



# Understanding Behaviour that Challenges

Level 2



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# About the Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Behaviour that Challenges

In your personal or work life you may encounter behaviour that you find hard to understand and impossible to ‘manage’. At times, a person’s behaviour may shock you; it may even frighten you. You may look back on episodes of behaviour that challenges and wish you had responded differently. You may feel guilt, frustration and even sadness. Conversely, when you respond to a situation in a way that achieves a positive outcome for both yourself and the person, it can leave you feeling enormously fulfilled.

This course aims to give you an insight into behaviour that challenges and how to respond to these situations in the most appropriate and supportive way. You will learn about what behaviour that challenges is, why it may occur and how to promote positive behaviour. You will learn about the importance of effective communication and the vital role of reflection following episodes of behaviour that challenges. You will also explore the support available to maintain your own well-being.

Behaviour that challenges others is almost always a form of expression (a way of telling you something) and an indicator of unmet needs. The ‘challenge’ is not the person. The challenge is to understand the triggers for and reasons behind their behaviour. This understanding will help care and education providers alike to develop the proactive strategies needed to reduce incidences of behaviour that challenges in the future.



## Aims

The aims of the course are to develop knowledge and understanding of:

- What behaviour that challenges is.
- How behaviour can be interpreted as a means of expression.
- How attitudes and lack of understanding can impact individuals.
- The impact and effects of behaviour that challenges on the person and on others.
- How to identify when an individual's behaviour may escalate.
- Strategies to support positive behaviour.
- Protecting individuals' rights.
- The importance of effective communication in the management of behaviour that challenges.
- How to manage instances of behaviour that challenges, avoid confrontation and maintain the individual's dignity.
- The services that are available to support individuals.
- The role of reflection for those involved in incidents of behaviour that challenges.

### Course content

This course has four units. These have been grouped together into the following two modules:

#### Module A

Unit 1: Understand behaviour that challenges

Unit 2: Understand how to support positive behaviour

#### Module B

Unit 3: Understand the importance of effective communication and the management of behaviour that challenges

Unit 4: Understand the role of reflection and support for those involved in incidents of behaviour that challenges



# Section 1

## What is 'behaviour that challenges'?

**In this section you will learn about:**

- What is behaviour that challenges?
- What is positive behaviour?
- Types of behaviour that may be perceived as challenging.
- The difference between conflict and behaviour that challenges.
- The difference between aggression and assertive behaviour.

### What is behaviour that challenges?

People of any age may behave in a way that challenges others. This can occur in any setting, and is more likely when people are vulnerable. Behaviour that challenges is therefore common in health and social care settings. Here people may be dealing with physical illness, mental health issues or a stressful situation, all of which can trigger behaviour that challenges.

Let's start by being clear about what we mean by the terms 'behaviour' and 'behaviour that challenges'.

Behaviour simply means the way in which one acts or conducts oneself. All behaviour (whether challenging or not) has a meaning and a purpose. For example, an individual may pace up and down to relieve tension, or may be sitting still and appear to be doing nothing but in fact is resting.

One of the most widely quoted definitions of behaviour that challenges is provided by Professor Eric Emerson, a well-respected psychologist in the field of behavioural interventions. He defines the term behaviour that challenges as:

**“culturally abnormal behaviour of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit or deny access to the use of ordinary community facilities”**

*(Emerson and Einfield, 2011)*



TO DETERMINE WHETHER BEHAVIOUR IS 'CHALLENGING' OR NOT REQUIRES IT TO BE JUDGED WITHIN ITS CONTEXT, AND ITS EFFECT ON OTHERS SHOULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED.



For example, drinking alcohol is more accepted in some social and cultural groups than others. Shouting is likely to be more accepted at a football match than a quiet setting such as a library. A person's behaviour is therefore **open to interpretation** – in other words, the same type of behaviour may sometimes be perceived as challenging and sometimes as not challenging.



### Key point



An individual's behaviour has a meaning and a purpose, and is open to interpretation by others.

## What is positive behaviour?

Positive behaviour is behaviour that ensures the well-being and dignity of the person and others, does not pose a risk to the person or others, and is socially acceptable.

