

Functions of behaviour

E.A.T.S.

- E = escape/avoidance behaviours – an individual may be finding a situation difficult to handle and wants to get away
- A = attention (social attention) – acting out in order to get attention from others
- T = tangibles (access to tangibles) – behaviour displayed as a means of accessing items that the individual wants
- S = sensory (automatic reinforcement) – flapping hands or making noise may ease anxieties and make the individual feel better

By looking at the function of the behaviour rather than what the behaviour looks like you can get to the bottom of why the behaviour is occurring.

Assessments can tell us what the function of behaviour is. Is the child hitting others because they're sad and need attention, or do they want to play with a certain toy? With this information, a function-based intervention can be put in place. Replacement behaviours can then be taught that meet the same function as the challenging behaviour.

For example a child who cries until they are given a snack is hungry. Rather than waiting until the child cries every time to give them a snack, giving the child a communication system so that they can ask for what they want will help avoid the behaviour and ease the child's anxiety. Both behaviours are accessing a tangible function but the replacement behaviours eradicate the need for challenging behaviour.