

Beyond the Behaviour: Reflecting on Values, Beliefs, and Inclusion

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Why This Conversation Matters

- Have you ever felt stuck when supporting a student's behaviour?
- Traditional approaches focus on compliance—*but do they work for all students?*
- True inclusion means rethinking how we see and respond to behaviour.



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What We'll Explore Today

- How our beliefs about disability and diversity shape how we view behaviour.
- Why traditional behaviour models don't serve all students.
- How we can rethink behaviour through an inclusive, strengths-based lens.



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Historical Approaches

- Traditional models → Compliance-based, deficit-focused, punitive
- Medical model: "Fix the individual" approach
- Behaviourist model: Rewards & consequences
- What's the problem?
 - Focused on control rather than understanding
 - Punishment over support



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Evolving Understandings of Disability & Neurodiversity

Social vs. Medical Models of Disability

Medical Model → "The problem is within the individual."

Social Model → "The barriers are in the environment."

The Neurodiversity Movement

Strengths-based approach → Differences, not deficits

Shift from fixing to supporting & valuing diversity



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The Impact of this Evolution on Behaviour Models in Schools

- Schools have traditionally used rewards and consequences to manage behaviour (behaviourist approaches)
- The focus has been on compliance—but what if a student can't comply?
- “Kids do well if they can” – *Dr Ross Greene*
- If we see behaviour as a choice, we might miss what's really happening.



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Compliance Isn't The Goal

- ⊘ Compliance ≠ Understanding
- ⊘ Compliance ≠ Learning
- ⊘ Compliance ≠ Inclusion
- When students struggle, it's often because they can't, not because they won't.
- Instead of asking “How do we make them behave?” ask “What do they need?”



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Let's Reflect

- Think of a time when a student's behaviour really challenged you.
- What was your first reaction?
- What assumptions did you make?



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How Our Beliefs Shape Behaviour

The words we use shape our mindset and our actions:

- ✗ “Attention-seeking” → ✓ “Connection-seeking”
- ✗ “Challenging behaviour” → ✓ “Distressed behaviour”



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A Shift in Perspective

Scenario: A student slams their book shut and walks out.

✗ Traditional Response: Defiance → Consequences

✓ Inclusive Response: Stress, frustration, executive function challenges → Support



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A Strengths-Based Perspective

- Behaviour is communication - look for the unmet need, the unsolved problem, or the lagging skill.
- Teach regulation, don't just enforce rules.
- Create inclusive environments - reduce stress, increase safety.
- Build relationships – Connection before correction.
- Use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – Provide flexibility and accessibility.
- Adopt restorative and trauma-informed approaches – Move from punishment to support.



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Time to Reflect

Think back to the student you identified earlier and the assumptions you have made.

- How could you *shift* your perspective?
- What's one small change you could make in your approach?



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Key Takeaways

- Behaviour is communication—our job is to listen.
- True inclusion requires **changing our lens**, not just adding strategies.
- When we shift our approach, we create schools where all students **belong**.



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