



Best Behaviour Management

Shared by Kellie-Jane Bennett

Kellie-Jane is Head of Junior Development and teaches Grade RR at Mindstretch School. Her keen observation skills, special needs understanding and empathy enable her exceptional behaviour management expertise. Kellie-Jane also provides at home consultation – find her contact details below.

Understanding the Child

The best way to manage an unwanted behaviour is to avoid it in the first place.

At Mindstretch, we proactively work to understand the child as a whole. We identify a child's preferences, challenges and triggers. Once we have this pinned down, **we develop a sensory profile for each child**. This helps us to act fast and give the support needed before an unwanted behaviour occurs.

Knowing a child's sensory profile lets us quickly identify, understand and act on the behaviour, applying the 'ABC Model of Behaviour'.

ABC Model for Best Behaviour Management

The **ABC Model of Behaviour** is a vital tool that we use for understanding and managing a problem behaviour.

- **A** **Antecedent (or trigger)**
- **B** **Behaviour**
- **C** **Consequence**

The antecedent is something that comes before a behaviour and may trigger that behaviour. A behaviour is anything an individual does. The consequence is something that follows the behaviour.

Knowing the Triggers

If an unwanted behaviour shows up at school (or home) we'll immediately investigate the **Antecedent**. **What might be triggering the behaviour** and/or what is making the child feel uneasy?

I find a **holistic approach** that takes into account the whole child most effective. For example, I'll assess whether the root cause is a sensory challenge. Or, after observing the child in their environment, I might determine the behaviour results from a lack of clear boundaries consistently applied.

Our **first priority is to manage or avoid the triggers** that bring on the unhelpful behaviour. Some challenging situations are unavoidable in the real world. Here we work to desensitize the child to a particular situation and/or to redirect any negative response. We inform teachers, parents and other carers of specific situations they may need to manage.

Identifying the Unhelpful Behaviour

When does the **Behaviour** occur? Maybe the trigger is transitioning between tasks, the stress of being asked to share with a peer, or some type of tactile challenge. Once we've pinned down the trigger and resulting behaviour, **we identify the best approach to solve the underlying issue**.

This is where **regular emotions monitoring and environmental control** comes in. Our residential location gives an intimate, child-friendly setting that **keeps stress to an absolute minimum**. Further, our low pupil-to-teacher ratio means we can continuously scan learners' emotions and quickly identify the warning signals that a child's becoming agitated. If this occurs, we immediately intervene with calming therapy, redirection and distraction. We also help the child understand and acknowledge their emotions.



We work to identify early warning signals and intervene quickly to avoid undesirable behaviour.

Selecting the Right Consequence

Mostly **we're successful in avoiding poor behaviours**. In rare instances where an unwanted behaviour shows up, there must be a **Consequence**.

It may be 'time out' for the child to think about their emotions and actions. We'll work with them to **unpack what they're feeling**. Visual tools are especially helpful here.

We recommend **redirection and positive reinforcement** rather than punishment. For example, if a child's pushing a peer, we might ask them to rather push them on a swing and then we'll praise them for how well they are pushing the swing and how generous they are.

Or perhaps we'll advise a **sensory break and correction**. **HANDLE® techniques are a critical tool** for addressing any sensory challenges.

- We include HANDLE therapy *every day* at Mindstretch. Read our article [HANDLE Therapy at Work](#).

Extinction is another technique. In this instance, **we'll avoid reacting to the negative behaviour and so deny it power**. This doesn't mean we ignore the child and their agitation, it rather means we don't acknowledge the poor behaviour. We rather praise acceptable behaviour and actions thus reinforcing the positive.

We'll also ensure that we calm an anxious or struggling child as quickly as possible.

- See our article [Calming Interventions](#). The HANDLE [Soothing Spinal Massage](#) can be very helpful here.

It's important that **any intervention occurs immediately**, closely associated with the behaviour that needs to change. We're careful to use **appropriate verbal expressions and body language** throughout the process. We also ensure **consistency** in tackling an issue – we intervene every time it occurs!

