


# Understanding Behaviour as Communication

Parent/Carer Information Session



# Session Agreement

- Supportive learning environment.
- Mixed range of experience
- Participation.
- confidentiality
- Feedback required at end.
- Ice breaker
- What are your aims for today?



*“The key to most things in life is  
**awareness and understanding.**  
Once you have that, the  
strategies are easier to find”*



# Aims for today

To develop an awareness of how our children and young people use some external/internal behaviours to communicate

How we can help CYP regulate their emotions



# A child's behavior is NOT always what it seems

What we see: Behavior

What we don't see:  
What's under the surface


SOCIAL SKILLS  
SECURITY  
POWER  
SELF-ESTEEM  
NEED FOR ATTENTION

BASIC NEEDS  
HUNGER  
ATTENTION  
DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL

PHYSICAL SAFETY  
THOUGHTS  
SLEEP  
SENSORY NEEDS

NEED TO BELONG  
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING  
ATTACHMENT  
NEED FOR CONNECTION  
EMOTIONS  
ANGER  
SADNESS  
FEAR

 PARENTS  
with confidence



# Discuss with the person next to you;

In what ways do CYP behave in which you find challenging  
to manage ?

# Discuss with the person next to you;

What do you think they COULD be trying to communicate to you? Use specific examples

As a group lets think of some unmet needs that cannot be communicated verbally



# Understanding Behaviour

When people behave in a way that challenges us, we need to question why they're behaving in this way. This will help to understand the meaning behind the actions and help avoid **attaching labels** to a person.

There are three approaches to understanding behaviour:

The **internal approach** views the behaviour as originating from the individual, including mood, mental health and character


The **external approach** views the behaviour as a result of the environment, including the physical environment (such as noise levels) and the systemic environmental

The **interactional approach** considers the interaction of both internal and external factors. This approach looks at the interactions among young people, family members and the environment and tends to prioritise an examination of the function of the behaviour.

Taking the time to work with the person will help you identify what it is that's causing the problem.








Have another think about the behaviour discussed earlier and using the interactional approach, do you feel you have a better understanding of CYP's actions/behaviour?

Behaviour – Possible reason – Possible underlying reason – how could you respond?

Activity - Using flip chart discuss together some possible situations,  
e.g. coming home shouting and upset, refusing to get out of bed, other possible  
suggestions





What is a schema ?

A **core belief** about ourselves and the world that have developed from;

1. Early childhood experiences.
2. The innate temperament of the child.
3. Cultural influences.

They are extremely stable and enduring patterns, comprising of memories, bodily sensations, emotions, cognitions and once activated **intense emotions** are felt

They are like lenses that only show you a certain view of the world

They are like magnets which attract some bits of information and repel oth


Core beliefs are like magnets;

They are waiting to **attract** evidence which confirms them. The more evidence they collect; the stronger they get.

Unfortunately they **repel** anything that doesn't "fit" with the belief. This makes it hard to see or believe anything which undermines them.

Core beliefs **ARE NOT** facts.





The options are; **surrender** to the schema, **overcompensate** or **avoid it** so a bit like fight or flight.

For example.. with LAC children the schema is normally around **rejection** and **abandonment, mistrust** and **abuse**.

1. If you **surrender** ; “everyone in the world is abusive so I’ll seek out abusive relationships as that’s what I’m used to and what makes me feel safe”. These children might play up or pick friendship groups that are not healthy.
2. If you **overcompensate** ; “I am going to get hurt so I may as well do the hurting”. These children tend to become the abuser so children may be the bully of their class.
3. If you **avoid** ; “to prevent myself from being hurt again I will just avoid all people”. These children tend not to build relationships full stop

Likewise we will see four modes when schemas are triggered;



**angry child, happy child, impulsive child and vulnerable child**

The **vulnerable child** inside us all is the one that we protect at all cost.

e.g. Jonny has a strong “rejection” schema. Therefore a school teacher sending him out of class is going to really hit hard as the child sees this as another rejection.

