Understanding and responding to difficult behavior: Co-design of support materials

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Improving the lives of vulnerable children
Why does behaviour matter?

• Behavioural and mental health concerns are common amongst vulnerable children.
  (Ford, Vostanis, Meltzer, & Goodman, 2007; Meltzer, Lader, Corbin, Goodman & Ford, 2004; Osborn et al., 2008; Pecora et al., 2009; Rubin, O’Reilly, Luan, & Localio, 2007; Sempik, Ward, & Darker, 2008)

• Any behaviour disorder ~27-38%; any mental health concern ~49%.
  (Bronsard et al., 2016; Ford et al., 2007)

• Disruptive behaviour is a mental health issue.
  (American Psychiatric Association, 2015)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>How common in OOH?</th>
<th>How does this compare to other children?</th>
<th>Is information processing different?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct disorder</td>
<td>20-60%</td>
<td>&gt; 10 x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASD</td>
<td>17-30%</td>
<td>&gt; 17 x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>&gt; 3 x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASD</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>&gt;1.8 x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>2-4%</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bronsard et al., 2016; Centre for Disease Control, 2016; Meltzer et al., 2004; Lange et al., 2015; Vostanis et al., 2007; Winsor & McLean, 2014.

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Exploring the problem

So many diagnoses! Well-supported interventions exist... but for some these ‘treatments’ don’t fit.....

What difficulties are common across all these common childhood ‘disorders’, irrespective of the ‘diagnosis’?
I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail

Maslow (1966; p.15)
Common difficulties

- What kind of difficulties do foster parents say are important?
- What does the literature say?
- What might help young people?

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Foster parents’ views

- Review of foster parent training programs
- Foster parents experience of challenging behaviour
- The support needs of foster parents
- The relationship between children’s Executive functioning and foster parents’ strain
- Reviews of evidence on Executive functioning and other interventions
- Co-development of resources
Common difficulties

- **Executive functioning** (flexible problem solving/organisation and planning/memory and changing tasks)
- **Memory and attention** (poor memory for instructions)
- **Language problems** (understanding, communicating and the social use of language (pragmatic language disorder)-delays and disorders)
- **Emotional regulation** (identify and express emotions)
- **Sensory regulation** (sensitivity and regulation)
What might this feel like?

PURPLE  YELLOW  RED
BLACK  RED  GREEN
RED  YELLOW  ORANGE
BLUE  PURPLE  BLACK
RED  GREEN  ORANGE
What do we take for granted?

• Several complex abilities...
  • Inhibit well learned behaviours
  • Think about cause and effect thinking
  • Maintain attention, reflect and take another’s perspective
  • Predict and generalise consequences
  • Remember instructions and past learning
  • Capacity to express using words

• Need to help the child with these skills
“...they wanted me to go to a parenting course.....I want specific strategies to manage my daughter’s behaviour. I don’t need a parenting course...”
Supporting children...

✓ Identify issues.

✓ Teach to developmental age.

✓ Manage the environment.

✓ Provide structure, predictability and spell out expectations.
Supporting children...

✓ Teach to missing skills (language, memory, attention, planning).

  • Use visual cues, visual prompts, visual sequences.
  • Check for understanding, simplify instructions, short sentences, repetition.
  • Check for sensory sensitivities, build in modulation strategies

✓ Transition (change) of all sorts needs to be supported.

✓ Continuity, stability and communication.
When you plant a lettuce, if it does not grow well you do not blame the lettuce.

Thich Nhat Hahn
With thanks to....

• Eureka Benevolent Foundation
• Connecting Foster Carers SA
• NoFASD Australia
• Foster parents in Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada
• ACU & Oxford University
To get involved....

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Or give your details on one of the forms being circulated....

Thanks!