



## Behaviour

Some children display behaviours that are difficult to manage, and this can cause concern and disruption for their parents, teachers and the community. When these behaviours are particularly challenging or happen often, a therapist or team of therapists might be able to help.

When families are concerned about their child's behaviour, a psychologist is usually the first port of call. However, it is important to determine the *function* of your child's behaviour (or the reason why it occurs) to make sure you get help from the appropriate therapist or therapists.

For example, if the underlying cause of the behaviour is a breakdown in communication, then a speech pathologist might be needed. If the behaviour is due to difficulties with sensory processing, an occupational therapist might be the best person to work with your child. If the behaviour appears to be related to anxiety, a psychologist might fit best. It could also be that a number of therapists might work together on different areas to address your child's challenging behaviours.

**The following is a list of indicators you might consider when thinking about your child's behaviour. You might want to get some assistance in this area if your child:**

- has difficulty following instructions
- does not respond to simple commands such as “no” or “stop”
- is non-compliant during routine tasks such as getting dressed, brushing teeth, eating dinner, getting ready for school, and going to bed
- has strong reactions to minor changes in routine or environment (such as when you drive a different route to kindergarten, or rearrange the furniture)
- has trouble separating from parents or caregivers, which significantly affects everyday activities
- has difficulty expressing and managing anger or frustration
- has severe temper tantrums or frequent minor tantrums
- displays aggressive behaviour towards others such as hitting, scratching, kicking, biting, throwing things, pinching or threatening.
- displays self-injurious, repetitive behaviours such as head banging, biting or hitting self
- appears anxious or reluctant to engage in outings such as going to the shops or visiting family friends
- experiences sleep disturbances such as insomnia, night terrors/nightmares or bedwetting
- hides or withdraws in response to new people or environments, which affects everyday activities
- displays behaviour that makes you concerned about their emotional wellbeing or mental health