

Teacher Assistant Behaviour Course Transcript

[00:00:00] Welcome, everybody. I am Sue Larkey, and this is Anna Tullemans. Well, I'm a teacher and a author and speaker and Anna is a parent, teacher assistant and consultant. And we are going to be sharing with you all our top behaviour strategies. I personally love it when a teacher assistant and parent and teacher work together because we can work out the behaviour strategies that work for both of us.

[00:00:26] So, Anna, can you just tell us a little bit about yourself and about your son? Um, yes, um, my son is, uh... My son is 37 years old now. He was diagnosed when he was 6. So a long, long time ago. There wasn't a lot of information around there about autism. It was mostly, um, very dark and very, um, okay. Just don't, just forget about him.

[00:00:51] Um, but I was very determined that, um, there was going to be some good things happening for him and that was the important thing. Um, so between myself [00:01:00] and my teachers, we came up with some fantastic strategies and have worked over the years. Absolutely. And Anna, you also set up the first Asperger's parent support network.

[00:01:10] That's right. The Asperger's Syndrome Support Network, which is now called Empower Autism. Um, and that was really quite valuable because I met so many different people with so many different wide points of view. And we had lots and lots of different strategies to choose from. So it was, it was very good.

[00:01:28] And I don't think I've ever asked you, how did you end up working in schools? Um, Well, I decided one day that, uh, I needed to teach people about autism. And I thought it's probably easier if I do it from the inside. Um, understanding a little bit more about autism and working with these kids, I could then slowly work my way through and tell people, Okay, this strategy will work really well for this child.

[00:01:53] This strategy will work really well for that child. Ah, I love that. So really, As a teacher and a teacher [00:02:00] assistant and parent, we're putting in this behavior course all the strategies you need to make a difference to you and the children you know. What I would recommend, print out the handout because we both talk really fast.

[00:02:10] And as you see, we haven't scripted this. We've just made some outlines for you. I've never asked Anna before how she started as a teacher assistant. So, look. Whatever your role is as an

educator, this is going to be full of practical strategies. If you have, um, done my previous courses for teacher assistants, this is all new stuff.

[00:02:29] If you've never met us before, we have written five best-selling books. Um, the teacher assistant red and blue books have been valuable to complement some of the things, because we'll just say use visuals, and we'll assume you know what they mean. Some of the things we'll explain a bit better, but a lot of the stuff we are going to just really do a deep dive on behavior and not go into the nitty gritty of the strategies because we feel like we've done a lot of that before.

[00:02:55] And everyone's telling us they need behavior, that behavior is their biggest challenge. And [00:03:00] I was talking to a school principal last week who said, when teacher assistants first started in schools, they were there to help a child, just give them a little bit more help with the curriculum. Yep, that's right.

[00:03:09] And now, Anna and I say nearly every email. We get about behavior, and if we can't get behaviour down, we can't get learning up. So this is really your starting point. If you're a new teacher assistant, this is a great point to start to understand behavior, So I'm gonna hand over to Anna to actually give you some tips and understanding about the autism spectrum and just to give you some foundations to help you understand the behavior

[00:03:40] I wanted to start off with this slide, uh, because I wanted you to have a look at how you're going to get all of these different animals up into that tree. So, when we're looking at all these different animals, we need to look at what are their strengths, what are their challenges, and how we're going to use their strengths, and how we can use some of the [00:04:00] challenges as well, maybe, to help other people up into that tree.

[00:04:04] So, if we look at a school... classroom, we find that this is what our school classrooms look like. We have lots of different kids with lots of different issues, with lots of challenges, and lots and lots of real strengths. And it's the strengths that we want to focus on, because if we have strengths, then we can actually do learning.

[00:04:24] Um, so, in our classroom of 30 people, we have so many varieties of these children with different needs. How do you, as a teacher assistant, decide what is the best need for this child? Well, first of all, it's understanding that they have a diagnosis, and understanding what that diagnosis means for that particular student.

[00:04:46] Um, is it a sensory thing? Is it a, uh, a behavior issue? Is it a... I can't concentrate because there's too much noise going on. And there's so many different things. And we'll talk a lot about all of these other things [00:05:00] as we're going along. So it's important that you understand that each child is different.

[00:05:04] So I want you to think about, how are you going to get that particular elephant into that tree as we're going along?

[00:05:21] It has... Yep, that's okay. Okay, just move. Uh... Yeah, uh, in a little bit, in a little bit closer I can. Just a little bit. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Now, hang on, just

[00:05:38] I can just Go a little bit. Do you know what I mean? Uh huh. You'll be happy I said that. Sorry. You did a really good job, Anna, by the way. Yeah, perfect. That way. Yeah. Ready? Yeah. You can move your arms around, don't worry. like, I can't talk without my hands. I know, I'm the same. That's why I'm like, I'm the Italian girl to be happy here.

[00:05:58] Okay, [00:06:00] uh, move that slide. And, oh, I should have pushed pause. Sorry. Okay. Oh, that's alright. Okay, go. Okay, so, when we have a very neurodiverse classroom, We have to start thinking about what are some of the issues that we're going to see with all of these different kids. So, there's often an overlap. It's not just one particular diagnosis.

[00:06:21] We may see PDA, we may see OCD, we may see ODD, AHDD, and there's just so many different things. However, if we are looking at each particular child, it doesn't really matter what their diagnosis is. We just need to understand the individual and what their particular needs are. The thing is, we don't diagnose.

[00:06:44] As teacher assistants, we can't put our hands up and say, Oh, you know, there's this child, we need to go and get something done about this child. Our job is to manage any of the behaviours that we're seeing and to do the work that the teachers are setting, or as much of the work as the teachers are setting [00:07:00] that is possible for that particular child on that particular day.

[00:07:04] So let's have a quick look at, Sorry Sue, but it's disappeared. That's alright. So let's have a look at what is Autism Spectrum. So Autism Spectrum has a number of different things that are associated with it. And the first thing that we think about is the communication skills. So this is usually, um, they are very visual learners.

[00:07:32] They, uh, are very literal in their interpretation of language, so they will take you at your words. So if you say things like, take a seat, they may not know what to do with that take a seat because it's not a very specific instruction. So if ,you say something like, Sit on the chair. That's a much more specific instruction that they can follow.

[00:07:55] Uh, remember that some of them have really good language skills and [00:08:00] that sometimes is a bit of an issue because it's language skills, it's not necessarily reciprocal language skills. So, they may be able to talk to you about their particular subject at a very high level. But, when it comes to actually doing a to and fro in a conversation, they find that very, very difficult and they usually just talk over the top of everyone.

[00:08:21] Or they need to finish whatever they're saying before they can move on to something else. Um, they have difficulty with processing of that verbal language as well. Um, it takes them a little bit of time to process words in their heads, and especially when they're trying to look at you at the same time.

