

Therapeutic Thinking

Dysregulation, Values and Beliefs

Behaviours driven by dysregulation

Behaviours that choose us

- Behaviours that are evident without any thought or planning.
- Behaviour predominantly driven by dysregulation is a sign of a failure to cope with an overwhelming feeling. Such as being overwhelmed with frustration, anxiety or depression or excitement.
- Dysregulation behaviours can be influenced by raised awareness or by changing the experience or feeling which is causing the reaction. They can be positively influenced by support, deflection, nurture as well as reduced stimulus, change of personnel or peer group, emotional support, counselling, managing triggers such as space, noise or activity. (Reference anxiety analysis.)
- Responses to dysregulated valued behaviours may include recognition and celebration to raise the behaviour to a conscious level, emotional feedback such as smiles, clapping, laughing etc.
- Responses to dysregulated detrimental behaviour may include managing the feelings through support, discussions, restorative work, counselling, recovery time or managing the experience with time out, differentiated curriculum, family support, managing the stimulus etc.

Below is a checklist to explore whether the behaviour of an individual child or young person is **dysregulation**.

Use this checklist to analyse the behaviour and identify anxieties through anxiety analysis for overwhelming experiences and feelings, or over reliance on unavailable support through the therapeutic tree.

Behaviours driven by values and beliefs

Behaviours that we choose because they are successful or effective at meeting our needs and/or behaviours that are the result of thought or planning

- Behaviours driven predominantly by values and beliefs serve the individual well enough to encourage them to use the behaviour despite any certain or potential consequence or punishment associated with the behaviour.
- Conscious decisions are influenced by the perceived outcome. They can be positively influenced by rewards, praise, recognition etc or suppressed with expectations, consequences, disapproval (within an established positive relationship), positive peer influences or expectations.
- Responses to valued behaviours influenced by values and beliefs may include positive feedback, recognition, consequential rewards, such as 'you have finished your work so you can leave early,' or logical additional freedoms.
- Responses to detrimental behaviour influenced by values and beliefs will be supported by clear expectations and an understanding and certainty of the logical protective and educational consequences.

Below is a checklist to explore whether the behaviour of an individual child or young person is influenced by **values and beliefs**.

Use this checklist to explore the behaviour of an individual to acknowledge the relevant motivations for its continued use.



Description of behaviours

Pupil name: Blake

Date:

Plan co-ordinator:

Describe the behaviour(s) <i>Unemotional, non-judgemental, factual description, including severity and frequency</i>	Estimated percentage dysregulation	Estimated percentage values and beliefs
Blake will refuse to start work or tasks in the classroom when asked by an adult resulting in significant lost learning. He shouts out that it is 'boring' which distracts other children, reducing their task completion. This is consistent throughout the day.	40	60
He leaves the classroom without permission and will go into the cloakroom, KS2 library, or outside onto the playground. This results in reduced staff in the classroom and at times negative impact on the learning of others. This happens once or twice most days.	60	40
He climbs bookshelves in the classroom. This occurs approximately once a week, normally during indoor lunch or break.	80	20
Twice in the past 10 days he has climbed the boundary fence at the far end of the playground and shouted at staff that he is "going home" (the boundary fence is next to the active railway embankment). This risks emergency services involvement, disruption to the railway operator and potential serious injury or fatality.	90	10



Dysregulation checklist

Question	Detail	Evidence of support and next steps
Medical factors?	Blake currently has no diagnosed medical conditions.	Continue to monitor for patterns that may suggest an unmet physical or sensory need.
Habitual factors?	Some refusal behaviours have become habitual. He will refuse before he knows what an activity is, which has resulted in him refusing activities that he enjoys. He then doesn't know how to say that he wants to join in.	Check in times at the beginning of the day, introduce visual timetable so Blake is prepared and we explore his concerns for any activities. Regular use of script (any change of activity) "Are you going to join us?"
What is causing the sadness? <i>What are the associated feelings? E.g. rejected, lonely, despondent</i>		
What is causing the anger? <i>What are the associated feelings? E.g. frustrated, embattled, undermined</i>	Angry at his own perceived lack of his ability. Refers to himself as "stupid" (feels worthless) His perception that he will be unable to meet the expectations of set written work (feels fear and sadness) Wants to 'save face' in front of his peers. Does not like others thinking he isn't capable of doing something – (feels embarrassed and vulnerable)	Tasks to be linked where possible to topics and activities that B already enjoys (transport, football, dinosaurs) to increase the likelihood that he will want to engage. Ensure that tasks are planned that are achievable so that B experiences success (the objective at present is engagement not task completion). Independent work always planned to be achievable and/or enjoyable.
What is causing the fear? <i>What are the associated feelings? E.g. worried, petrified, reluctant</i>	Fear of failure, therefore reluctant to attempt a task or activity as he perceives it as a risk. If he perceives that others think he cannot do something or doesn't understand something. Public focus and "all eyes on him"	Break tasks into small, clearly achievable steps and provide a worked example or model before expecting independent completion. Give discreet reassurance and clarify that asking for help is a positive skill.