Often they are trying to provoke a reaction in you that they are used to, thus feels safe





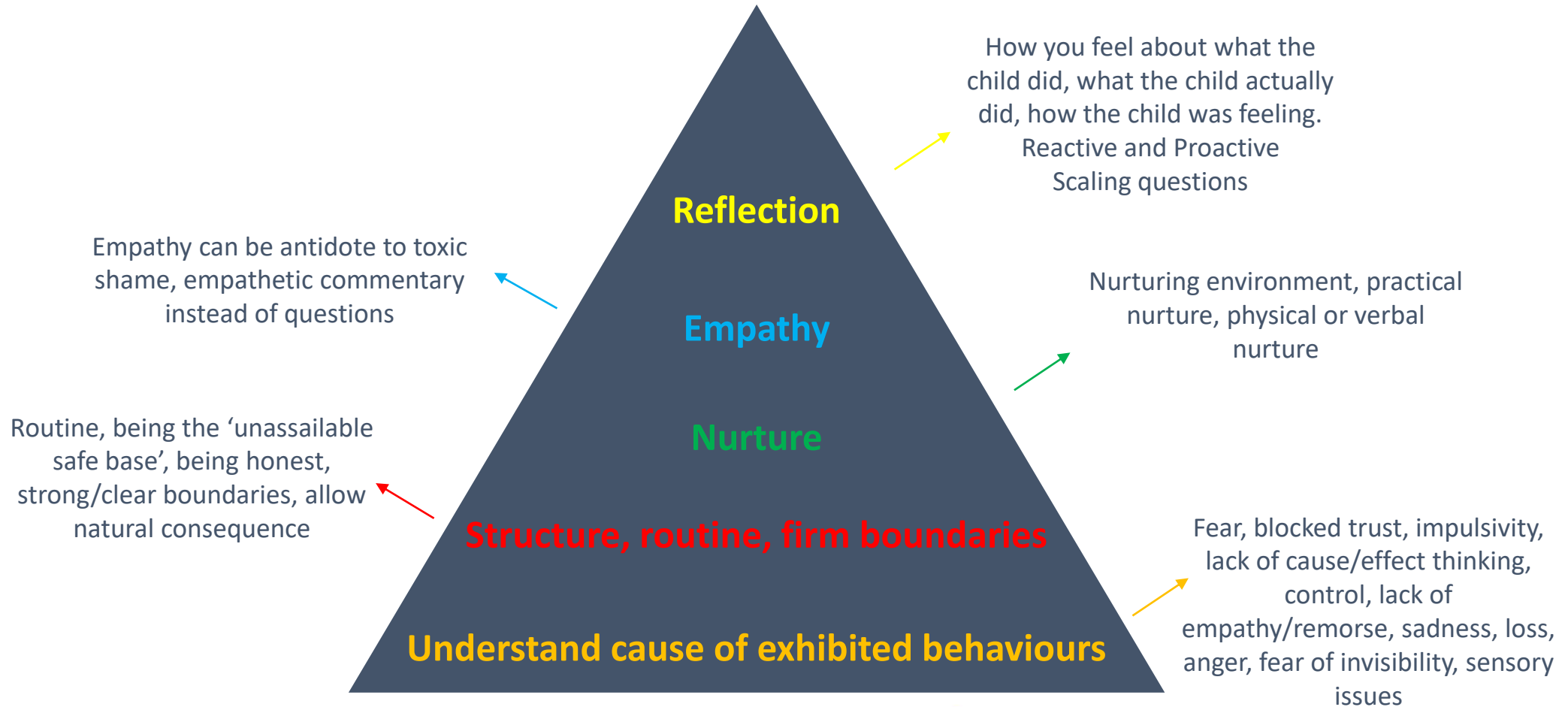
**REMEMBER;** we all have our schemas, don't take others behaviour so personally.

When you notice an extreme reaction in a child – its likely a schema has been activated.

