

Supporting children's behaviour

Looking beneath the behaviour

A practical guide for early childhood educators

All behaviour is communication. When we look beneath challenging behaviour, we can better understand what children need and respond with warmth and intention.

Understanding behaviour

Behaviour is a child's way of expressing unmet needs. Consider what is happening beneath the surface – tiredness, hunger, being overwhelmed or a need for connection.

Connection before correction

Children learn best when they feel safe. Prioritise relationship and co-regulation before redirecting behaviour. Get down to their level and use a calm voice.

Emotional regulation

Young children are still developing the brain pathways for self-regulation. They need patient, repeated support from trusted adults to build these skills over time.

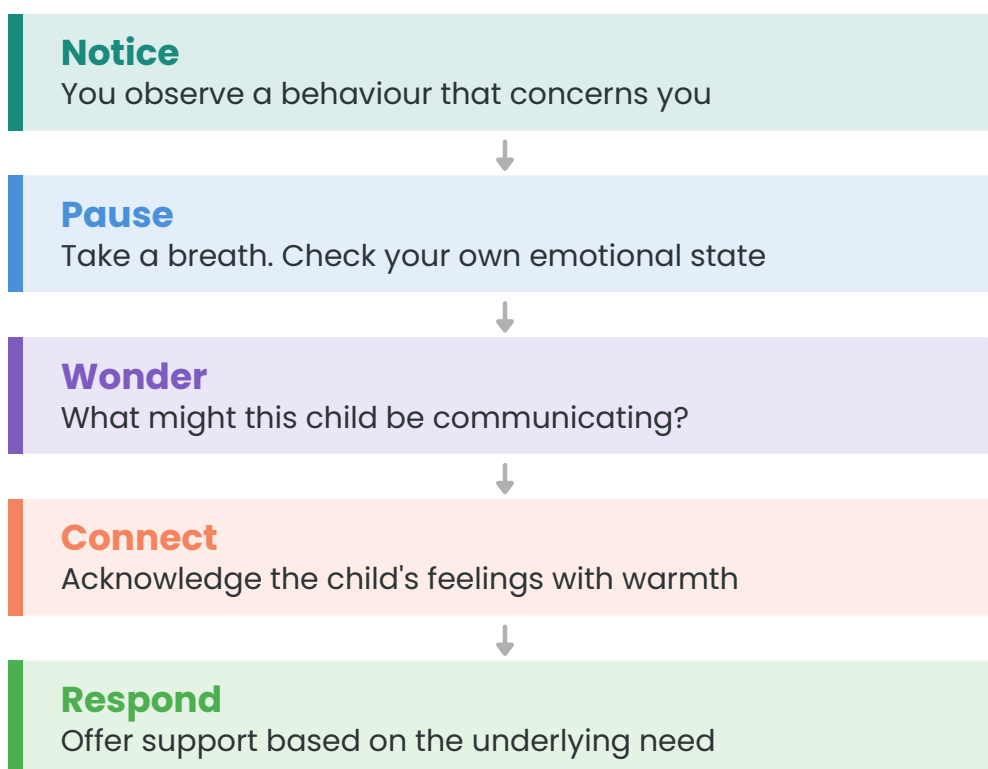
Inclusive practice

Every child and family is unique. Consider cultural context, neurodiversity, trauma and developmental stage when interpreting and responding to behaviour.

Key Message

When we shift from "What's wrong with this child?" to "What happened to this child?" we open the door to compassionate, effective support.

Responding to behaviour: A reflective flowchart



Try this

- Use visual supports and social stories
- Create a calm-down corner together
- Offer choices: "Would you like to sit or stand?"

Tips for educators

- Name emotions: "I can see you're feeling frustrated"
- Model regulation: "I'm going to take a deep breath"
- Be consistent and predictable in routines.

Remember

- Behaviour is not the problem. It can be the clue
- Progress isn't linear; celebrate small wins
- You don't have to have all the answers.

"The most powerful thing we can do for children is to be the calm in their storm."

— Dr. Bruce Perry

Acknowledgement

This resource was developed following professional learning through [Anthony Semann's](#) webinar 'Supporting Children's Behaviour: Let's Get Practical'. It has been created by Monash Health as a practical companion resource to support educators in applying key concepts within their own teams.