	"They're all looking at me" Embarrassment.	Use planned limited choices, such as selecting which question to start with or whether to work independently or alongside an adult. Praise effort, use of strategies, and willingness to try rather than accuracy. Offer ways to contribute privately or in a pair before expecting participation in a larger group. Pre-teach questions, allow rehearsal time, and agree a non-verbal signal he can use when he needs support. Gradually build confidence through predictable, low-stakes opportunities to share successes with a trusted adult or small group.
What is causing the disgust? <i>What are the associated feelings? E.g. reluctant, avoidant, cautious</i>		
What is causing the surprise? <i>What are the associated feelings? E.g. confused, shocked, panicked</i>		
What is causing the happiness? <i>What are the associated feelings? E.g. excited, enthusiastic, engaged</i>	Praise from a trusted adult but only when given quietly away from peers with public focus removed.	Use specific, private feedback that identifies the effort or strategy Blake has used, for example: "You kept going even when that felt tricky." Create regular opportunities for achievable success within areas of interest, including transport, football, and dinosaurs. Use these interests to support motivation, conversation, and transition into less-preferred learning activities. Check with Blake which types of praise and rewards feel helpful rather than embarrassing.



Values and beliefs checklist

Question	Detail	Evidence of support and next steps
What are the perceived gains of the detrimental behaviour?	Avoiding work. Avoiding admitting that something is difficult for him - especially literacy/writing. Thinks that others won't see what is his perceived lack of ability.	Record which tasks are avoided, the point at which avoidance begins, Blake's words or body language, and what happens afterwards. Check whether avoidance is more likely during writing, independent work, public questioning, or tasks perceived as difficult. Teach and reinforce ways for Blake to communicate difficulty, such as using a help card, asking for a worked example, requesting a short planned break, or saying, "I'm not sure how to start."
Why do they believe their detrimental behaviour will be successful?	Delay tactics. If he leaves the classroom he believes he does not have to complete any of the class activities. He is also away from all the other children so less public focus.	Support must be consistent across staff. Where Blake needs time out of the classroom, use a brief, supervised regulation break with a clear return point, rather than allowing work to be indefinitely avoided. On return, provide a reduced or scaffolded version of the original task so that Blake can experience success while learning that he will still be supported to complete some aspect of the work.
Why do they believe valued behaviour will not be successful?	In the past, valued behaviour usually resulted in more time in the classroom, expected engagement in an academic task, and less time one on one with an adult. If the function of the behaviour is to gain adult attention then there has not previously been enough of a planned response to the valued behaviour Blake displays to make this successful for him.	Frequent, brief, predictable adult check-ins during valued behaviour, particularly at the start of literacy/writing and at key points in a task. Give specific feedback for replacement behaviours, for example: "You used your help card straight away," or "You started the first sentence even though it felt hard." Make support visible and achievable, with clear information about when the adult will return. Gradually reduce adult proximity only after Blake has experienced repeated success.

Is the expected adult response preferable to their current experience?	Yes - Blake wants engagement from an adult regardless of whether it is for praise for valued behaviour or a consequence to detrimental behaviour	Increase positive adult attention before difficulties arise and during periods of engagement, rather than mainly after refusal, delay, or leaving the classroom. Planned schedule of brief check-ins so Blake knows when adult support is available. Keep responses to detrimental behaviour calm and brief, while providing fuller interaction and encouragement when he uses agreed coping, communication, and participation strategies.
Is the expected adult response motivating behaviour?	Yes - as above. Blake expects there to be more adult engagement following detrimental behaviour than for valued behaviour.	Provide immediate acknowledgement and adult engagement for valued behaviours such as starting work, attempting a task, staying in the learning space, asking for help, accepting an adaptation, and returning after a break. Avoid lengthy discussions or negotiation during refusal where possible; instead, offer a brief reminder of the agreed support and return to the planned task step.