

## Reframing Behaviour

The table below provides examples of how you can shift your approach from ‘managing challenging behaviour’ to better understand what a child needs.

SITUATION – Child feels threatened	SAFETY – What the child needs from you
<p>The child is “misbehaving on purpose, defiant or poorly motivated, choosing to not follow your instructions and requests”.</p> <p><b>Implication:</b> Heightened responses will continue, and the child will experience shame as your focus is on the misbehaviour rather than their needs.</p>	<p>The child communicates their needs through behaviour (a response). The child needs you to stay calm and be mindful of responses being triggered in yourself.</p> <p><i>You need to reflect on what triggered the behaviour and adjust your expectations to consider the child’s developmental abilities and history.</i></p>
<p>It appears that the child is starting a power struggle with you (using survival strategies). You might feel you need to assert your power and win the struggle.</p> <p><b>Implication:</b> Engaging with the power struggle will continue to heighten both you and the child and reinforce the child’s perceived need for control.</p>	<p>The child has developed a need to be in control to keep themselves safe and is testing you to see how you will respond.</p> <p><i>You need to prove to the child that they are in a secure relationship with you (Secure Base).</i></p>
<p>The child needs ‘time out’ to calm down and think about what they have done.</p> <p><b>Implication:</b> Isolating the child is more likely to increase their stress and lead them to develop unhealthy ways to regulate their emotions.</p>	<p>The child needs you to be present to teach them how to calm their nervous system down (use the bottom-up approach and think about ANS).</p> <p><i>The child needs ‘time in’ with you to learn to identify their physical and emotional states and how to express these in appropriate ways.</i></p>
<p>Traditional parenting and schooling strategies suggest that the child needs to be punished and needs to learn consequences to ensure they do not behave this way again.</p> <p><b>Implication:</b> This threatens the child’s relationship with you and is likely to further trigger a fight, flight or freeze response. Further, generally the child will not learn how to behave and punishment may cause their behaviour to worsen.</p>	<p>When the child is calm and can think clearly, empower the child by working with them to make sense of why they responded in that way they did, problem-solve and agree on natural or logical consequences for their behaviour (response).</p>