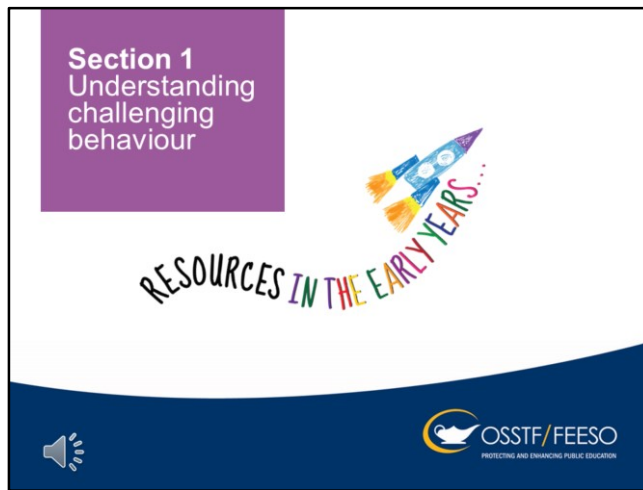


**Section 1**  
Understanding  
challenging  
behaviour

# Addressing Challenging Behaviour in the Early Years



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“Let’s examine some underlying causes of Challenging Behaviour.”

## Challenging behaviours may:

- Cause injury to self, or others
- Cause damage to the physical environment
- Interfere with learning new skills



“As educators we know that schools are a social setting and that individual behaviours do have an impact on all in the learning environment.”

**Challenging behaviours may:**

- be inappropriate for the child's developmental level
- occur at home as well as at school
- socially isolate a child

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“It is difficult for a child to be successful at school when they are not able to communicate their needs in an appropriate way.

When a child cannot get what they need by communicating appropriately, they often behave in a way we may see as challenging. These behaviours can impact, and have consequences, for both the child and others.

Those in the child's environment – family members, educators, friends - may not know how to interact with a child who is struggling to communicate.”

**Behaviour = Communication**

**Behaviour may be used to:**

- Obtain something
- Escape something
- Change the way they feel

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“When we understand the function of the Behaviour, then we are better able to address the behaviour.

Most behaviours fall into one of the three categories you see here:

- an attempt to obtain something
- or escape something
- or an effort to feel good, better or differently.



For example, a child may scream or hit when they are trying to get the attention of an adult. Or they may exhibit those same behaviours if they don't want to do a difficult task.”

**Now what?**

Observe

Document

Respond

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“So, now what? As you are likely aware, the basic steps are to observe, document and respond.

The goal of observation is to determine what the child is trying to communicate and how. It is important that we document how often, when, where, and in which situations does the challenging behavior occur. This may involve Applied Behaviour Analysis (or ABA) or some other technique. Once we know what the child is trying to achieve, our job is to teach more appropriate ways of getting there.”

**Responding**

Provide:

- Alternative ways to communicate
- Information
  - Choices
  - Consequences

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No one processes information well when they are agitated. Students who exhibit behaviour problems often have language difficulties so it is important to keep your sentences short and direct.

Provide alternative ways for the student to express themselves. For example:

Teach and model words/phrases like “I’m angry,” “I don’t like it,” “I’m not happy about it.”

You may also need to teach and model more appropriate non-verbal techniques . For example teach the student to move to a time-out place or create a signal the student can use when they are feeling out of control.

Make sure that you respond promptly to the new words or signals that the student may use. If these new methods do not prove effective, the student will find less appropriate ways to get what they need.

Providing information can also be useful but remember to keep your language short and simple.

Give the student choices—You can do this or you can do that. Repetition is key here. Staying calm and repeating the choices the student has are important. Make sure the at least one of the choices allow the student to be successful.

Let the student know what the immediate consequences are if they engage or continue the inappropriate behaviour.

**END OF**

**Section 1**  
Understanding  
challenging  
behaviour



RESOURCES IN THE EARLY YEARS...

