



Summary Sheet

# Module 3

**ATSI: Replacing difficult behaviour with useful behaviour**

# Replacing difficult behaviour with useful behaviour

Has your child's behaviour started to improve? If so, that's great. If not, don't worry. There are lots more ideas that will help you.

## The purpose of a behaviour

The purpose of a behaviour is the reason a behaviour is used. We have already looked at triggers and consequences of behaviour. We can use these to work out the purpose of your child's behaviour. The purpose is to get whatever positive consequence usually happens after the behaviour.

*Example:*

Trigger	Behaviour	Consequence
Frances's dad gets home from work	Frances shows her dad her homework	Dad praises Frances and sometimes gives her a treat

The purpose of (or reason for) Frances showing her dad her homework is to get the praise and a treat from her dad.

## Identifying the purpose of difficult behaviour

All human behaviour has a purpose. Research tells us that children who are slower to learn generally behave in order to:

- get attention from someone
- stop someone paying attention to them
- do something they really like, e.g. eating or playing a favourite game
- escape from having to do something they don't like to do
- obtain physical pleasure
- escape pain.

# Next steps

## Next steps

Think about a plan for dealing with your child's difficult behaviour. If you already have a plan before the difficult behaviour occurs, you will find it a lot easier to deal with it successfully.

It's easier to build a plan in stages. The next few ideas will help you make a few choices about how to deal with your child's difficult behaviour before putting them all together into a plan that you can use every time the problem happens.

Once you have worked out the purpose of your child's behaviour, the next step is to decide if that purpose is:

- always acceptable
- sometimes acceptable
- never acceptable.

For example, if your child is yelling at you to get your attention, is the purpose (to get your attention) something that is acceptable at all times of the day, wherever you are? (For the moment, do not think about what the difficult behaviour actually is, just think about the purpose of the behaviour.)

The answer is likely to be "no". There are times (when you are on the phone, talking to someone else, doing something that needs your full attention) when it is not acceptable for your child to have your full attention. So the purpose of this behaviour is "sometimes acceptable".

## Encouraging alternative behaviour

### Choosing an alternative behaviour

Now go back to thinking about the actual behaviour. What other behaviour could your child use instead of the difficult behaviour to achieve the same purpose? In the example above, most parents don't like their children yelling at them, so you might want your child to say "Mum" in a pleasant tone that is quite loud enough for you to hear, but not yelling. (Teachers often call this an "inside voice".)

# Encouraging alternative behaviour

Try to choose a behaviour your child is already able to do, even if they don't do it very often. If you can't find a behaviour that they can already do that would be relevant, you might have to skip over to Module 5 to find a behaviour you can teach your child to use, then come back to this point.

## Triggers and consequences for the alternative behaviour

Remember in the last module you learnt about giving clear instructions which could "trigger" a behaviour? Think of an instruction you could use to trigger the alternative behaviour you have chosen. Think of a positive consequence. It might be the consequence the child already receives for the difficult behaviour, so in that way the alternative behaviour serves exactly the same purpose as the difficult behaviour. Make sure that your child does not get a positive consequence for the difficult behaviour any more.

## No consequences for difficult behaviour

If the purpose of your child's difficult behaviour is to get your attention, you have to make sure you do not give them any attention. You have to pretend your child is not there. This is called "planned ignoring". As you will see in the DVD, this is really hard to do. You cannot use planned ignoring if your child is in a dangerous situation.

## Providing negative consequences for difficult behaviour

This simple strategy often works. Say "No" to the child if they show the difficult behaviour, then provide the trigger for the alternative behaviour (tell them what you want them to do) and praise them when they do it.

## Reasons for not using physical punishment

- This can cause serious physical harm to the child.
- The child might copy you and use physical aggression on others.
- It can have a bad effect on the relationship between you and your child.

### **There are better alternatives:**

- You can take privileges away from the child, e.g. computer games, time watching TV, pocket money, etc.
- Use time out from positive consequences. If you plan to use time out, you must follow the guidelines from the facilitator very carefully, and keep a record of what you do. Time out will not work for children who like to be on their own.

### **Putting all these ideas together**

Go back to the purpose of your child's behaviour. Talk to your facilitator about the purpose of your child's behaviour and they will show you a chart to follow.