[00:08:40] Sometimes they just can't do the two things at the same time. Um, a lot of the teenagers that I've worked with over the years often say, Miss, Miss, I can't talk to you, and you, and I can't hear you. If I have to look at you. So I let them just look wherever they need to look, but then I always check for [00:09:00] understanding and make sure that they've understood any of the instructions that I've given them to make sure that they can actually carry them out.

[00:09:08] So I don't get frustrated either. Um, Uh, Often they don't have a lot of facial expression either. So, We see quite bland faces and, uh, which is fine, but we just need to see some of those subtle signs. They don't usually have good gestures either. They usually have a monotone voice, and they have unusual eye contact.

[00:09:33] So some of those communication skills then can really have big implications in a classroom. All right, so the other thing that we have there is our emotions and emotional control. Of course, I love this part, because in the old days, when my son was diagnosed 30 odd years ago, they said, oh, these kids don't have any emotions.

[00:09:54] Don't expect them to ever have an emotion, and don't ever expect them to have an emotion. And [00:10:00] I used to think, oh my god, but he can have a real good meltdown, isn't that an emotion? So, uh, we had to start thinking about what is it that we could do to help him understand what emotions are and how to regulate those emotions.

[00:10:13] And in a classroom, it's about putting it all in context. So saying that, you know, little Jimmy over here, he sometimes feels like that too. He feels really frustrated when the teacher's asking him to do things. And, you know, what does frustration feel like in your body? And you can explain what frustration feels like in your own body so that they can put it all into that same context for themselves.

[00:10:36] It's important that we make those connections for them. Because they often feel like they're the only ones who are having that particular emotion or that particular feeling on that particular day. The other thing is when it comes to communication skills, they often feel the vibes of other people as well [00:11:00] and they take on that vibe, they take on that feeling. But because they don't have the words to be able to explain what that feeling is, we may see a lot of behaviours because they don't know what to do with that particular emotion.

[00:11:13] If we're thinking about it and we're feeling angry, we have quite a few strategies that we use. We will sometimes walk out of the room, uh, we'll go and have a glass of water. If it's at nighttime, we might even have a glass of wine or two, perhaps. We might go off and read a book, you know. There's a lot of different things that we have available to us.

[00:11:34] A lot of our AS people just don't have very much available to them. So we need to make sure that we put it into that context, let them understand what they're feeling, how they're feeling, and that other people have exactly the same feeling and what other people do about that particular feeling when they have it as well.

[00:11:53] So our next thing is our adaptation and generalisation of skills. Now this one's a [00:12:00] big one because it's learning something in this particular environment and then taking it somewhere else and being able to do that skill in another place. And this... It usually comes back to things like social skills.

[00:12:16] Social skills, we usually teach, and we're lovely at it. We do it so well. We get five or six other kids around the place who haven't got very good social skills. We put them in a room, and we sit down, and we teach them all about turn-taking. We teach them about how to have a conversation, how to start a conversation, how to finish a conversation.

[00:12:37] We do all of those beautiful things, but it's always with Mary and Joe and Tim and... Um, and Roxanne. It's always the same people. So, in this room, after a few weeks, these kids know it.

They do it really well, and they're getting on with each other really well. The problem is, when we send them out into the playground to use that skill, they have no idea how to use [00:13:00] it.

[00:13:00] We haven't taught them. So, we need to help them adapt the skill that they've learnt in here into a different context.

[00:13:19] Now, when we're looking at sensory issues, we have quite a number of different sensory issues. We can either be hyper or hypo, which is over reacting or under reacting. Um, there's quite a lot in Sue's other courses about sensory issues, so I won't go into too much detail. Uh, but just let's have a quick look at We have sight, so a number of our students really have difficulty with too much information coming at them.

[00:13:50] Remember right at the beginning I said that they were visual learners? Being a visual learner, if you have way too much visual stuff happening around you, it's [00:14:00] very hard to concentrate and to figure out what is the most important bit of information in that room. The other thing is touch. Now of course we, I think, As teacher aides, you've probably seen quite a lot of this happening where we have a, either, a real overreaction when someone is lightly touched.

[00:14:19] Especially as we're walking through doors, um, when the shoulders are touching as we're walking through a door. Some of our AS people will feel like someone's hurting them really badly, and all it was was just a little bump. However, those light touches can sometimes feel like someone is really hurting you quite badly.

[00:14:38] Sound is another thing that we see quite a lot with our students, and especially in the classroom, one of the things that I noticed a lot were the overhead fans, especially here in Queensland. We didn't have air conditioners back then, we had overhead fans, and overhead fans were not necessarily part of the maintenance man's purview.[00:15:00]

[00:15:02] I'll get that word right in a minute. Anyway, so he wouldn't actually get up there and stop them squeaking. So, some of our students would really struggle with that. And then trying to hear the teacher's voice over the top was really hard. Because then we also had the things like, uh, We had material scraping together, we had chairs being moved backwards and forwards, we have writing on paper, we have the noise from outside the classroom.

[00:15:33] And our children are very, very sensitive to sound, and what happens, of course, is they don't know which is the most important sound to pay attention to. So they find it very difficult to

listen to the teacher's voice. So, we need to be very aware of the sounds that are happening in that room. Um, smell, and this is a big one for us as teacher assistants, when we have a lot of perfume on, or if we have underarm [00:16:00] deodorant or our beautiful scent shampoos and conditioners and, uh, lotions, all of those smells can become very overpowering for someone with as, um, we need to be very aware of our coffee breath or if we're smokers.

[00:16:17] And then we put a mint in our mouth as well. All of that can be really hard. Um, I know one of the boys that I was working with, um, I always had to be very careful. I actually had this beautiful perfume that I loved wearing. But he would come into the room and go, Miss, I can't sit with you. I can't sit with you.

[00:16:38] And I finally figured it out when I asked him. We sat down and actually discussed it. Why he couldn't work with me on that particular day. And it was the perfume. It was just too overwhelming. So I stopped using that perfume. I stopped using perfume mostly. Um, especially when I was working with the kids. I was very lucky I didn't smoke, so it worked out really well.

[00:16:57] Oh, and toothpaste is the other one, too, that I [00:17:00] forget to mention quite a lot. Uh, we have some really wonderful toothpastes out there, but it's that minty freshness taste that some of them really can't abide when we're sitting so close to them, because we actually sit very close to them, uh, you know, face to face when we're working with them.

[00:17:15] The other thing, of course, is taste. We often see them not wanting particular foods, or not sitting down with everyone and eating them. fruit or eating things out of their lunch box. Um, and so if we're just aware of that, you know, don't force them to eat stuff if they don't really need to. Um, just let them be around that.

[00:17:36] Um, you can work with parents around what food must be eaten, um, and with teachers. Uh, but for me, you know, as long as they're eating at home, eating at school is not such a huge issue. If we're looking at sensory as well, we're looking at vestibular and proprioception. Now this is my sense of balance and where I stand and where I fit into [00:18:00] space around me.

