



## **Danella Taylor (Psychologist)**

### ***Functions of Behaviour***

Children can display a range of different behaviours for a variety of reasons, and it doesn't necessarily mean that all behaviours that children with autism display are related to autism. Sometimes children can just be being children and having tantrums, because that is what all children can do.

Sometimes there are behaviours that are more specific to children that have autism and that can be related to ASD. Psychologists can help families understand some of those behaviours and understand the difference between what is just a child being a child and which behaviours are symptomatic of other things that might be going on for the child. It might be looking across a variety of contexts like school, kinder and childcare and understanding how some difficult behaviour can happen in those situations and the ways that people can be working to minimise some of the difficult behaviours and increase some of the positive behaviours.

I think that it is also about understanding children's emotional states and just because they are little doesn't mean that they might not be experiencing things like anxiety or stress. All children have trouble understanding their own emotional world, children with autism particularly find this even more difficult so finding a language that they can understand and helping them to start to understand their emotions and how they can trigger and interact with behaviours and how behaviours can affect your emotions is also really important. It is also important for parents to understand this process.

Sometimes children with ASD can experience high levels of anxiety, particularly in situations where there are other children and lots of expectations placed on them. I think that it is very important to understand the child's behaviour in the context that it is in and not just see the child as exhibiting bad behaviour or parents not parenting their child properly because often there is an underlying reason for it.

Sometimes looking at the context and understanding the environments where the behaviours or the challenging behaviours are occurring can be really effective in thinking about strategies and helping parents to find ways to manage it. It might be as simple as having things like a schedule, explaining to a child what is happening first, what is happening after, particular events for them to start minimising some of the unknown. Having some control over their environment can help with some of their stress and their challenging behaviours at different times. Helping other professionals, such as kinder teachers or integration aides or teachers or different people in a variety of situations to understand the child and understand that they are not just being difficult but sometimes that we as adults and as professionals can do things differently to help the child because they might not be able to just say it.

*\*\* this is an approximate transcription only, minor modifications have been made to assist the reader.*