

# Mindful Moments

Brought to you by the Itinerant Counselling Team

Understanding that "all behaviour is communication" can help parents better understand their child's needs and respond effectively, leading to improved communication and stronger relationships. Behaviour is a way for children to express themselves. Parents can address underlying issues and teach more positive communication skills. This is consistent for all ages (even adults!).

## Behaviour as a Tool for Communication

Children, especially young ones, may not have the verbal skills to express their needs or feelings directly, so they use behaviour to communicate.

### Decoding Behaviour

Instead of immediately reacting to challenging behaviours, take a thought pause. Then parents can try to be curious and understand what the child is communicating. For example, a child throwing a tantrum might be trying to seek connection, avoid a task, or is simply overwhelmed.

### Identifying Underlying Needs

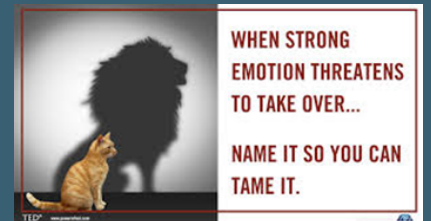
By understanding the function of the behaviour (e.g., connection, escape, access to something, sensory), parents can better address the underlying need and help the child learn more appropriate ways to communicate.

### Responding Empathetically

Once parents understand what the child is trying to communicate, they can respond empathetically and help the child feel heard and understood. "I see that you are feeling \_\_\_\_\_." (validate the emotion)

### Teaching Positive Communication Skills

Parents can foster positive communication skills by consistently responding, listening, and providing their child with examples of language the child can use to express their emotions or feelings. "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_"

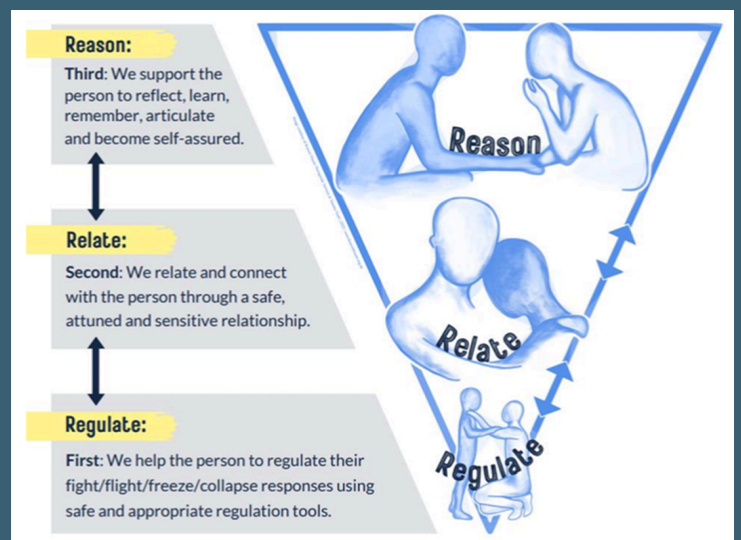


### Examples of Behaviour as Communication

- A child crying might mean they are hungry, tired, or upset.
- A child screaming looks like anger, but it might be disappointment because something didn't turn out the way they planned (cognitive inflexibility – common in little kids).
- A child hitting or kicking might mean they are frustrated or unable to express their feelings verbally.

### Tips for Parents

- **Active Listening:** Pay attention to your child's behaviour and try to understand what they are trying to communicate.
- **Empathy:** Try to see the situation from your child's perspective.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise and reward positive behaviours and communication skills. Help them learn words/language they can use to share their feelings.
- **Model and Share Out Loud:** your own healthy ways to name and manage emotions
- **Consistency:** Respond consistently to your child's behaviours and needs.
- **Seek Professional Help:** If you are struggling to understand your child's behaviour, don't hesitate to seek help from a therapist or counsellor.



Start at the bottom - Regulate FIRST