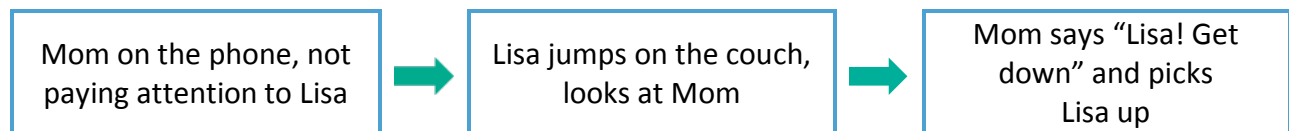
- ✓ Teach your child/youth appropriate way to ask to escape (e.g., “break”, “all done”, “no”)
- ✓ Teach to request help from an adult
- ✓ Teach pre-requisite skills for difficult tasks

Attention Seeking Behaviour

Used to get either of the following:

- something desirable from someone (like praise or affection)
- something undesirable from someone (like a reprimand or verbal argument)

What Might It Look Like?



Before the behaviour, try:

- ✓ Give lots of attention throughout the day when child/youth not engaging in problem behaviour
- ✓ Do activities that require high level of attention from you
- ✓ Model what it looks like to appropriately ask for attention

After the behaviour, try:

- ✓ Stay neutral (e.g., no eye contact, no instructions, and do not provide any feedback when challenging behaviour happens)
- ✓ Catch them being good; when the child/youth engages in appropriate attention seeking behaviour, give lots of praise and attention!

Replacement Behaviours (Remember to always reinforce!)

- ✓ Teach more appropriate ways to seek attention (e.g., tapping someone on the shoulder, grabbing someone's hand, saying "look at me!", "come play!")
- ✓ Role play appropriate attention seeking behaviour
- ✓ Teach to wait for attention (start with only a few seconds and build up)
- ✓ If attention is not available, teach your child/youth to engage in activities they enjoy independently

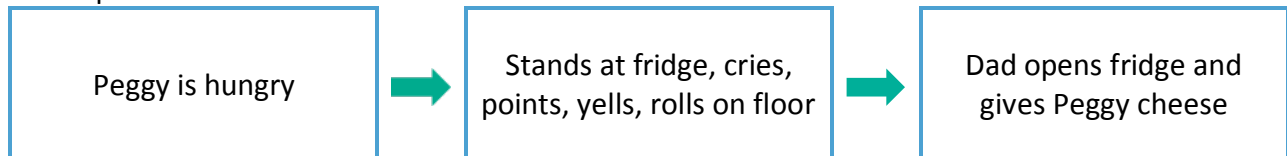
Tangible Seeking Behaviour

Used to get any of the following:

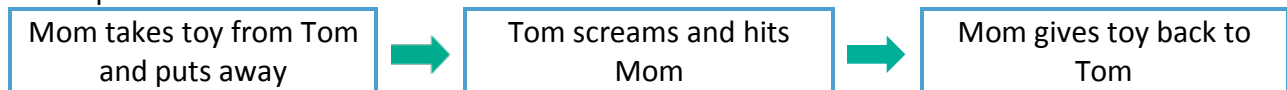
- food, activity and/or object

What Might It Look Like?

Example 1



Example 2



Before the behaviour, try:

- ✓ Warn the child/youth when he/she has to stop using the item and move to something else
- ✓ If food/activity/object no longer available, give choice of two other preferred items
- ✓ Use visual supports to show child/youth how many times he/she can have the item throughout the day
- ✓ Maintain access and control of items at all times

After the behaviour, try:

- ✓ Do NOT give access to item when inappropriate/challenging behaviour has happened
- ✓ Give first/then request; “first” is something easy and “then” is the item (e.g., “First stand up, then cheese”)
- ✓ Give choice of other similar items he/she can have

Replacement Behaviours (Remember to always reinforce!)

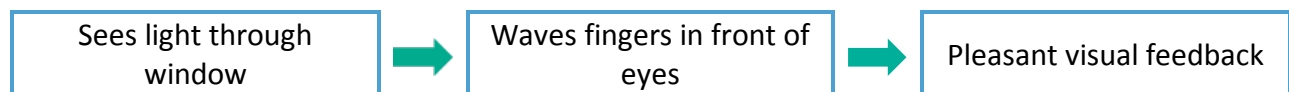
- ✓ Teach how to properly request (e.g., “cheese”, sign language, use PECS)
- ✓ Teach to wait for item (start with only a few seconds and build up)
- ✓ Expose to more items or activities to expand interests

Sensory Reinforcement

Used to get:

- Internal stimulation from information through senses (e.g., touch, visual, auditory, movement, taste, temperature)

What Might It Look Like?



Before the behaviour, try:

- ✓ Incorporate the type of sensory input into day
- ✓ Ensure child/youth has a variety of sensory input from environment and activities
- ✓ Engage in regulating activities, such as walking
- ✓ Consult an occupational therapist for additional strategies around sensory integration
- ✓ Consult your family doctor to ensure no medical issues present

After the behaviour, try:

- ✓ Do not provide any additional reinforcement when sensory stimulation occurs
- ✓ Redirect the sensory behaviour to activities in the environment

Replacement Behaviour (Remember to always reinforce!)

- ✓ Teach child/youth to request the type of stimulation they need
- ✓ Teach an appropriate behaviour (e.g., try waving a whisk in front of the light, then play with the whisk in other ways to incorporate the sensory stimulation into play)
- ✓ Teach behaviours that cannot be done at the same time as the sensory seeking behaviour (e.g., clapping hands is incompatible with waving fingers in front of eyes)

Services and supports offered in partnership with:

