

“WHAT IF?”

USING A TRAUMA-INFORMED LENS TO REFRAME BEHAVIOUR

“It’s just attention-seeking”

What if the child has been starved of attention in the past? What if the child wants to be remembered?

Try: regular check-ins; explicit communication about separations; transitional objects as a concrete representation of your connection with the child.

“They have no respect for authority”

What if the child has experienced a lack of respect and dignity in past relationships?

What if they need to learn to trust you?

Try: making time to talk about their interests; finding moments for shared humour; communicating acceptance and empathy for their feelings.

“Praise and rewards never seem to work”

What if praise is too abstract for a child with a younger developmental age?

What if the child feels shame about failing to earn a reward?

Try: non-verbal methods of showing warmth and approval; giving indirect feedback to a group of peers; scheduling time for play and relaxation as part of a preventative approach to emotional regulation.



“This is just manipulation”

What if the child is using behaviours which helped them stay noticed or survive in another environment?

What if they learnt to prioritise their own needs?

Try: giving them opportunities to exert control; providing responsibilities which help them feel valued; using reassuring commentaries or visual schedules to make daily routines structured and predictable.

“Every day is constant disruption”

What if the child can’t regulate their emotions as well as other children their age? What if they have lacked the sensitive, responsive and attuned interactions needed for taming the amygdala?

Try: a settling morning routine; visual communication about changes and transitions; a daily sensory diet; reducing demands when their stress is elevated.

“They want everything done for them”

What if the child has missed out on the period of healthy dependency on a caregiving adult? What if the bonds of attachment were disrupted by neglect, abuse and separation?

Try: getting alongside to convey safety and give encouragement; breaking down tasks into smaller steps; modelling and visualising organisational skills.