

# Challenging Behaviour

Research findings for mothers (Bourke-Taylor PhD©)



This fact sheet reports on research findings that identified challenging behaviour of children as a significant contributor to maternal stress (Bourke-Taylor, 2019). All children can behave in challenging ways at one time or another. However, for many parents of children with a disability, challenging behaviours may occur more frequently. Many parents may find that some behaviours have a negative impact on family relationships, health and well-being. If conflict in the home is something you experience, there are tools and resources available to help.

## What is challenging behaviour?

Challenging behaviour involves a range of difficult behaviours that persist over time and cause distress to the child and family.

## Why is it important to address challenging behaviour?

Often, behaviours that families find challenging commence in the early years or mid-childhood. It is more difficult to break the circuit of behaviours that upset others once they are frequent. Understanding what triggers or diffuses behaviours can go a long way in reducing or eliminating the behaviour.



It can seem overwhelming when challenging behaviour is a frequent occurrence in your family's daily life. Children are capable of changing their behaviour and learning new ways to express themselves or react. It takes time, support and a good plan to address challenging behaviour.



Challenging behaviours may include:

- uncooperative behaviour
- over-reliance on routine
- aggression
- refusal of other carers.

## So what can I do?

Reflect on your own situation and evaluate if changes need to be made. Help is available, and there are professionals who can help you implement a behaviour support plan that suits the needs of your child and family. Sometimes parents find assistance through their child's teachers, therapists, psychologist or medical practitioners. There is no easy answer to some challenging behaviours.



In addition, it is also important to develop strategies to manage your own stress, as challenging behaviours can happen sometimes even with the right supports in place. Find ways to relax after a stressful experience, such as talking to someone close, doing something enjoyable or using other coping strategies.

**Challenging behaviours can be stressful and exhausting for your family. With the right supports in place and a plan to manage your own stress, the impact on your well-being may be reduced.**

Visit our website at <http://www.healthymothers-healthyfamilies.com/> for references and more information.

If this fact sheet has raised any concerns, please seek medical advice from your local GP. Alternatively, please call LifeLine on 13 11 14 or Carers Australia, who can provide short-term counselling and emotional support for carers and families, on 1800 242 636.