[00:18:00] So walking through doors, walking between chairs and tables. And we usually find quite a few kids who are... Um, touching tables as they're walking between furniture or touching the backs of chairs. Or they might need to hold on to you while they're talking to you. Um, and there's lots of things. As I said before, Sue has done quite a lot on the sensory issues.

[00:18:21] So, have a look at her other courses because they're, they're really fantastic. And you'll get a lot more information out of them. Um, just remember one thing though. That sometimes they actually will seek out. Those sensory issues, they will good ones and bad ones because it's very calming. I know how it feels.

[00:18:40] I know how it's going to go with me. So, I will actually do this on purpose so that I can calm myself. So just be aware of those things, and we'll talk more about that as we go on about behavior as well.

[00:18:58] So if we're looking [00:19:00] at behaviour, which is what we're going to be concentrating on today. We have to start thinking about what behaviour means, and we have to start thinking that behaviour is a second language. It's another way of telling you what I'm feeling. I want you to think about how you convey your wants, your feelings, and your needs.

[00:19:19] What are the things that you use? Okay, so we use things like facial expression we use our tone of voice we use our Um hand gestures We use quite a number of different things when it comes to behaviour. Even just our attitude and the way that we're talking just shows people what we're thinking and how we're feeling about a subject.

[00:19:45] However, when we're looking at a lot of these kids with a, uh, students with a diagnosis, a lot of them don't have the facial expressions. They don't have a tone of voice. They have limited, uh, hand gestures. They have limited ways of actually talking. [00:20:00] Helping you understand what they're feeling so what they're doing is they're doing a behavior because they've learned that if they do a behavior You're going to come and help them.

[00:20:09] You're going to come and do something for them to help them get past that particular behavior. So if we look at behavior, it can be caused by some of those sensory issues. It can be because they have limited communication skills And because they don't have ways of expressing themselves because they can't use all of those things that we use.

[00:20:30] What we have to remember is that behaviour always serves a purpose. It's always a reaction to something that's happening in the environment around them. But it can always be changed. Once we help them understand what behaviour looks like. What their feelings are inside. How they can get rid of those feelings.

[00:20:54] We're going to see lots of changes in behaviour. The real issue though, of course, is because [00:21:00] behavior is like having seven different dialects. If you've got seven different kids that have a diagnosis. Just pretend that you're going to Italy and you've learned Italian. Okay, and you've learned Roman Italian.

[00:21:13] But you're actually going up to Venice. Now, up in Venice, they actually speak a different dialect. Or if you're going down to Sicily, they're speaking a different dialect as well. Which just means that some of what you're saying is not going to be understood. And this is exactly what we see with behaviour.

[00:21:30] We have all of these different dialects. We need to see what is the dialect that that particular child is using to help them. Emojis are a way to help him understand himself. So if we understand what behaviours he's doing to express an emotion, then we're going to be able to help him understand that behaviour.

[00:21:48] And we're going to talk a lot more about that as we're going along.

[00:21:58] Now I'm really sorry, but I keep saying [00:22:00] he quite often. And that's just because of my son Daniel. I've worked with him for so many years that I just constantly say he. I do mean they, because we do have girls and boys. Um, with lots of different diagnoses. So, please excuse me if I just say he. Um, look, we're going back to generalisation and adaptability.

[00:22:18] Um, it's a very important part because sometimes we get very frustrated because we've taught them a skill. And the skill is then not transferred to somewhere else or to a different classroom or out into the playground. So, we just need to remember that. Because they are visual learners, whatever they're learning is what they're taking in.

[00:22:40] So, whatever they're seeing around them is what they're list... Sorry, what they're seeing and what they're being taught. So, whenever they go somewhere else, it has to be a very similar situation for them to be able to use that same skill. Now, can I talk about, as a parent, I found [00:23:00] this really difficult because I taught my son how to use a knife and a fork at home.

[00:23:04] And we always sat in the same place and we always had the same table, the same table cloth, etc, etc. And he always had his seat. He always wanted that seat. Um, and that was because he knew how to use his knife and fork. But as soon as we went to visit my mother-in-law or, or, uh, his

other grandmother, We found it really, really hard because he didn't know how to use his knife and fork anymore.

[00:23:28] And that was because we needed to put it in the context. That, okay, you've actually learnt this skill before. This is how we did it at home. And this is how we do it at Nuna's place. Or at Grandma's house. This is how we do that same skill. And it's the same in a classroom. If we're teaching them how to be still on a, on a chair.

[00:23:48] Just because they can do it in Mrs. Smith's class doesn't mean that they can do it in Mr. Jones's class. Because Mr. Jones's class may actually not allow, um, water bottles on the table, [00:24:00] but Mrs. Smith does. And so visually, the room looks different already in his immediate, his or her immediate surrounds. So, we always need to make sure that we put it into context for them.

[00:24:12] Where have I used this skill before? How am I going to use it? And how is it different? from where I learnt it. What, what are the differences that I'm going to be able to see? Um, show them what to do. So, if you, if we go back to that, this is how we use the knife and a fork, this is how we did it at home, but this is also how we do it over at Norna's house.

[00:24:32] So, when we're in Mrs. Smith's class, we have the water bottle here, and we can still pick up our pen and paper and write. And when we go to Mr. Jones's class, The water bottle is not there, but we can still pick up our pen and our paper and start writing. So, sometimes we need to be really, really explicit with our instructions.

[00:24:54] And that can be really frustrating for us as teacher aides, because we have this amount of time to [00:25:00] spend with this child, and we have an awful amount of stuff that we've got to get done. Um, and we'll talk a little bit more about that in just a moment. It's about that not being able to do some work today.

[00:25:11] That they could do yesterday.

[00:25:17] Um, thanks Anna for sharing about that. I think as both a teacher and a teacher aid, this is what's so frustrating because you go, why do I have to teach this child in every situation? I've already taught them how to do that. Why can't they sit in that chair? But I remember one of my students, Jessica, I'd say sit in your chair and she was so literal, which comes back to communication you were talking about, and her chair had a little bit of green on it, and I didn't realise, so when I'd say sit in

your chair, she was like actually literal about her chair, but as you say, she knew how to sit in her chair in the classroom.

[00:25:53] If we went into another room, she'd just run around. So, that is, that is, um, a classic of not adapting. [00:26:00] I'm not adapting for other chairs and other situations. Sadly, my worst ever case of not understanding generalisation was when I first taught in an autism school. So I had a beautiful student called James.

[00:26:12] Funny, I ended up calling my own son James because I love this little boy so much. I just adored him. He was one of my first students. Um, any of you who have worked with children know that There are some names you mightn't call your children, but in this case, I call my own son James because I love this James.

[00:26:27] Anyway, and his mum was just fantastic. But one of our biggest struggles was he didn't like other people doing up his shoelaces. He wanted to control his, he was very OCD about his shoelaces. So, sounds silly, but his mum got, his mum's goal on the IEP was to do his own shoelaces up. Good plan. So I spent hours and hours because it's a fine motor skill.

