

Finding the Meaning of Challenging Behaviour

Children use challenging behaviour to communicate one of three things:



I want/need something

(e.g. “I want to play with you.”)



I don't want to do something

(e.g. “I'm not ready to stop what I'm doing and clean up and leave”)



Express uncomfortable feelings

(e.g. “I feel tired.”)

Sometimes we need more information to fully understand challenging behaviour or find a pattern for reoccurring and persistent behaviours. There are 3 clues to finding the meaning of challenging behaviour:

1. What happened before or what triggered the behavior?
2. What did the child do?
3. What happened after the behavior? (i.e. How did people respond? What maintains this behaviour?)

The Bottom Line

All behavior has meaning and is a form of communication. Once we know why our child is doing what they are doing, we can start to figure out more effective and meaningful ways to prevent and respond to their challenging behavior.