People whose behaviour sometimes challenges may, at other times, demonstrate positive behaviour. This behaviour can also be supported and encouraged, to the benefit of the person and others.

Examples of positive behaviour include:

- Listening to others.
- Being considerate toward other people.
- Trying to cooperate with others.





[www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

[www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk)

## Activity A4

Research other examples of behaviour that challenges and positive behaviour.

A good starting point is the Scope website at [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk).

After that, explore the website of the Challenging Behaviour Foundation at [www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk). It is a great resource for your studies and working practice.



## Key point

Conflict and behaviour that challenges are very different things. One key difference is that conflict is a serious disagreement between two or more people, whereas behaviour that challenges is an expression of feelings or a means of manipulation shown by an individual.

## The difference between aggression and assertive behaviour

Aggression is usually a form of behaviour that challenges others, whereas assertive behaviour is not. It is important to be able to identify each behaviour correctly so that **the right support can be given or action taken**. Some behaviour may appear aggressive but isn't – for example, the use of swear words in general conversation is considered part of normal 'banter' in some social groups but can sound aggressive to others. In some situations aggression may be justified, such as when individuals defend themselves when under attack. The key difference between aggression and assertive behaviour lies in **whether or not the rights of others are respected**.





BEHAVIOUR THAT CHALLENGES	HOW THIS BEHAVIOUR COULD BE INTERPRETED AS A FORM OF EXPRESSION
<p>Hannah is in her twenties and has learning disabilities. Support workers are unsure why she has started to take food from other residents' plates and from the kitchen. (Setting: supported living accommodation for young adults with learning disabilities)</p>	<p>Hannah has recently been prescribed some new medication that has increased her appetite. She is unable to express this in words.</p>
<p>Every day Joan sits by the front door in her care home and says that she is waiting for her husband to pick her up. Joan has dementia and does not remember that her husband died 20 years ago and she now lives in a care home. (Setting: care home for older people with dementia).</p>	<p>Joan's behaviour may be her way of expressing her anxiety and confusion. It may also be a way of expressing her need for companionship, love and reassurance.</p>
<p>Ben is 15 and has not settled in his new school. He disrupts lessons and has been involved in physical fights with other students. He is at risk of exclusion. Ben's parents don't know why their son's behaviour has changed so much. Teachers at school have applied their behaviour policy and senior staff are trying to engage with him. (Setting: mainstream secondary school)</p>	<p>Ben is being targeted by a gang and he feels afraid and out of control. He has not told anyone about his problems. His behaviour may be a way of expressing his anger or a means of getting away from the gang.</p>
<p>Kaleem is 32 and has learning disabilities and autism. He has an outgoing, adventurous personality. He leaves the house unaccompanied sometimes in the middle of the night. His family and social worker worry about his safety. (Setting: own home)</p>	<p>Kaleem doesn't understand dangers. This may be due to his learning disabilities. His behaviour may be an expression of his need for adventure and/or independence.</p>
<p>Eric is experiencing an episode of psychosis, a mental health problem that can cause delusions (false beliefs). Eric has ripped up the bedding in his room to use as additional curtains. (Setting: a 'safe haven' community facility for people going through a mental health crisis)</p>	<p>Eric's behaviour is due to his psychosis. He believes that he is under surveillance from people outside his window. His behaviour may be an expression of his fear and paranoia.</p>





**“ She screams pretty much most of the time, nothing seems to settle her ... she’s biting me, pinching, slapping ... I am at a total loss, she’s been like this for several years and is getting worse. I tried everything I can think of, her consultant just says it’s the terrible 2s – at the age of nearly 7! ”**

*(Post on Scope online forum, September 2014)*

Behaviour does not need to be aggressive to be challenging and to disrupt family life:

**“ Home life was a nightmare for Hamish and all the family ... He could not be left alone with his brother and sister ... The family walked around on eggshells and this was still too loud for Hamish. Meal-times were a non-starter. He could not eat with the rest of the family because of the noise of knives and forks banging together. The sound of his family actually chewing food was too loud. Strong smells like bacon would agitate him to distraction ... he had great difficulty falling asleep and tended to rove round the house at night disturbing everyone else ... his siblings could not have their friends around unless they were quiet as mice ... Bend down low, get closer and feel the strain on this household. ”**