[00:26:47] It's really hard. Hours teaching him to tie his shoelaces. I rang his mum back in the day with the ring and not text and go, Guess what? He can tie his shoelaces. She rang me the next morning and goes, He has no idea. He just sat there, literally [00:27:00] like hands all limp, like looking, had no idea. Turns out, I had taught him to tie his shoelaces behind, with the carpet in the classroom behind it.

[00:27:09] That visual of our green school classroom. So he couldn't do it on the tiles at home, he couldn't do it in his own classroom, um, bedroom. And I'm really embarrassed to say, I had over toured it, Anna. And so what I had to do, I had to get a piece of old carpet square of the same green carpet. And if we rolled that out...

[00:27:29] He could actually do his shoes up. Now, that is an ideal. What I should have done is taught him to tie a shoelace and arrange his settings, but I had over taught that skill. So that is, I know this sounds crazy, but that is that adaptability and generalisation. And that's where we get so much behaviour because we assume the child knows what to do.

[00:27:49] And here was me ringing James mum like, Yay! He can do it! And he couldn't. Okay, so that is a classic case of generalization. Now, my [00:28:00] adaptability one is a little bit

embarrassing. But here it is. I taught a student called Andrew, and I had come from mainstream schools to a specialist school. And one of the goals was to teach the children to write their names.

[00:28:12] Good goal. First, he's five years old. Write their name. Great. So, being a junior primary school teacher, because I first started in South Australia, so for five year olds, I went home and wrote Andrew's name out with the dots. Andrew joined the Dots together to write his name. But I taught him for a whole year.

[00:28:30] And for that whole year he would put the dots. And then joined the dots to write his name. He never wrote it like that. So now, if you're teaching writing, you don't join the dots. He thought that's how you wrote. And like, once, that's the adaptability. He could not undo that learning. And that was how I taught him to write his name.

[00:28:53] So that's how he was going to write his name with me. And it was so embarrassing because he'd sit there making all these beautiful dots [00:29:00] and then join the dots. And it was taking so long. Exactly. And so. You know, I guess I want to say that sometimes you don't know you're teaching the wrong things and like Anna with the cutlery, sometimes bizarre things happen, and you're like, how did I teach that child that?

[00:29:15] And as I say, that's what's so frustrating that sometimes we want to climb in the kid's head and be like, why are you still doing that? But I think he just really enjoyed it. So now, when I'm teaching handwriting, I always use bubble writing, and the child writes within the line. So not that's a much better idea, but I learned a lot from Andrew.

[00:29:35] So that is a classic case of generalization and adaptability. And I'm hoping that you can actually step back and look around. Where is this child struggling to move learning from one place to another, home to school? I mean, I can see why it used to be called childhood schizophrenia. Children can be very different.

[00:29:53] And I hate that term, but some children have different accents. Some children have selective mute. Some children will chat to you and not chat to, [00:30:00] you know, this is that adaptability. It is very much so. Yeah. So we can do the next topic. Okay, so let's move on to choice making then, and why this can cause behavior.

[00:30:14] Wow, this is a massive one. There are many reasons, and I've just listed a few of them. First of all, they have limited problem-solving abilities, and this is why they love those routines and

the structure around them. Routine is predictable. I do this, then this happens, and then that happens. And that's why visuals work so really, really well.

[00:30:36] Because if you can't problem solve, you can't figure out what might happen next. So, the other thing is that fear of making a mistake. What about if I do something wrong? They are perfectionists. They can, will only attempt something if they know they can finish it to the ability that they think that they should be finishing it at.

[00:30:58] So it doesn't matter whether we say, [00:31:00] oh that's really fantastic, because well you have to say that mess because you, you work with me. So for them, if they don't think they've done a fair enough job or a good enough job, then they won't think it's completed, or they won't think it's finished, or they won't think it's any good at all, and so that's why we see lots of them.

[00:31:18] Screwing up the paper and throwing it in the bin and meltdowns and those sort of things. But the other thing there is that fear of making the wrong choice. Because as I said, they can't problem solve. They don't know what to do if they make the wrong choice. Where do I go? What do I do? We do that every day.

[00:31:37] Oh, you know, okay, we've made the wrong choice. I should have bought the blue dress because I really like that better. So, we know that we can go back to the shop and we can exchange it. Or, if, uh, we buy noodles instead of pasta. You know, we know. Okay, well, I'll use noodles another day. Um, I'll do a different recipe tonight for the noodles instead of the pasta [00:32:00] that I was supposed to buy.

[00:32:01] So, we've got that problem-solving ability. What are the things that we can do then as teacher assistants in a classroom? Well, there's lots of things. First of all, make sure that any choices that you give them are really, really clear. So I always start with making really two easy choices. And depending on the age group, it might just be, do you want the red one or the blue one?

[00:32:22] Um, because that's much easier than, uh, you know, if, if they usually have a favourite colour, so choose the favourite colour and a non favourite colour so it's easy for them to work out what it is that they want. So start with really easy choices. Then, start to get into a little bit harder choices. Maybe give them three choices, but don't overcomplicate it.

[00:32:43] Whatever you do, just keep it really simple, especially when you're first starting out with this. Make the choices really visual. So, out there in front of them, it's very easy to choose. Um, it's

very hard to think about choices in your head if you're not able to make a choice in the first place.
[00:33:00] Um, show them what they can do if they make a mistake.

[00:33:03] That's easy, isn't it? What do you do when you make a mistake? You try to fix it straight away. Um, if you've rubbed out on a piece of paper, you rub it out. Uh, sorry, if you've written something on a piece of paper and it needs to be rubbed out, you rub it out. So you can actually model it. Be aware though, that if we teach that sort of skill, that sometimes they get very frustrated because they've made the mistake, and they can't, uh, make that choice of, okay, I can just do a little rub out only, um, instead of doing that really big rub out, and throw the whole thing out.

[00:33:38] But we'll talk about that in a little while. Um, choice making can be really hard. Um, because if you can't make the right... Just, I'll just take a step back. If we're talking about perfectionism, and we have kids who are very much into that perfectionism stuff. If you think you've made the wrong choice, then you're not perfect.

[00:33:57] And if you're not perfect, then I must be an idiot. And if [00:34:00] I'm an idiot, myself as well. My self-esteem is going to go down. And they also start to think about, well what are other kids thinking about me if I've made the wrong choice? They don't realise that other kids also make a wrong choice. And that they problem-solve their way out of that wrong choice.

[00:34:16] And that they can fix that wrong choice. And we'll talk a little bit more about that just a little bit further on when we're talking a bit more about other behaviours as well.