These are all **emotional responses** not **cognitive responses**

How can we alter their feeling of rejection?

# What can we do; Structured Approach



*The A-Z of Therapeutic Parenting; Sarah Naish*



## Encouraging emotional regulation; why is it important?

A simple definition of emotion regulation is..

**“the ability to control the experience and expression of emotions (Gross, 2002)”**

Since children do not necessarily **choose** to be at school or to **participate** in particular learning activities, they therefore may need to **regulate** a variety of emotions in the classroom.

Parents also face situations that may make them feel angry, frustrated, disgusted, and sad, and they need to find appropriate ways of regulating these emotions in the home and at work.

The development of emotion regulation is therefore **important** for both **young people** and **carers**.



What strategies do you use in  
every day life to regulate your  
own emotions?



## **Involve your children in thinking of a way to check in with their emotions.**

Spend time together talking about how everyone is feeling, so they learn how to manage intense feelings from observing yourselves.

### **Share your own feelings!**

Its a way to help them understand the connection between feelings and behaviour. Parents/carers are the absolute best examples of emotional regulation and normalising “bad days”.  
ITS OK NOT TO BE OKAY!

### **TIPS for modelling emotional regulation**

#### **Set the tone in your home**

Ask your children what might be bothering them. The idea is to discuss any event that likely elicited a feeling and have everyone share. This sets the tone for the day, giving you the heads up on why they might be having a tough day and behaving in a particular way.

#### **Check in all day long and be patient**

It's beneficial to stop throughout the day for quick regulation checks. This way young people can vocalize if there are any lingering emotions from anything that's been happening in the day.

# Reducing anxiety in the home

Collaborative working as a family

Parent/carer's positive attitude

Parental encouragement

Parental reassurance that We Can Do It!

Parental recognition and validation of anxiety of young people.

Not dismissal or punishment;

Use of humour to defuse situation;

Family supporting each other

Relating subject to real world situations and their own lives;

Opportunities to de-stress

DO not embarrass

## 5 Steps to Eliminate Performance Anxiety

<b>SEE</b> Notice 5 things that you can SEE and name them out loud.	<b>5</b>	
	<b>4</b>	<b>TOUCH</b> Notice 4 things that you can TOUCH and take the time to actually feel those items.
<b>HEAR</b> Next, notice 3 things that you can HEAR and name them out loud.	<b>3</b>	
	<b>2</b>	<b>SMELL</b> Notice 2 things that you can SMELL and name those things out loud.
<b>TASTE</b> Finally, notice 1 thing that you can TASTE.	<b>1</b>	

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# Time IN instead of time OUT

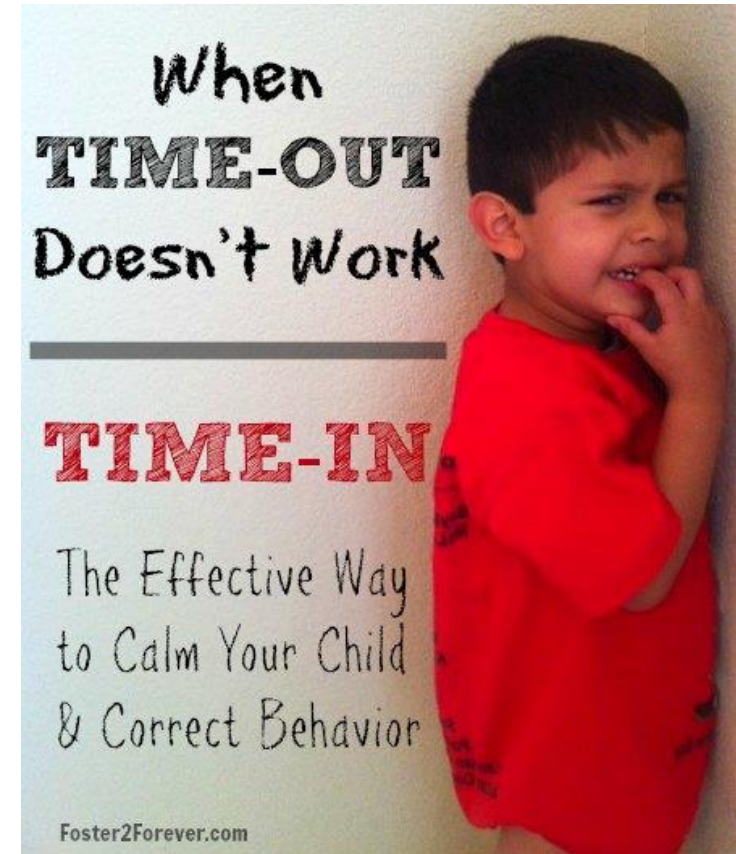
When you see a child becoming **frustrated** or **dysregulated** – pre-empt their anxiety and bring them close to a trusted adult.

