

About strange and difficult behaviours

Some children with disability have difficult behaviours. It can be a challenge to be imaginative about ways that we can help them.

Because some children lack the normal stimulations and pleasures of life because of their brain damage; we must help them to **act appropriately** so that they can sociable, functional members of their families and communities.

There may be many reasons for these strange behaviours:

- Because of the damage in the child's brain, the child may be confused about how the world works and how they fit in to it.
- Children may find it difficult to learn about how to behave
- Children may learn that the best way to get attention, or food, or a cuddle, is to behave strangely or scream.
- If the child doesn't speak, then they may be frustrated that they have no other way of communicating how they feel other than through difficult behaviour

CRYING AND SCREAMING:

Brain irritability can cause babies and children to cry with a high pitched cry – and it may be hard to change until the child's brain becomes more mature. But try a secure atmosphere; holding, singing, swinging gently, rhythmical patting on the back. Consider...is the child frightened? Hungry? Sick? Cold or hot?

ISOLATING BEHAVIOURS:

Some children withdraw into their own world and only want to interact with themselves – they may develop head banging, rocking, flicking, spinning, and self-indulging, obsessive behaviors as well as echolalic speech. Stimulation and socialisation can assist these children – never leave them in their own world or this inappropriate behaviour will increase.



HYPERACTIVE CHILDREN:

Some children show fast over-active behaviours that are not productive – they run, throw things, never finish anything and do not listen to or follow instructions. These children need careful. Secure handling by a firm, loving person who talks to them clearly and **reward their good behaviour**. They may need a special place – a chair or mat so they have their own place to do things.

ANGRY, AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS:

The child with brain damage can often become frustrated and lonely because they are left out, teased and bullied by other children. Kind, gentle loving with clear guidelines is needed and **TEACH** correct behaviour and social rules. **REWARD** good social behaviour with other children (share a favourite toy) and **TAKE AWAY** a special treat (like a biscuit) to teach correct behaviour. Be careful to balance reward and punishment – one goes with the other.

SELF-DSTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS:

E.g.... Head banging, self-biting, hitting and eye poking. Some children with disability learn to stimulate themselves in ways we find hard to understand. Some psychologists think this is because painful behaviours can somehow bring pleasure to brain damaged children because their brain is getting a mixed message. We must be understanding and supportive to these children and teach them non-harmful ways of getting pleasure – giving them an old guitar to strum, a soft blanket, more food and a lot of contact with family can often help. Usually children grow out of these behaviours as the brain matures.

EPILEPSY (FITS)

Many babies and children with disability have fits. These children should be checked by a doctor to determine if there is a cause (such as a high fever) and if medication can help. Because epilepsy can lead to accidental injuries such as burns and many people have fear of people with epilepsy. The family should be given help to understand as much as possible why their child has fits and what to do.

