Do you have a child who exhibits bad behaviour? Are you often embarrassed at your child’s outbursts?

Do you get looks, comments and are always called in to school to discuss your child’s bad behaviour?

There are four fundamental reasons your child is acting out!

Take a SEAT and let me explain these four reasons:

S – Sensory

We all have sensory likes and dislikes and we all take information in from our environment via our senses. This information is then processed and filtered down to just 7 pieces of information from which we consciously pay attention to and make sense of. Sometimes this doesn’t always work the way it should and sometimes this can result in something we call “Sensory Processing Disorder”. An incredibly common diagnosis and often accompanying other, more serious diagnoses such as ADHD and Autism, the ability to not be able to process information coming in from our senses adequately can result in “bad behaviour” either in terms of trying to avoid a sensory stimulus that is causing us discomfort, or trying to seek a sensory stimulus that provides us with pleasure. If you feel your child’s bad behaviour may be sensory based, try to jot down when your child does odd behaviours to see if there is a pattern, i.e. is it when there are flashing lights, loud music or a lawn mower is on. This will help you to pick up sensory cues they may be trying to seek or avoid.
Some children will be acting out and exhibiting bad behaviour because they are trying to remove an undesired situation or person from their environment. They have become so over stimulated and overwhelmed by this specific thing or person, they feel it is their only option. This often happens in a school situation when something is deemed as being too hard, too boring, or too loud. A great way to try and break this cycle of acting out is to give your child a break from the situation. Ensure that you divide tasks into small chunks that are more manageable and build on basic skills that have already been mastered so you resolve this cause for acting out. And PRAISE, PRAISE, PRAISE!! Congratulate them on the things they can do!

This makes sense doesn’t it and is probably the most obvious cause for bad behaviour. Attention seeking behaviours provide a reaction from others, and even a bad reaction gets a reaction, so is often worth doing (even if you do end up outside the Head Teacher’s office every day). The key thing to do here is to teach your child to request and receive positive attention through engaging in desirable behaviours. By extinguishing the negative behaviour and subsequent negative attention and increasing the positive behaviour and positive attention, this will teach your child that engaging in desirable behaviours has positive outcomes for them.
This refers to the child seeking tangible (touching) behaviours at a time in which the child desires a specific activity or item, which happens because these behaviours provide access to their highly preferred items or activities. An example here, is a child I used to teach, Jason*. Jason* was a non-verbal Autistic boy who gained pleasure from drawing Superheroes over and over again. It wasn’t always feasible, in a class situation, to allow him to draw Superheroes all day over and over; otherwise no work would get done. He used to scream “Daddy” at myself and the other teacher as well as get out of his chair and take our hand and lead us to the pot of drawing pencils and paper, indicating that he wanted to draw. Through to use of Makaton (a form of sign language) we signalled to him to sit down and that he could draw after he had completed his work, in the “free-play” time before break. After not even a week, the screaming of “Daddy” at us and the leading us to the pencils and paper stopped and he had learnt that the reward for completing his class work was to draw. By responding with an “if you complete this task that I want you to do, you get this as a reward” children will quickly learn the reciprocal I do something for you and you do something for me mentality, which is such a foundation in our everyday society and workplaces.

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