[00:34:31] I think as a teacher, this is one of your most important jobs in the classroom, because often I give children a big choice, like write what you did on the weekend, or, like teachers give very broad questions. And one of your key roles as an aide is to narrow down those choices. So instead of what did you do on the weekend, you might say to the child, what do you want to do Saturday or Sunday?

[00:34:51] Does that, like, not the weekends, a really big thing? Yeah, or even narrow it down even further. What did what happened on Saturday morning? [00:35:00] Or what did you do Saturday afternoon? So make it quite a narrow choice For deciding because otherwise, they're thinking about from the time they woke up to the time they went to bed. So it could be anything.

[00:35:11] Absolutely. One of my little boys, I just didn't have an aide or angel as I call them, and he wrote down, I said, what did you do on the weekend? He wrote down 702, woke up, 703, got out of

bed and he wrote down every minute of his time. That's what I mean. Because there's a literalness, and this is the communication that I'm saying.

[00:35:27] So the other thing I want to say about literalness, a lot of people when they give choices, they say to the child, yes or no. And some of my children will never, they'll never choose no, because no equals never again for the rest of their life. That's exactly right. That's why no one can trigger a meltdown. So those of you who've done my, like, full day course or join me face to face, we cover that a lot.

[00:35:47] But remember, words confuse our children. And so words like, if you say yes or no, Some children will always say yes, even if they don't want to do something because that word no is really just not a [00:36:00] word. Just not something that they want to respond to. Because the word no requires problem solving. Mm hmm.

[00:36:05] And the word no requires you to mean later. And that's why we use language like in our ultimate guide. Now, next, later. Okay, and in the now, in the ultimate guide one, and Anna taught me about choice making. In fact, Anna and I worked out yesterday. We've been working together for 20 years. I can't believe it.

[00:36:23] I can't believe it. Me neither. Um, and um, one of the things that Anna first taught me when we were writing The Essential Guide as our first book, because Daniel was a teenager then, was about teaching, instead of saying to Daniel, when are you going to do your homework? She would say, are you going to do your homework at 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock?

[00:36:41] Right? So clear choices. Are you going to pack the dishwasher or put the bins out? Not pack away. So, when we're talking to children, often we have to make sure we're making the clear choice choices, right? And what Anna said back, get visual. So, if you're telling a child to choose a [00:37:00] book, You might have two books out ready for them to choose from.

[00:37:04] So, um, or if they've got to choose between an explorer and an animal, you might have those ready. And that, I think, is the role of the teacher assistant. It is. Very much so. Because I don't have time to do that as a classroom teacher when I've got 30 kids. No. And you do need to reduce those, that choice making.

[00:37:21] As I said before, they can't do that problem solving, if there's just too much choice there, then they won't even participate. They'll just decide they're not going to do it. So being able to say,

okay, do you want this book or this book is going to be so much easier than digging through the tub and going through, oh, there's five different explorer books here, but there's five different animal books here.

[00:37:42] So it's so much easier if you just choose one of each. And then they've got a choice. Very easy choice. Yeah, and clear choices. And the other thing I think is really important. This is what I call a choose your battles. Is the goal the child chooses the book or does the work? So, [00:38:00] you know, it's like, what is the goal?

[00:38:02] The child finds the pen or does the work, right? They choose, do they choose between twelve coloured pencils or they have one coloured pencil? So, a lot of your job is to ask yourself, Is the choice stopping the child learning, or do they swap? An ADHD kid will swap from one choice to the other. They'll start one then go to go from the animal to the Explorer back to the animal.

[00:38:26] Sometimes your job is to go we've chosen the Explorer. We're gonna stick with that, which is a little bit contradictory to us saying we need to say to the child Oh, I made a mistake. Okay, and I want to swap. That's okay. Two. One swap. One swap. Exactly. You might need rules around that. If it's a consistent behaviour where they keep swapping.

[00:38:46] Okay? So they choose the blue pen, then they want the red pen, then they want the blue pen. Let's just be like, you're allowed one swap. Now, I know, I know that sounds hard, but in my experience. That's sort of your job as the aide in my classroom. It is very much, [00:39:00] very much what you are supposed to be doing for that particular child.

[00:39:03] Because what you're helping that child do is problem solve. But, we don't want to get into that stage where I'm swapping, swapping, swapping because we're not, first of all, we're not getting any work done. But secondly, the choice making is not actually leading to an end of the problem. which is that problem solving.

[00:39:20] So there has to be an end to it. Yeah. So being able to say, okay, you've swapped once. Now we're going to sit with this, and we're going to finish it. Yeah. And next time you can choose that colour. So you're not saying they can never have it. It's just, well, next time we'll read the animal book, you know, and I, that's where, and I was talking to Anna about this yesterday, I've introduced a thing called a tomorrow box where we can.

[00:39:41] just the lid off a photocopy box where if a child hasn't finished their work or you know they want they change their mind well we can put it to the side and we can come back to it you know so we're not saying they can't do it like it's okay you've changed your mind we'll put that and if we once we finish this We can look at that book.

[00:39:58] So because [00:40:00] again, that's a problem solving challenge. The rest of us know, well, I can put the book back and I can still read it later. Many of our kids think they've made the choice. It's the end of the world. They're great catastrophizers. Yeah. Very big catastrophizers. And so sometimes that is your role to smooth the way.

[00:40:17] But, and I get asked a lot by aides, well, aren't you like. Making them prompt dependent, but actually I don't believe so. No, no, I don't think so. I think the more prompts we can put into place, the more we're teaching them, and we just take away some of those prompts as We're going. We don't take them all the way at the same time.

[00:40:36] It's like, you know, I know I'm going off course here, but You know, we have visuals and we do really fantastic visuals and then we come in and go, Oh, this kid doesn't need the visual anymore because he's doing the work. So we take that visual away, and all of a sudden, this kid can't work. And it was only because, yes, the visual was very comforting.

[00:40:53] I know what I have to do on that visual. And it's the same sort of thing. If we add these prompts in for choice [00:41:00] making, they're going to be able to keep making the right choices. Or if they make the wrong choice, they're able to then. Take away the wrong choice and go back for the right choice. Yeah, absolutely.

[00:41:10] So, just like we talked about generalization and adaptability, remember, they might learn to make a choice here, but then you go to the library, and you've got to re-teach it and re-teach it. So, even though you've taught choice making around a book or choice making about writing on the weekend, you notice...

[00:41:27] I want you in the next 24 hours to notice how many choices you make. Like, you would be amazed. Even going to the toilets. One of my little boys had a set toilet he went to. Like, that's a choice-making activity. Like, which cubicle you go into. Um, what order you eat your food. Like, just notice. You are constantly making choices.

[00:41:43] But some of my children, if they eat something in the wrong order, they won't eat anything. That's it. Let's go on. And that's the adaptability and generalisation. So, can you see that all of these things build to create behaviour? Because we assume these children know what to do. We assume, well, [00:42:00] they should be able to make a choice.