*(The family life of Hamish, who has sensory hypersensitivity due to autism, quoted in Hesmondhaigh, 2006)*



Unit 2

# Understand how to support positive behaviour





It is important to identify patterns of behaviour and triggers because:

- **The indicators can be included when developing a support plan** for the person. A support plan is a written document that sets out what support an individual needs, which all involved should refer to (for children and young people aged up to 25 who are at school or college this is called an 'education, health and care plan' or EHC plan). This helps to ensure everyone is aware of the individual's needs and the best way to meet these. A support plan helps to ensure consistency of approach.
- Family, friends or staff members can **support the person better and reduce the triggers**.
- **Coping strategies**, and if necessary **avoidance procedures**, can be developed. For example, a plan for an individual who becomes distressed in busy shops may be to avoid busy times.
- Family, friends and staff members are more likely to be able to **respond earlier to signs** of behaviour becoming more challenging. This may help **avoid escalation** (the behaviour becoming more challenging).
- It can help those involved feel **more in control and able to meet the person's needs**. Responding to behaviour that challenges others can be extremely demanding and exhausting. Therefore, identifying patterns of behaviour and triggers can have **a positive effect on the morale** of others.





### Case study: George

George is 19, is on the autism spectrum and attends college with one-to-one help from Dave, a learning support assistant. George sometimes finds the busy environment of the college overwhelming and he can go from calm to sensory overload very rapidly. He will then start shouting and thumping his desk, which is alarming for everyone around him. Dave is working with George to help him recognise the early stages that indicate he is becoming agitated. They are using a technique called 'The Incredible 5 Point Scale':



**5**

#### ANGRY

I'VE LOST CONTROL. I'M NOT LISTENING ANYMORE. I COULD HIT, KICK OR BITE. I NEED A QUIET PLACE TO CALM DOWN.



**4**

#### OVERWHELMED

EVERYTHING IS TOO HARD. I'M LOSING CONTROL AND NEED TO LEAVE THE ENVIRONMENT I'M IN. GIVE ME SPACE.



**3**

#### FRUSTRATED

I'M NOT GETTING IT. I'M SHOWING SIGNS OF STRESS. I SHOULD TAKE A BREAK NOW.



**2**

#### ANXIOUS

TRYING TO STAY FOCUSED BUT HAVING A HARD TIME STAYING ON TASK. USE CALMING STRATEGIES NOW.



**1**

#### HAPPY

READY AND WILLING TO WORK.

When George or Dave notice indicators that George is moving up the scale, they have an agreement to take the actions indicated on the scale to try to prevent further escalation. This helps George to take avoidance actions to prevent behaviour that challenges others.

### ASSESSMENT 2.1

#### HOW TO IDENTIFY WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL'S BEHAVIOUR MAY ESCALATE

Well done! You have come to the end of this section and should attempt the assessment questions. You can find these in your assessment booklet for Module A.





### Key point

Legislation protects the rights of vulnerable people, including individuals with learning disabilities and other conditions that make them more likely to show behaviour that challenges.

## Agreed ways of working to protect individuals

Enid's situation in the previous case study is an example of the need for agreed ways of working within a workplace and across organisations. She is vulnerable to bad practices, as shown by the nurse in this case. Agreed ways of working are work methods that all concerned are required to use. They require staff to be prepared to work with professionals from other organisations and other professions (sometimes called 'multidisciplinary working').

Agreed ways of working **protect an individual** who presents with behaviour that challenges others by:

- Helping to **ensure continuity of care** and that everyone is **working in the same way**.
- Enabling all to work **in accordance with legislation and workplace policies and procedures**.
- Ensuring that there is **a protocol to follow**, which should ensure incidents are dealt with appropriately.
- **Highlighting any bad practices** that are not in line with agreed ways of working.
- **Flagging up the need for staff training** to enable staff to carry out agreed ways of working.

This is especially important when working with individuals whose behaviour may challenge because of the implications for the **safety and well-being** of all concerned.