

**CULTIVATING
CHANGE**  **by JAMIE'S
FARM**

DECODING BEHAVIOUR

Your guide to understanding
what drives behaviour



Welcome

Why do children act out? What causes them to behave in certain ways, and is it possible to change these patterns?

The good news: Children's brains are malleable and behaviour change IS possible. By tapping into their basic human need to be liked and likable, we can become kind, empathic, positive adults who help them change their narrative about themselves.

In this guide, I would like to share what I have learnt through therapeutic conversations with thousands of children who were struggling to 'behave' in school.

Just one trusted adult can change a child's life outcomes. Never underestimate your importance in their journey.

Tish Feilden

Co-Founder of Jamie's Farm



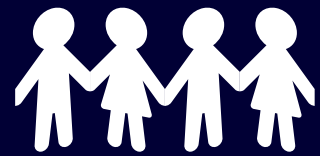
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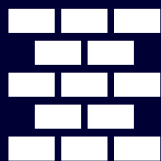
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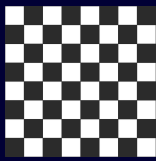
Starting
afresh



The Developing Brain

It's important we bear the developing brain in mind when framing our expectations of young people. Teenagers in particular are desperately forming their identity while struggling with emotional overload. They are between being a child and an adult, wanting independence and self-reliance, and feeling dependant, whilst vulnerable to mood swings and hormonal changes. Here are some key points to remember:

They think in
black and white



Teenagers think in absolute terms and live in the here and now - they are prone to catastrophise rather than rationalise

They're dopamine
dependent



Teenage brains in particular respond to and seek dopamine 'hits' - instant gratification

Social connections
come first



Teenagers are wired to care more about their peer group than what adults think of them

Emotions
trump logic



Their logical brain hasn't fully developed, so emotions are far more powerful than logic or reasoning



Secure attachment

Before a child can be ready to learn, they must feel **safe** – both physically and emotionally. We know that unsafe children are hypervigilant; simply looking to survive rather than thrive.

Attachment Theory, developed by John Bowlby, is the understanding that from a moment a child is born, they are looking to their caregiver to attune to their needs.

If this fails, these children will learn alternative methods of coping.

With no control over their care givers' responses, children develop survival mechanisms that help them to cope in the best way they can.

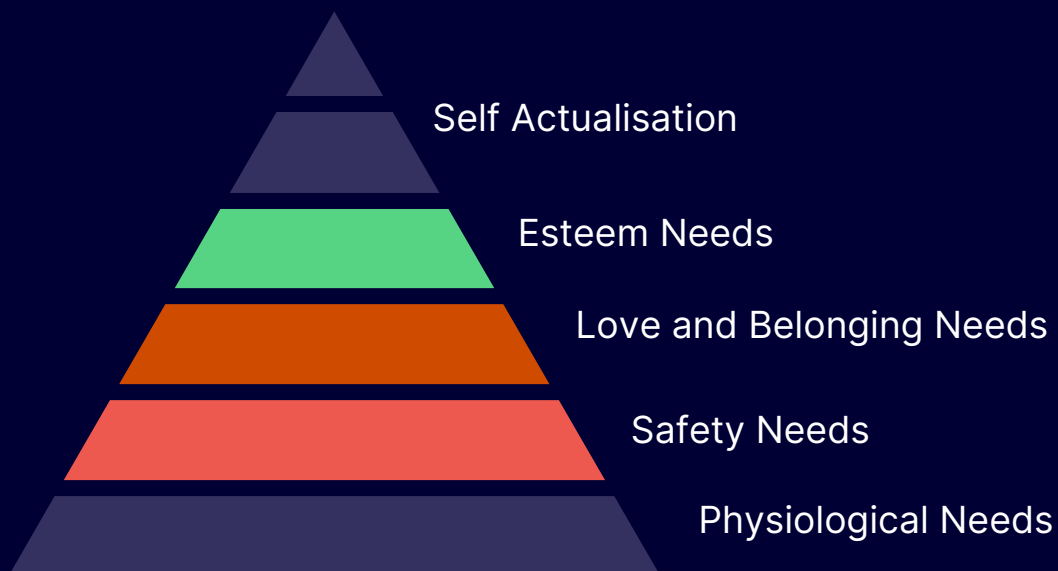
Children carry these styles with them into their future relationships with others, and this can result in challenges.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Unless our basic physiological needs of food, water, warmth, sleep and safety are met, children are unable to access the higher levels of this hierarchy.

Children need to feel a sense of belonging and being liked and likeable by their peers and adults - this builds their self-esteem and a positive sense of self. Only once all these needs have been met can a child achieve their full potential, academically, socially and emotionally.



Listen Here!



Feeling Safe: a core condition for learning

Podcast Episode

Checking-in

8 10
4

What is a check-in?

Check-ins are an opportunity for young people to connect and share how they are feeling. Involving all young people, take turns to score how you each feel as number between 1 and 10 - one being the lowest and ten being the most positive.

What are the benefits?