[00:42:00] They should be able to do these things. And what we're trying to say to you is actually, this is the challenges this child has. And the only way they can communicate is through behavior. So if you're getting behavior, start to think about, have we given this child too many choices? So they've gone under the table, they've run away, they are overwhelmed by choices.

[00:42:19] Did they rip up that piece of paper because we gave them too many choices and they're perfectionists. So I'm hoping you can see, actually we are focusing on behavior. And I just want to spell that out because I listen to Anna, and I go, yes, yes, yes. But I know particularly if you're new, this might be something that you haven't experienced before.

[00:42:36] So I just wanted to spell that out for you. I hope that really helps. I really like what you just said about going under the table. Because I had a little Jono who, um, If I gave him too many choices, I was, you know, trying to do all this choice making stuff with him and one day I decided to add an extra choice in there and as soon as we added the third choice, he was under the table and that's where he stayed for the next two hours.

[00:42:56] We couldn't even get him out for morning tea. Yeah, yeah, 100%. So be [00:43:00] very aware of how you're doing it and make sure they're in the right frame of mind when you do add that extra choice. Yeah, absolutely. And just like what Anna and I are sharing and stuff we wish, we've learned from experience. Like we're trying to save you having these same challenges along the way.

[00:43:17] So, you know, if a kid goes under the table for two hours, it's okay. Don't worry. You can learn from that. We're still learning. We're still meeting children and learning. So please, we're just sharing these so to hopefully give you some shortcuts. So when you see the child go under the table, you're like, oh, I gave them too many choices.

[00:43:33] Or, they made a choice, and they didn't get the choice. Because sometimes that happens too. They finally make the choice and another child has that book, you know. And they then can't problem-solve. Again, you go, well you can ask to have it after them. Can you really be explicit? I cannot emphasise enough.

[00:43:51] Don't assume they know to say, can I have that after you? Can I have that? You know, like, we assume. We assume they know. We do. Okay. [00:44:00] This is the one thing I wished I'd known about 30 years ago. And it's the hidden reason behind so many behaviours. It's the ability to execute something. And it's called executive functioning, which is a big term and please don't get overwhelmed.

[00:44:16] You use, you execute things every day. When you get dressed, you have to know to put on your socks before your shoes. This is organizing. For many of our children, they struggle with organizing. So they'll get out their book and not have their pen. You know? We assume they know that. By year two, we assume children know what to do.

[00:44:34] We assume they know how to execute activities. And you use this every day. Organization. When a child goes back to their desk, they have to remember what to do. They have to regulate their emotions. Like we just said, they mightn't get the activity they wanted. So they need to regulate their emotions. They need to block out the sensory.

[00:44:54] That is all part of executive functioning. So executive functioning, I once heard [00:45:00] described as Like the, um, control tower at the airport with all the planes coming in and out and all the noises. For most neurotypical children, they're very good at remembering what they're doing, focusing on the runway and not getting distracted by all these other things.

[00:45:17] But many of our children, their working memory, they can't remember what they're doing. They are disorganized. You pull out their tote box and there's things everywhere in it. They struggle to, um, regulate their emotions when they can't find the things they want. So this is all called executive functioning.

[00:45:34] But what we need you to understand it's that for many of our children this is your role to help them plan, prioritize, organize. But this is why we need visuals like the now, next, later so they know what they're doing when. This is why the visual schedule is really important because the rest of us remember how the day is going to go.

[00:45:54] So that's working memory. So we need that schedule for them to see, oh, I'm doing this, this, and this. [00:46:00] Okay, and how long I'm going to be doing it. And this is where visual timers, and lots of you have heard me talk about visual timers, are so important because they visually show the chart. But it's also why many of our children don't have a sense of time.

[00:46:14] You and I actually quite get quite good at knowing five minutes, ten minutes. We have a concept of time. ADHD kids, if they're hyper focused on something, they'll say, I only just started because time disappears. But if they're sitting on the mat and it's boring, time is really slow. And so we use visual timers to help them visually understand time.

[00:46:36] But again, because of their working memory and their executive functioning issues, this is why we have to reduce choices, which is what you heard. So can you see how all of this builds on top of each other? So Anna and I are going to share some examples of how executive functioning, um, what you can do and how, um, we wish we'd known about it a long time ago.

[00:46:58] Oh, I love this. Good [00:47:00] days and bad days. Don't we all have them? There are some days that are much better than others, and there are some days that I want to remember and other days that I don't. That's the same with our kids. There are some days that they cope with everything. They cope with what's happening around them and you only have to help them a little bit every now and again.

[00:47:15] And then there are other days when it's just really gone far too far and they have to be removed from the class. And that's just normal. That's just normal for our ASD people. What I want you to remember is that Don't take those behaviours personally, because they're not aimed at you personally, they're aimed at, I can't tell you how I'm feeling, so this is the only thing I can do.

[00:47:41] I can just do this behaviour. So even if they tell you that you're looking fat today, it's okay. It's just because they're not coping very well. Some days, the children can adapt and they can generalise and they can make their own choices. And then there are other days when they find it really hard, as I just said.[00:48:00]

[00:48:00] And there's a number of different reasons. Some of that is because of the sensory issues that are happening. Some of that is because of some family issues that are happening at home. Some of it is because they just had Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Jones just told them that they weren't allowed to have their water bottle when normally Mrs.

[00:48:15] Jones... Let them have their water bottle, and so that is a big thing because it's a big change, and I can't cope with that big change. It's just too much for me to do. So, what we need to do is help them understand that we all have good days and bad days. And that it's alright to have a good day and a bad day as well.

[00:48:34] So, how I do this is I teach them about spoons. Excuse me. We have ten spoons that we start the day with. Okay, so we have these spoons, and in the morning, I might use two spoons just to get out of bed today. Um, and then I might use three spoons because I'm thinking I've got to go to school. And then I might use two more [00:49:00] spoons because mum didn't give me the same lunch as I had yesterday and I really wanted the same lunch as yesterday.

[00:49:07] And then by the time I get to school I've only got three spoons left. So three spoons for socialising and for being good and for doing all the things that I'm expected to do is going to be really hard to get me through an eight-hour day. So, I might use another spoon because Mary wasn't at school today, and Mary's the one who normally plays with me first thing in the morning.

[00:49:33] Then I might lose one more spoon because, um, my teacher aide is not there today. I've got a different teacher aide. And then my last spoon goes because I just can't function anymore. And it's only 9 o'clock in the morning. So I have got nothing left to give. At all. I'm finding it really, really hard. So we just help them understand that there are days when we start off with only one [00:50:00] spoon and that one spoon is gone within the first few hours.

[00:50:03] And that's okay. Because what we do then is we make sure that we take it low and slow. And I'll talk about that in just a second. But some days, we start off with 10 spoons, and they disappear really quickly. And what we need to help them understand is that when they're feeling like that, they need to go and talk to someone that they trust, someone that will understand what they're talking about, and someone who can get them to a safe spot.

