



CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY

UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING BEHAVIOUR

Psychology in Schools Team
NSFT

September 2025

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#8335577**

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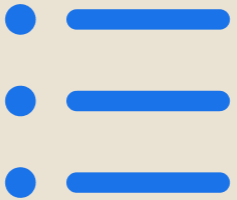
Slido will be used as our main interaction tool. We will not be able to use the Q&A function or answer raised hands.

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How old is your child?

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What stage are you at?

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What presentation are you interested in today?

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How would you rate your current understanding of behaviour in neurodivergent children?

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How would you rate your current confidence in understanding and supporting behaviour?

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WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Understanding behaviour

- Behaviour as communication
- Responses from others

Supporting behaviour

- Linking understanding with strategy
- Connection before correction
- Recognition, autonomy and natural reinforcement
- Working with schools
- Looking after yourself



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Which behaviours are you concerned/worried about for your child(ren)?

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How do those behaviours make you feel?

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WHAT BEHAVIOURS ARE WE THINKING ABOUT TODAY?

- Behaviours of distress will be unique to your young person
- Behaviours that we are not trying to change- It's not about trying to make our children fit neurotypical cultural standards



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**Which unique behaviours do you love
or value about your neurodivergent
child?**

Or behaviours you want to protect?

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Repetitive
compulsions

Self-harm

Running away
Breaking things

Eating problems

Violence

Withdrawn

Crying

Avoiding school

Irritable





Repetitive
compulsions

Self-harm

Running away

Breaking things

Eating problems

Violence

Withdrawn

Crying

Avoiding school

Irritable

Confused

Seeking safety

Distress at changes to routine

Shame

Uncertainty

Academic problems

Hopelessness

Sadness

Anger

Low self-esteem

Tired Bored

Feeling left out

Overwhelmed

Pain

Sensory overload

Needing attention

Hungry

Fear Trauma memories

Embarrassed

Bullying

Lonely

Friendship fall out

THE BRAIN HOUSE

Upstairs brain

- The control tower

Downstairs brain

- The alarm system

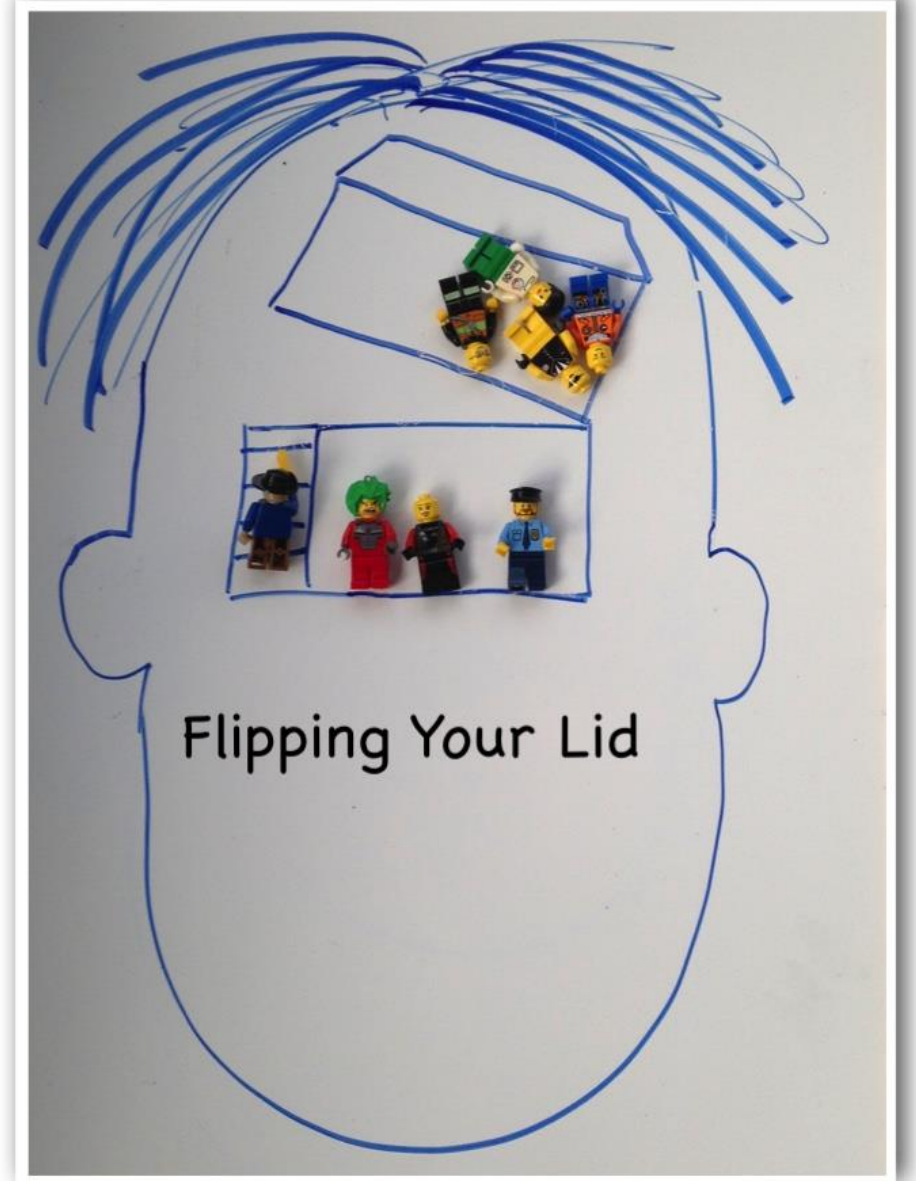


Illustrated by Dr Hazel Harrison

FLIPPING THE LID

Dr Dan Siegel

- This is what happens when people get overwhelmed by big feelings
- We lose access to the upstairs part of our brain
- When this happens children no longer have access to the part of their brain that helps them to make good decisions



BRAIN HOUSE IN NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN

More sensitive
to some stimuli

Impulsivity

Innate difficulty
with emotion
regulation

Difficulty
understanding
big feelings

More frequent
negative
experiences

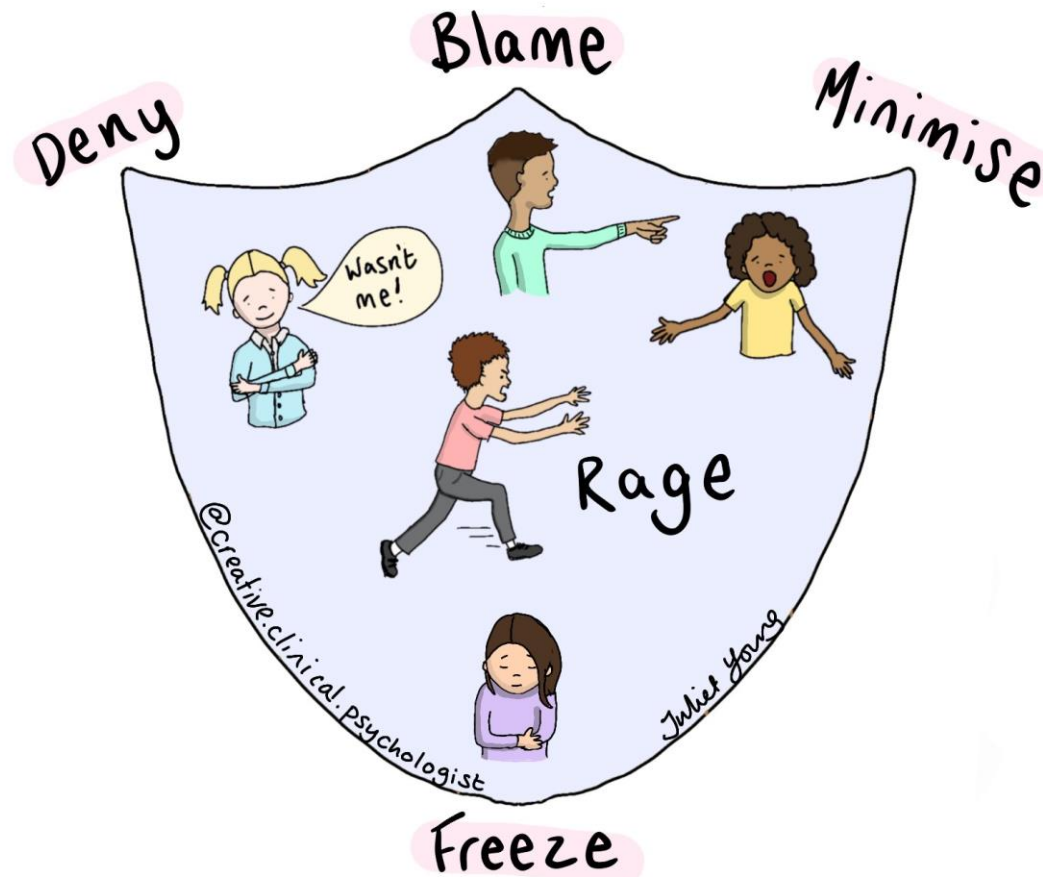
Executive
functioning
differences

Shame shield

The Shield of Shame

(adapted from Golding and Hughes, 2012)

Shame can be such a painful emotion to feel that we often respond in ways that end pushing people away (at a time when connection is really needed)



OTHERS' RESPONSES TO BEHAVIOUR

- Lack of understanding can escalate the situation
- Negative attention
- Punishment or criticism
- Feeling of shame



Skill, not will.

