

Understanding Children's Behaviour

Using the STAR approach

(Source: Zarkowska and Clemments, 1994)

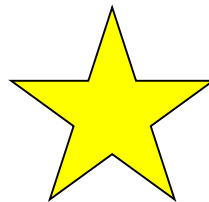
“Challenging behaviours” are often an effective way for children to:

- Express needs, feelings and emotions
- Relieve boredom
- Gain attention or something the child likes
- Get away from a situation or activity they don't like

It is vital that we understand the reasons underlying the behaviours so we can support children in communicating these needs in a more appropriate way.

The STAR approach is one way to analyse behaviour.

STAR stands for: **S**ettings **T**riggers **A**ctions **R**esults



Settings are the context in which the behaviour takes place. They can be:

environmental the physical environment
 the people around
 the activity

or *personal* the child's physical well-being
 the child's thoughts and moods

Triggers occur immediately before the behaviour. Examples of triggers are:

- The child being asked to do something
- The alarm clock going off
- The TV being turned off

Actions are what the child DOES. You must be able to SEE an action, for example:



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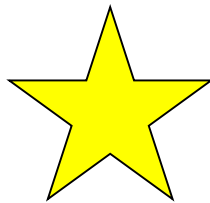
Based on Parent Survival Manual
Clinical Psychology Service for Children with Disabilities
Central Manchester and Manchester Children's Hospitals NHS Trust

- Hitting
- Screaming
- Spitting
- Running off

Results are what happen AFTER the Action. Results include:

- The responses made by other people e.g. shouting, laughing
- The child gaining something e.g. getting a sweet
- The child avoiding something e.g. brushing teeth

By keeping records of the **S**ettings, **T**riggers, **A**ctions and **R**esults of your child's behaviour, you may start to see some patterns.



Use STARs like the one on the next page to keep records of your child's behaviour.

If you are getting stuck think about this question:

How does that behaviour HELP my child?

All of us behave in ways that help us. We will only keep doing something if we get something out of that behaviour.



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