[00:50:29] or a quiet spot. I call them a safe spot because usually that's where we don't see meltdowns. We don't see, um, we just see them calming. You can actually see the physicalness of the calming happening, which I really love. We talk about this low and slow. You may have heard about it before. Low and slow is when we try to reduce what is happening in our body.

[00:50:51] We reduce whatever is happening around us as well. And I have the perfect example of my son, Daniel, who, you know, he's 37 now. [00:51:00] Excuse me, going on 38. And I spoke to him a few months ago because he lives overseas. He was talking about how he was going to be having a really big weekend so lots of socializing and he knows that when he socializes too much, he has meltdowns.

[00:51:17] And his partner has actually seen him in a meltdown. So what he does is he has a low and slow day. So in other words, no socialization, no talking. The day that I rang him, he actually said, Mum, I'm having a low and slow day. And I said, OK. We won't talk for very long. I just wanted to

say hi. I love you, and I'll hang up now, and that's all we did For. him, being able to recognize that for himself is something that took me a long time to help him recognize.

[00:51:49] And as a teacher assistant, it's something that I teach a lot of the kids that I work with. It's about understanding how I'm feeling in my body, and that if I'm feeling heightened, [00:52:00] then I need to bring myself down. Just think about it for yourself when you're feeling really excited about something and you're going, Oh, this is fantastic.

[00:52:08] This is great. This is great. And then you've got to go into a really serious meeting. You actually have to bring yourself down before you go into that serious meeting. You have to really think about what you're saying and what you're going to do. So we help them understand what that low and slow means.

[00:52:23] And we help them to feel it in their body and help them feel the change from that heightened Um, bad day to that low and slow I'm going back into a good day.

[00:52:39] It's not helping.

[00:52:45] I'm just left the recording on. By yourself? No, no, jump in. I've left the recording on. Um, thank you, Anna. I think that's so important. And then, if you want to learn more about the spoons, it is in our ultimate guide. It is. And I know you taught me that. And a lot of adults say, [00:53:00] especially teenagers, find that, um, spoon theory, incredibly helpful to understand because it makes it visual.

[00:53:07] Remember, we need to make things visual and the spoons make it visual. So Anna was using her fingers, but you can actually get 10 spoons and explain that. And then you can teach them what puts the spoons back. And the book I love to do that is this one. It's called The Kid's Guide to Being Awesome. Oh, sorry.

[00:53:23] It changes the color, but some of the. The thing in this book, sometimes, as Anna said, sometimes you're heightened and you need to come down. Sometimes you're low and slow and you need to go up. Sometimes you're wriggly. So what this book does, it's by an occupational therapist. It teaches children the different types of ways you can feel.

[00:53:40] And then what you can do to make you feel just right. And that's really what we want for our kids. We want them to be just right. So, I think we mu And I think talking about ourselves is invaluable. This is where if I'm with my students, I will come in, and I'll go. Oh, I had a really busy weekend. I need a low and slow day, you know, [00:54:00] or low or slow morning, or I'm having an extra coffee or, you know, or I'm so excited we've got all this stuff happening, but I've got to bring my emotions down because we need to get on and do some work.

[00:54:09] So please talk about your own emotions. I call it emotional literacy, just like teaching to read. We have to teach children to read our emotions and their own, yeah, amazing. The main reason you're going to get fluctuations is because of anxiety. Dr. Tony Atwood talks about 75 percent of children with neurodiversity experience anxiety.

[00:54:34] And if you think of yourself, the higher your anxiety, the harder it is to engage in new situations. That you're going to want the same thing over and over again. I don't know about you, but you probably have comfort food. When you're feeling anxious or had a bad day, my guess is you want sameness. So, if a child's feeling anxious and they walk in and there's a relief teacher or as Anna said, their friends away, that can cause a spoon to go down, [00:55:00] yes?

[00:55:00] And when a child is anxious, making choices is harder, they're going to become more rigid, they're going to insist on sameness. And this is the fluctuations in the good and bad days. If you think about it, most of that has to do with anxiety. On these days, you might have to take that child out and socially withdraw them.

[00:55:17] And just let them work in a small group or just with you. This is a very important part of your job. As a teacher, I rely on my angel to go, We're going to go and work out there. because I've got 29 other learners. So, please, um, and I know, look, different teachers have different rules and that makes your job really hard.

[00:55:37] But personally, I believe your job is to advocate for that child and to say to me, Hey Sue, Jessica needs a break, or hey Sue, Elijah needs to go for a walk. And I love that, because I would prefer that than the child has a meltdown or escalates so they can't do any work. Um, some of the children, though, remember that anxiety ends up as anger.

[00:55:59] And [00:56:00] I know, they'll just come in angry, and often it's anxiety and anger confused. And this is where, again, you might need to teach them. When your 10 spoons have gone, you get angry and that's okay. We all get angry and remind them about how to fix up that anger. I've got a new workbook called the Red Beast Anger Workbook.

[00:56:19] And if you have students who get really angry, I highly recommend it. It's a 14 day program that really teacher aides can do with the student to teach them about anger. Um, often you'll get meltdowns on these days, and the big one is that fear of trying new things. So, one day they're happy to try new things, happy to work with someone new.

[00:56:38] When they're anxious, they will not want to try new things. Because the higher the anxiety, the lower the problem-solving. So, remember, if you try something new, you need to be able to problem solve. Yes? You might have to make a choice. So, the higher the anxiety, the lower your problem-solving. So, this child's going to be fearful of trying new things.

[00:56:56] Or they might try and self regulate by making [00:57:00] repetitive noises or movement. This might be the day they move on their chair a lot. They might be humming. They might be making little clicky noises or clicking their pen. These are all signs to you, as a teacher assistant, this child's anxiety is high. Now, I know it can be hard when you might have seen the child in the morning and you come in halfway through the day and you can see all these signs.

[00:57:22] You don't always know what's happened before. And please, I always think I'd love to climb in children's heads and have a look around. What sets them off one day mightn't set them off the next day. But that's all to do with those spoons, isn't it? Because if you've got no spoons left... things are going to set you off more.

[00:57:38] So this is the good and bad days. It's often to do with anxiety. Um, so you might see children asking you the same question over and over again. And one of my students, I knew he was having a bad day because he'd be like, why, why, why, why? Everything was why. And even if he gave an answer, he'd ask the same question again.

[00:57:55] So, look for all these little signs of anxiety and remember [00:58:00] 75 percent of diverse children, neurodiverse children, experience strong anxiety. Can you imagine that? I think these kids are probably the bravest kids you'll ever meet. If I lived of much anxiety as many of our kids, I literally would stay in bed all day.

[00:58:16] Okay, so now that we've got all of this anxiety around us, what are we going to do? What, what are some of the strategies that we can use? And there's plenty of them. If you have a look through our red and blue books, there's There's plenty of information in there about the sensory break, and the physical break, and the relaxation breaks.