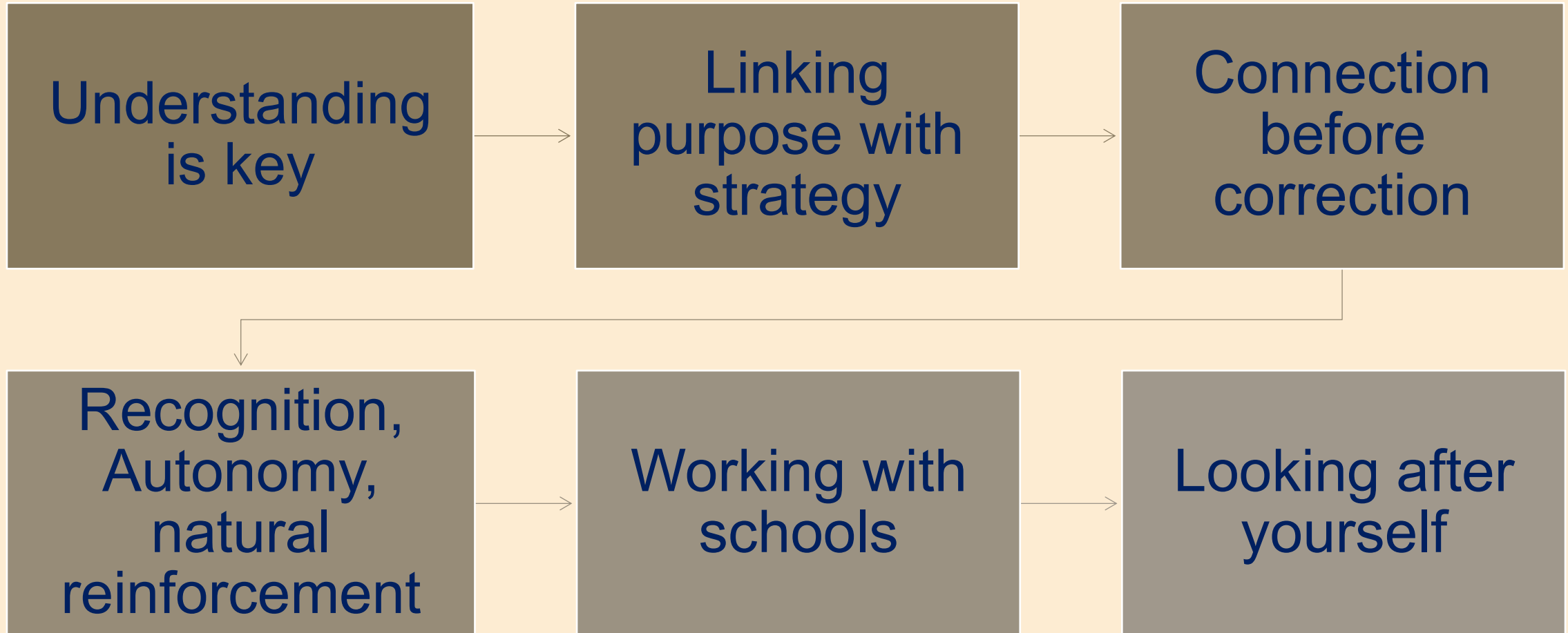


ReaconStreet

Break



Supporting behaviour



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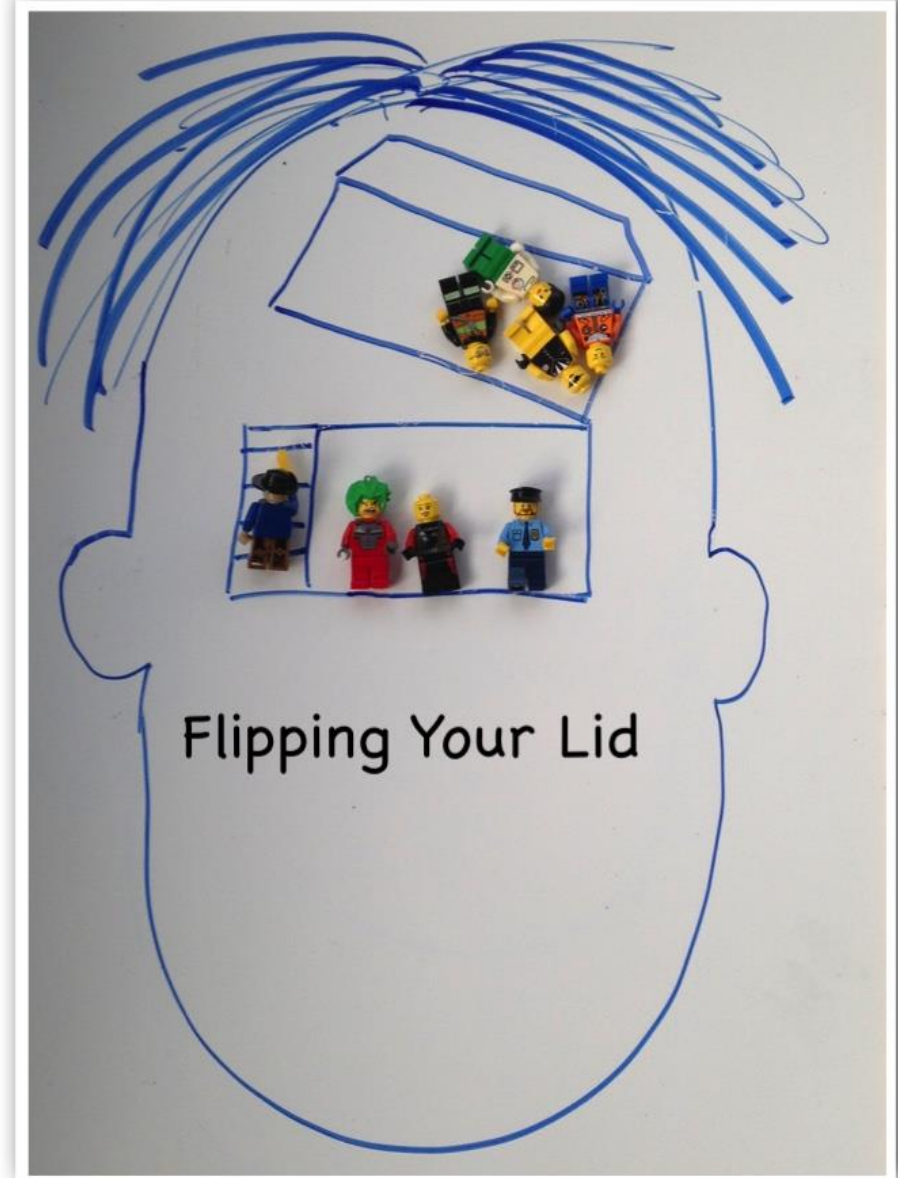


What do you find helpful in supporting behaviour?

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CONNECTION BEFORE CORRECTION

- When children are overwhelmed by big feelings, they will not be able to hear us until the thinking part of the brain is back online
- We can help with this by prioritizing connection over correction
- Coming alongside your child to help them regulate, becoming calm before deciding what to do next



UNDERSTANDING IS KEY

- Understanding the behaviour is key to planning how to respond
- What is your child trying to communicate?
- Is this behavior that we need to educate others on rather than expecting our young people to change?



HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND MY CHILDS BEHAVIOUR

ABC (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence) Chart Form

Date/Time	Activity	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
Date/Time when the behavior occurred	What activity was going on when the behavior occurred	What happened right before the behavior that <u>may</u> have triggered the behavior	What the behavior looked like	What happened after the behavior, or as a result of the behavior

- Keeping a diary: When, where and in what situation did the behaviour occur?
 - **Antecedent:** what happened right before? The trigger
 - **Behaviour:** describe the behaviour itself
 - **Consequence:** what happened after or as a result of the behaviour?

HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND MY CHILDS BEHAVIOUR

Day & time	Situation	Trigger	Action	Response

- Keeping a diary for long enough to collect lots of detailed examples
- Can involve school in tracking the behaviour to share understanding
- What patterns do you notice in the behaviour?