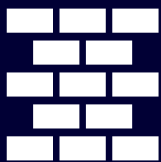
- A regular check-in shows that you care deeply about how young people are feeling. This models to them the skills needed for developing **positive relationships** with others
- This activity allows young people dedicated time and space to **express their needs** and allows you to recognise when they might need support
- It helps young people to develop **self-awareness** by recognising and naming their own emotions
- It also helps young people develop **empathy** by listening to others and reflecting on how they might be able to support them

When should I check-in?

This would work best with a group (ideally of no more than 12) who you work with often and who already have a level of familiarity with each other to feel safe enough to share how they are feeling. This could be something you do with a group who have been to Jamie's Farm. Alternatively, you might use this at the beginning of each form or tutor time, or at the start or end of each day by splitting a larger class into smaller groups.

TOP TIPS

- **Try not to praise high numbers** - all feelings are equally valid, and we want to encourage young people to be as honest as possible
- **Ensure everyone in the group is listened to uninterrupted**- this makes sure that those who are quietest have a chance to have their voice heard
- **Demonstrate active listening**- really showing that you hear and understand what each young person is saying
- **End with checking in yourself where possible**- this shows your willingness to be authentic and share some of your own ups and downs as a human being (within reason of course- young people who are struggling don't need to feel responsible for adults' feelings too)
- **Some young people may not feel confident speaking** at all to start with, so they could demonstrate a number using their hands instead



Defence Mechanisms



We all have developed defence mechanisms to protect us from danger, which have evolutionary importance for our survival.

They can typically be categorised into fight, flight, freeze and 'fawn' responses.

FIGHT

Just like an animal might raise it's hackles to make itself look bigger and more threatening in the face of danger, young people in fight mode will often puff themselves up in order to ward off the danger.

FLIGHT

Isn't always literal running away from a situation. Flight responses may also be seen in the form of deflection and distraction, and difficulty in concentration.

FREEZE

Like a baby bird that plays dead to avoid danger, freeze responses in children can be seen as extreme numbness or withdrawal, including selective mutism or persistent absence from school.

FAWN

Fawn responses typically include avoiding conflict through people pleasing behaviour.

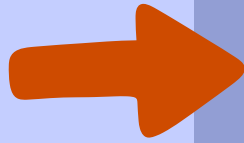
These defence mechanisms are learnt behaviours which can also be triggered when we feel **emotionally** unsafe.

For many young people, when they don't feel safe, fear failure, or are in danger of losing face in front of their peers, these defence mechanisms can spring into action, and trigger unhelpful behaviours.



Fight Mode

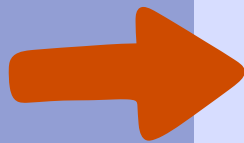
- Exhibiting defiance
- Being hyperactive
- Behaving aggressively
- Screaming/shouting
- Arguing



- Remember, it's not personal
- Remain calm, grounded and confident
- Don't enter into conflict
- Give them time-out from the room
- Give them a simple task to refocus them

Flight Mode

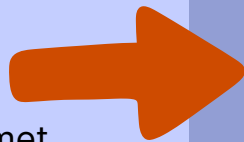
- Withdrawing
- Truancy
- Day dreaming
- Disengaged
- Leaving the classroom



- Acknowledge their struggle
- Scaffold to make every task accessible
- Offer a fresh start
- Ask them a question you know they can answer - praise their small achievements
- Try to stay positive!

Freeze Mode

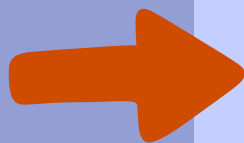
- Refusing to answer
- Traunting
- Refusing to get needs met
- Blank looks
- Feeling numb



- Give them time and space - follow up with them at the end of the lesson
- Acknowledge something positive about them as an individual
- Offer a safe space for them to communicate - either with you or someone they trust

Fawn Mode

- Teacher-pleasing
- Always offering to help
- Flattering others
- Overly compliant
- Easily peer pressured



- Give them time and space - follow up with them at the end of the lesson
- Acknowledge something positive about them as an individual
- Offer a safe space for them to communicate - either with you or someone they trust



Starting afresh

The Power of Labels

How we perceive and are perceived begins with the narrative we are told about ourselves, often within our families.

'Oh he's the shy one' or 'She's the reliable one' can begin early on with good intentions; it's human nature to categorise people after all.

But even positive labels can become limiting as we grow and change, restricting the opportunities we are given by those around us.

For those who are given negative labels, the impact can be more damaging. If we begin to believe we are inherently 'bad' or difficult, then there is nothing to lose by leaning into that label and really behaving 'badly'. If it's expected of us anyway, then why bother trying to disprove?



Reparation is key

When things go wrong, as they inevitably will, it's important to model our ability to recover and learn from challenges rather than give up. Reparative conversations are invaluable in this.

Hit the reset button

Children are evolving and changing daily. If we can, we need to give them fresh starts, rather than ask them to lug around the baggage of all their misdemeanours. Every day is a new day -if we let it be - to reset.

More carrot, less stick

The human brain learns far better through reward than punishment. Whilst routine and boundaries are critical, the evidence shows that sanctions are less effective than praise and support when it comes to long term behaviour change.

Listen Here!



Podcast Episode

The importance of fresh starts: inclusion vs exclusion



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self-regulation

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