Consistency is also important for boundaries. For example, if bedtime is at 7.30pm then this rule must be applied every night.

Teaching about Emotions

Education on **emotions management is as important as academic tuition and socialization** in a child's early years. If emotions are out of control everything suffers. We teach our children to identify and share their emotional state as it unfolds through the day. Story time is a great way to proactively work through this.



Case Studies for Best Behaviour Management

I share some examples of the behaviour and emotions regulation I've helped parents with during home visits. I aim always to provide simple, functional ideas that are easy to apply and which work well.

CASE 1

The Problem: The child would bang his head against hard surfaces and throw himself on the floor. He then turned to his mother, seeking attention. His mother responded with distraction techniques, putting on the television for her son before continuing her tasks. The boy twirled and swayed side to side or back and forth when left to occupy himself.

My Observation and Interventions:

Sensory Needs. I noted that the boy needed vestibular input. I took several actions to address this.

- I had the parents buy a therapy ball and showed them how to use it for vestibular rolls.
- I gave the boy some time on the trampoline and introduced HANDLE techniques such as skull tapping, bear hugs and joint tapping.
- I introduced a visual choice board so that he could indicate which therapy he'd like me to engage when I worked with him.

Personal Time. After addressing the sensory needs, I consulted with his mother and helped her understand that her son wanted more one-on-one time.

- We looked at his Mindstretch School IEDP (a learning programme tailored specifically to his needs) and introduced activities she could help him with, such as puzzles, drawing and sensory play.

Very quickly the child settled into a more relaxed, happier state with many fewer 'meltdowns'. The mother and son relationship improved too. They now enjoy regular story times, swimming lessons and art activities together. The little boy's emotions are better regulated at home and at school.



CASE 2

The Problem: The child regularly got into fights at school and hit his peers. He was doing the same with his little brother at home. He struggled taking turns and hated 'losing' or getting something wrong in class.

My Observation and Interventions:

Emotional Regulation. I noted the boy struggled with emotional regulation and so I began our home sessions by giving him a choice. He got to select his preferred activity from a 'visual choice board'. He could select to begin with story time and emotions check in, a preferred HANDLE therapy or game time.

Turn Taking. I used fun games to teach turn taking. The activities ranged from gross motor tasks to a game of Jenga. Initially the child wouldn't participate in turn-taking activities and so I role-played with his brother. Then gradually I invited him to join. He saw that the games were fun and slowly he joined in. I facilitated the play and introduced a visual structure card with an image of the boy and his brother. I used it to both show and verbalize whose turn it was.

Emotions Identification. Whenever I saw the child tensing up, I'd bring out our emotions chart and have him explain his feelings. Together we worked through his emotions. There were times we'd simply sit and talk about his emotions, and sometimes we'd draw images of how he was feeling. We'd return to the emotions management books we'd read and then we created our own social story to explain his feelings. He was proud of that and was reassured that his feelings were being heard and represented.

Physical Activity. Sometimes the child needed physical release and so I introduced proprioceptive inputs to calm his system. These included muscle work activities or application of deep pressure to the muscle and joints with HANDLE techniques.

The child learned to understand and manage his emotions better. He also participated in turn taking and so improved his relationships at school and with his brother at home.



At Home Support and Tutoring

Kellie-Jane offers **at home consultation on an hourly basis**. This includes observation, issues identification and behaviour intervention, with use of visual structures, social stories, communication support and sensory integration techniques, as needed.

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What her clients say:

“Kellie-Jane provided us with wonderful tools that we still use to support our son when he struggles to regulate.”

“Kellie-Jane was instrumental in assisting us with our daughter’s behaviour, especially identifying triggers and how to diffuse a situation. She’s patient and calm with her learners while keeping firm in her approach. Her tips and tricks helped us a lot.”

“Kellie-Jane gave us excellent ideas to create a functional room.”

By teaching good emotions management we ensure our learners interact well with one other and with the world of learning.