Example STAR chart

Day & time	Situation	Trigger	Action	Response
Tuesday 2.45pm	Class packing up art lesson end of day	Asked to pack away paints, classroom quite noisy	Lay on floor and refused to move for 20 mins, hit TA	TA tried to pick him up, then just sat with him
Thursday 11.45am	End of lesson about to go for lunch	Classroom noisy as getting ready for lunch	Lay on floor refused to move 15 mins	TA tried to encourage him to get up
Friday 8am	Getting ready for school early due to doctors appt	Asked to put on school uniform (earlier than usual)	Lay on floor refused to move 20 mins, hit Mum then refused to leave the house	Mum tried to encourage him to get up, had to try to lift him up as going to be late, missed the appt
Tuesday 3pm	Class packing up art lesson end of day	Given timer for end of lesson time to pack away, class reminded not to be too noisy	Lay on floor but got up after 5 mins and packed away	TA sat with him waited for rest of class to leave, stayed calm
Thursday 8.30am	Getting ready for school	Asked to get in the car for school	Lay on floor for 2 mins then got in car	Mum sat on floor next to him, reassurance about school day, stayed calm

A NOTE ON COMORBIDITIES AND COMMUNICATION



Visual
timetables



Communication
booklet



Choice board



iPad/tablet
communication app

LINKING PURPOSE WITH STRATEGY

Communicating unmet need

- Meeting the need quickly e.g. pain relief, food, water, sleep
- Longer-term planning for meeting the need

Overwhelming emotions e.g. anxiety

- Calming and grounding strategies
- Self-help or professional support for emotions

Needing attention

- Connection before correction
- Scheduling 1:1 quality time, even if it can't be right away

Sensory distress

- Remove distressing stimuli if possible
- Aids e.g. ear defenders, fidget toys, soothing box

Reducing triggers

- Using shared understanding to reduce likelihood of triggering situations

RECOGNITION, AUTONOMY AND NATURAL REINFORCEMENT

- We want to recognise when our children do something positive
- We want to support our children to do things independently as much as possible – giving them choices and allowing them learning from this
- There will be natural consequences for when actions don't support the child or others



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY REWARD?



- Sense of pleasure: What do they get enjoyment from doing?



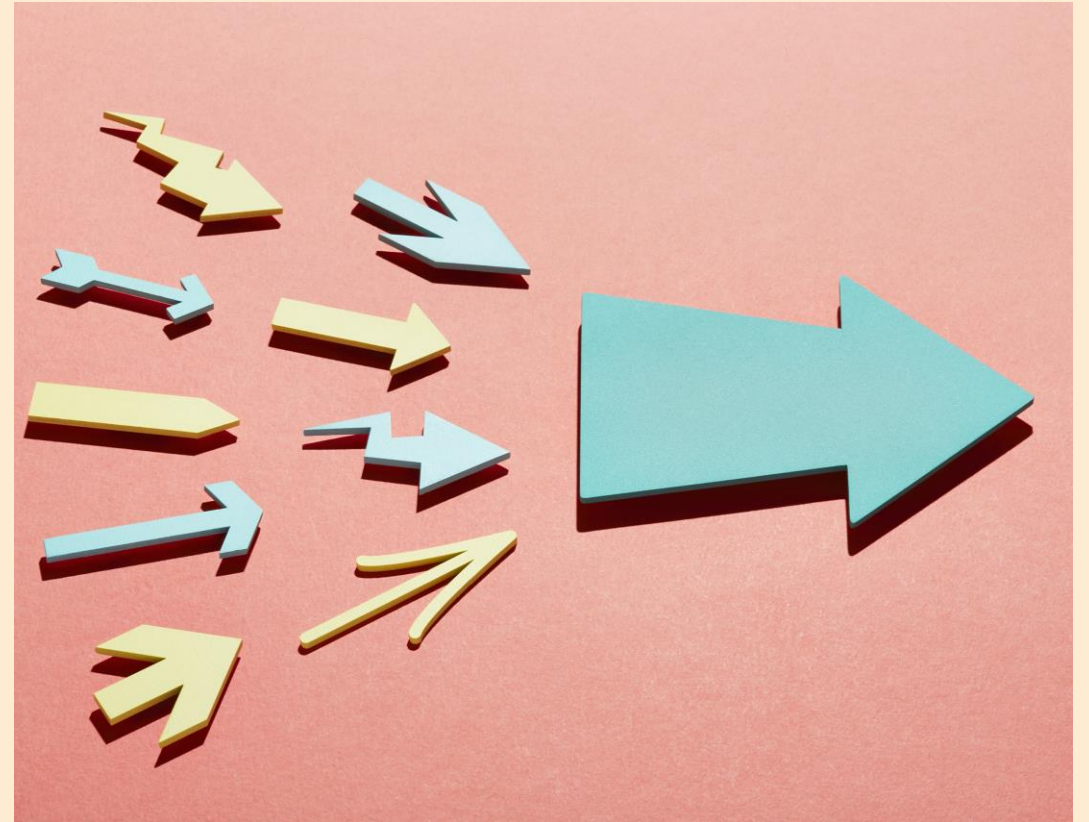
- Sense of achievement: What makes them feel good about themselves?



