

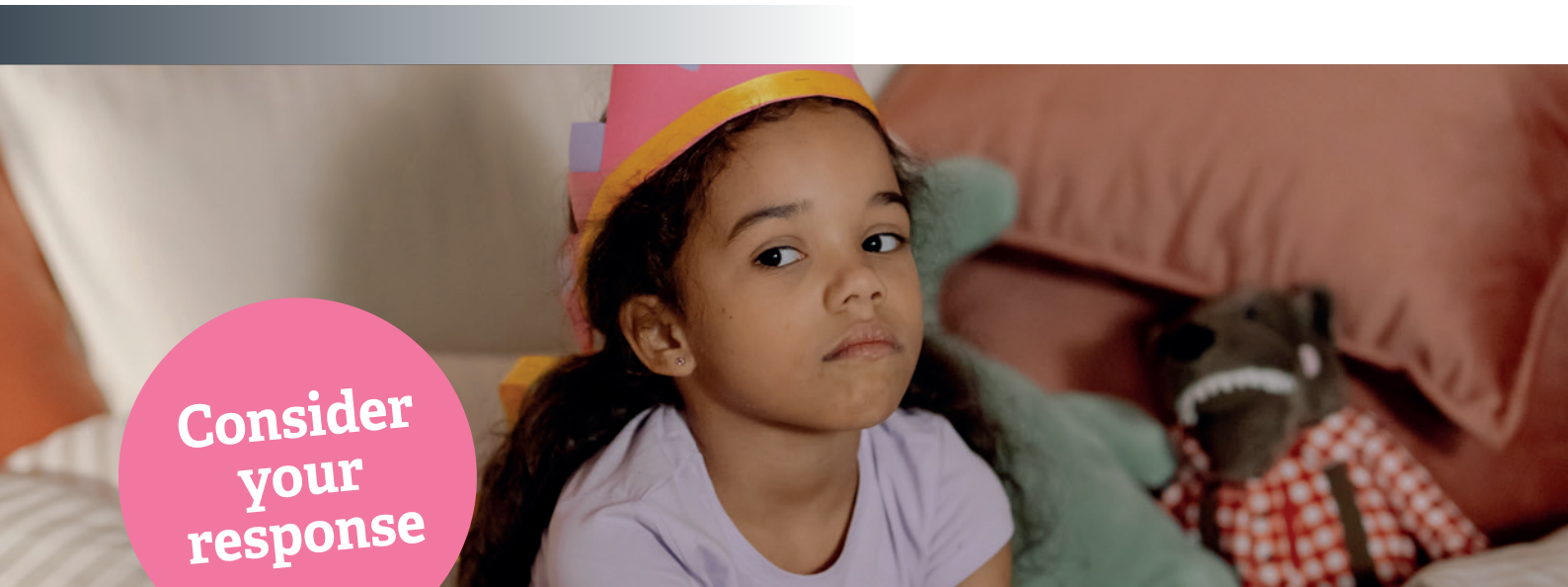
# All In

Co-Design and Connect

Tricky  
Behaviour



**De-escalating and managing tricky behaviour.**



**Consider  
your  
response**

### **Prepare your environment**

Preparation promotes positive behaviour and the likelihood of full participation. It enables boundaries to be set so young people living with disability know what behaviours are expected and acceptable. Facilitate comfort and help young people living with disability to focus and self-regulate by providing options within your space. This could include various seating arrangements and making available a box of sensory objects/toys.

Let the young person know what is likely to happen and when by preparing visual cues and instructions such as a picture schedule or images with simple instructions. Follow up with the young people living with disability to ensure they understand.

If behaviour becomes less cooperative it may be best to stop the activity and provide the young person living with a disability with a break, or to move on to a new activity.

Instructions don't always have to be verbal; you can use visual representation such as images or 3D objects to give instructions. Follow up with the young people after each instruction to ensure they understand.

### **WHO YOU are and HOW YOU respond to tricky behaviour matters**

Often times when a young person is behaving in a way which is difficult for leaders to manage, it is important to remember they are trying to communicate a message with you. Seeking understanding behind a young person's behaviour can help you to discover what they need. Although behaviour may be difficult to manage, maintain an attitude of love and respect. If a young person knows they are valued and are being heard, they may allow you to help them problem-solve and they may change their behaviour.

### **Know your participants' unique needs**

Get to know the young person living with disability so you can plan positive behaviour strategies in advance. These could include age and ability-appropriate visual cues such as hourglass timers, timer apps, regular mats or spots to sit on the floor when the children arrive. You might like to use an activity to focus attention at the start of your time together each week such as a special object inside your suitcase or bag. A box of quiet, sensory, calming or fidgeting objects/toys that the young person living with disability enjoys can help them to self-regulate during the lesson.



## **De-escalating challenging behaviour**

We cannot control another person's behaviour, but we can help them to manage it. It is important to consider a variety of factors, thoughts and triggers that may be contributing to a young person living with a disability's behaviour. Understanding these can help you locate strategies to support positive behaviour.

By getting to know who you're working with, you'll gain an understanding of their needs and know what strategies will work to de-escalate and manage challenging behaviour. As a leader, check your own wellbeing during a difficult situation.

### **Check the environment**

It is possible sounds, colours, items and people in a young person's environment could be causing them distress, leading them to behave in a challenging way. It is okay to quietly ask them how they're feeling and what you can do to help them cope. Always stay calm and non-judgmental. Listen respectfully to the young person and remember it is the behaviour that is challenging not the young person.

Chill Out corners are private and calm spaces where the young person can reflect on the situation, self-regulate and feel less stimulated. Allowing the young person time to think without intruding on their personal space is essential for self-regulation. Always check in after a few minutes.

## **Boundaries**

Your activity preparation should aid in setting boundaries. Having simple rules or visuals illustrating what your expectations are can be useful. It is also okay to work alongside parents/ caregivers to implement positive behaviour strategies and prevention plans, which may enable you to avoid known triggers for the young person.

### **Safety first**

If you believe a young person is in danger, remove them from the environment and ask for additional support from other church leaders. It might be essential to contact the young person's parents or guardians to help manage the situation to ensure a positive outcome for everyone.

### **Evaluate**

After implementing strategies to manage and de-escalate challenging behaviour, observe the young person as they participate in activities and assess whether the strategies you have implemented are working. Check in with the young person to find out if the strategies are working for them. Adjust when necessary.

### **Pray**

Pray for the young person, their family, care givers, your leaders, and the situation you are managing. Ask for wisdom, compassion and remember these young people are indispensable to the body of Christ. We need one another to thrive together.



This content was developed with young people living with disability, care givers/parents with lived experience, and professionals working with young people living with disability. **Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.**

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130 Rose Terrace  
Wayville SA 5034

T 08 8273 7100  
[enquiries@baptistcaresa.org.au](mailto:enquiries@baptistcaresa.org.au)  
[baptistcaresa.org.au](http://baptistcaresa.org.au)

 [@baptistcaresouthaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/baptistcaresouthaustralia)

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