Likelihood is they might start “misbehaving” and therefore have some form of punishment – naughty chair, time-out etc.

Ultimately they will want to be close to a trusted adult and feel safe, especially when their feelings can be so powerfully negative.

Instead invite them to help you sort out the washing, or to help tidy with you, or do any task with you!

The idea is you bring the child towards you before they get to the stage of high arousal when they can be a danger to themselves or others.





I wish I had known that my children's behavior was a language – that their actions and words were telling me something about what they were feeling or thinking. I wish I'd remembered that they did not get up in the morning plotting to do things to frustrate me.

I wish I'd known that melt-downs and explosions usually meant my kids were tired, or hungry, or bored or frustrated themselves. I wish I'd known that they needed an adult to help them find the words to express what was troubling them. But they sure didn't need a frustrated adult.

I wish I'd known more about child development, brain development and behavior. I wish I'd known that growing up is a slow process. I wish I'd known how each development stage has its own way of seeing the world. I wish I'd known that most times they saw things very differently from me.

I wish I'd listened more to what was true about their hearts and spirits and personalities than worrying about what other people thought of their behavior.

—Dawn Hallman, M.A.,  
executive director of the  
Dallas Association for Parent  
Education, [dallasparents.org](http://dallasparents.org).



If you feel you need some advice to help a young person, or your child needs extra support...

ASK CAMHS, now part of Thriving Kirklees based at Northorpe Hall is the single point of access for all referrals of children aged 5-17 ½ in the Kirklees area.

**ANYONE – (young people, parents/carers, teachers, doctors, grandparents) can call our duty team if;**

- a. they want to make a support request for a CYP to receive therapeutic intervention
- b. they simply need some advice about a particular child/children/class.

Our duty team will answer your calls, taking as much info as possible about the child if support has been requested, or giving you guidance as required with some resources/links to refer to. If processing a support request, our duty team will contact everyone who is involved with the CYP to gather as much info as possible. The info will then go to our Referral and Support meeting and a decision will be made about what service is appropriate.

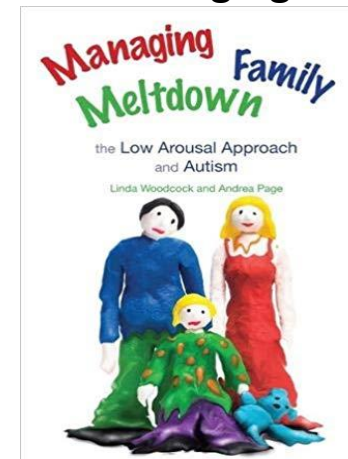
If we are supporting them @ NTH, it will be through telephone intervention, counselling, direct support, or projects like mentoring, Create and Rise

The requests can be discussed with specialist CAMHS and 0-19 practitioners.



## Possible Resources

[Managing Family Meltdown](#) : The Low Arousal Approach. Book offers practical, long-term and effective strategies to help resolve common challenging behaviours using a low arousal approach to behaviour management.



[My Hidden Chimp](#) by Prof Steve Peters, author of The Chimp Paradox – Helping children to understand and manage their emotions, thinking and behaviour