- Values: What is important to them?



- Goals: Is there something they want to work towards?



NATURAL CONSEQUENCES



- In certain circumstances, a negative response makes behaviour less likely to be repeated
- Clear, consistent and proportionate boundaries/rules are useful
- Agree consequences together – but strike while the iron is cold!
- Restore connection



WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

- Children are entitled to needs-based support regardless of diagnosis
- SENDIASS can help you with accessing needs-based support for your child from their school
- Suffolk schools can access advice on supporting children with emotional and behavioural difficulties via consultation with local services

Need	Adjustment	How do we know it is having an impact	When will we review



IMPORTANCE OF YOUR OWN WELLBEING

- If you are feeling dysregulated it's very difficult to support a young person to regulate themselves
- Filling up our own resource bucket first

[Recording: Childhood Neurodivergence: Managing Parental/Carer Stress](#)

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How do you fill up your own resource bucket?

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RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Behaviour

- [Understanding Your Child's Behaviour - information for parents of disabled children](#)
- Yvonne Newbold resources on SEND Violent and Challenging Behaviour (VCB) [Articles Written by Yvonne Newbold - Newbold Hope](#)
- [Challenging Behaviour Foundation resources](#)
- [Behaviour safe at Home - Suffolk SEND Local Offer](#)

Suffolk family support

All can be accessed at
www.Infolink.Suffolk.gov.uk

- **Parent Carer Needs Assessment** with Suffolk Family Carers
- **Home Start Suffolk** independent support including with behaviour difficulties
- **Suffolk Family Carers** – provide support and guidance including activities and workshops.
- **Triple P Stepping Stones** course – for parents of children with additional needs
- **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** early help family support
- **Customer First** – if you need any advice from children's social care, live webchat or call 0808 800 4005#

CONTINUED...LOCAL SUPPORT

- <http://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/>
- [PACT | Parents And Carers Together | Suffolk](#)
- [Suffolk Parent Carer Forum](#)
- [SUFFOLK SENDIASS https://suffolksendiass.co.uk/](https://suffolksendiass.co.uk/)
- [Suffolk InfoLink | Beans at Access Community Trust](#)
- [Families Together Suffolk | Local Family Charity |](#)

PSYCHOLOGY IN SCHOOLS: FREE LIVE WORKSHOPS AND VIDEO RECORDINGS

Upcoming LIVE Parent/Carer
workshops on mental health
www.nsft.uk/workshops
Eventbrite



Recorded previous mental
health workshops on a range of
topics:

- School Avoidance, Tics and Tourette's, Self-harm, Managing Behaviour, Social Media, OCD, Exam stress and more!

Childhood Neurodiversity
Workshops:

Access recorded workshops here:
[Parent workshops | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)

Topics include:

- Childhood Neurodiversity: What You Need to Know as a Parent or Carer
 - How the Brain Develops
 - Supporting Social Relationships
 - Supporting Language and Communication
- And More!

Recovery College

Recovery College

Open to all those interested in mental health recovery in Norfolk and Suffolk, the Recovery College provides free educational courses to equip you with the skills and strategies to move on with your recovery and/or to support others.

[Recovery College | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)

Discovery college

The Discovery College offers free educational online courses and webinars on mental health topics for 16 - 25 year olds. The courses and webinars are designed so that 16 - 25 year olds can become an expert in discovering themselves and their self care alongside others their age.

[Discovery College | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)

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**How would you rate your
understanding of behaviour in
neurodivergent children now?**

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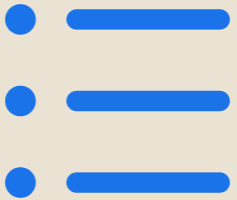
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**How would you rate your confidence
now in understanding and supporting
behaviour?**

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I have found this workshop helpful

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Two key things I will take away from this workshop are...

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One thing to improve this workshop..

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Childhood Neurodiversity: Parent/Carer Feedback Survey



If you would like to share any feedback on this workshop, please access the feedback survey by scanning the QR code or clicking the link below:

<https://forms.office.com/e/xAjg9U4zUJ>