[00:58:36] All of those are very easy to do, and very easy to be able to talk to your teacher about, and work out a strategy that's going to work for that particular classroom. And, of course, you're always working in conjunction with your teacher. Don't do any of this by yourself, because if they don't know what's happening, they're, um, they're going to be wondering what, what is going on in their classroom.

[00:58:58] So the other thing that we can do is this. [00:59:00] Uh, diversion, uh, you know, getting them to do something else, taking them out of the classroom. The solitude, giving them some time by themselves, always works. It helps to reduce. I know when I get really anxious, I like time alone. I like to be by myself. I like to get a book out and read.

[00:59:16] Uh, there's quite a number of different things that I like to do. And I have a lot of different choices that I can choose from. But I do like to be away from people who are not going to be asking me questions. Um, and the co regulation. Make sure that you stay really calm because if you are starting to get heightened, they will start to get even more heightened.

[00:59:36] Their anxiety is going to become rooftop anxiety and it's very hard to bring someone down from up there. So make sure you stay really calm, check how you're feeling, check how the vibes that you're giving off is going as well. So, keep your voice low and slow as well. So you stay low and slow will then help them to become low and slow as well.

[00:59:58] So do lots and lots [01:00:00] of that co regulation.

[01:00:09] Um, what Anna said is so important and I think one of the things I've found over the years, often if I'm doing something that's really exciting with the whole class and they're all hyped up. Sometimes, actually, the co regulation comes from the peers, so this is where you might need to take the child on a job, or take them for a walk, or find an activity, just until I've got the class settled, because often, one of the things people don't talk about enough is the double empathy, that my kids pick up on other kids emotions, so if I'm doing something noisy and sensory and exciting, Sometimes, if that child needs low and slow, you need to take them out for some low and slow time, and then bring them back.

[01:00:44] And, again, because of supervision, you'll need to check with your teacher what's appropriate, but normally as a teacher I'm like, Yes, please. I know this environment is setting the child off. Yes. And, you know, just reiterating once again, don't take [01:01:00] behaviours

personally. Because it's, it's very hard to do sometimes because you feel like oh, maybe I'm a failure, maybe it's me not doing a good enough job.

[01:01:08] But it's not about you, it's about the child. You're doing the best that you can on that particular day, you, as long as you are co regulating and keeping yourself calm, then you're doing a fantastic job. So don't take those behaviours personally. Yeah, and also I think one of the things we do, sometimes teachers and angels or aides do this, where you're all excited about an activity you've got ready for this child, and you're like, wow, I can't wait to do this, and we had such a good day yesterday, and you're all excited and got these high expectations, and this kid's not having a good day.

[01:01:40] Some days you've just got to lower those expectations. You know, you're still going to get to do that activity, but today's not your day. And in fact, if you do try and do it, it's just going to end in disaster for both of you. So sometimes it's about moving your expectations. Now. Anna was saying don't take behaviour personally and my beautiful friend and colleague Dean Beadle who I've had [01:02:00] out to Australia, Brisbane and Sydney many times and Dean is just truly amazing.

[01:02:04] I highly recommend. He has done a teacher assistant part two course where he shares his lived experience because his teacher assistant changed his life. He was a child being expelled, suspended, moved from one school to the next. And when he met his teacher assistant that he kept for something like six years, it changed his life.

[01:02:22] She was just such a game changer. He was actually, anyway, I won't go on about that, but Many years later, Dean met up with her and he's like, I just want to thank you. I think her name was Mrs. Rendell. Thank you so much. Sounds like from High School Musical. Um, Mrs. Rendell, I just want to thank you so much for being so patient because he used to say some pretty horrible things and had a lot of oppositional behavior and he's OCD.

[01:02:46] So if the smallest thing was wrong, boom. So he, he was a complex. student, and he's like, I just want to thank you, Dean. I thank you Mr,s. Rendell, so much for all you did. And she looked at him and went, Dean, you know, I [01:03:00] got paid to do that.

[01:03:07] The funniest thing he'd ever heard. And he always tells that story in his workshops. And I just want to remind you, some days. It's okay, you know, lower your expectations. Some days you're going to get behavior, but that is your job. Sometimes your job is the loving push, pushing this child and actually encouraging them to try new things, to try three choices, and they go under the table, don't worry, tomorrow you know two choices is going to work, right?

[01:03:36] Some days you're going to get behavior, but that, sometimes you've got to push a little to know where those limitations are. Other days, you have to look at that child, assess their anxiety and go, Today's not the day to push the child. So I hope that A, you sort of understand that anxiety, and B, you've got some strategies to try.

[01:03:56] But most importantly, Anna and I are hoping this course is reassuring. [01:04:00] That you sort of feel better about, Okay, I'm going to get some behavior. Because guess what? You all know how to get zero behavior. Let the kids do what they want all day. Isn't that what we do? That's exactly right. Let him be on the computer all day.

[01:04:12] Let him do Minecraft. If you let Daniel be on his computer all day, he would have loved it, or in his room doing whatever he wanted. He was happy. Exactly. Lego when he was younger. So what we have to remember, it really is a gut feel, but that making sure you're calm is an important part of your job, that co regulation.

[01:04:34] Accepting that sometimes this child will need more breaks than other days. So, I hope that helps because I think so much behaviour comes from this. And that fluctuations and our expectations. Yeah, and remember we have good days and bad days too. So, you know, we expect them in other kids as well.

[01:04:51] Absolutely. So, you've learnt all of these bits and pieces. But you know what? Sometimes your [01:05:00] behaviour strategies don't work. They're not working, I've been trying to put them all into place, and there's quite a few different reasons. I'll just go through a few of them. One is just not looking at the bigger picture.

[01:05:12] You know, trying to do everything all at the same time, trying to make sure that, you know, I've got this behaviour to work with, that behaviour to work with, this behaviour to work with, and trying to do it all. What you really need to do is think about choosing your battles. Which is the most important one for this particular classroom?

[01:05:28] What is the second thing that I need to be looking at? What we do find is that once we've worked on one thing, other things come into play very easily. So if they've learned a skill to, to calm themselves down in this situation, we can then help that, that child then go on to the next one. And say, well remember you used that skill in that room, this is what you can do over here.

[01:05:51] So putting it into that context. So the other thing here, too, is focusing on extinguishing a behaviour. So, you know, getting rid of it [01:06:00] rather than teaching a particular skill of how to overcome it. Um, presuming that the student understands. This one's a big one. Especially when we have some very vocal and very highly verbal, um, People with autism.

[01:06:16] They sound like they know so much more. So our expectation thinks, Oh, he sounds like he's a 10 year old. So I'll talk to him like he's a 10 year old. But he's not understanding the verbal language that we're using of a 10 year old. So it's making sure that the student understands what you are trying to say to him and what you are trying to do with him.

[01:06:38] Um, inconsistent reaction to I love that one because how many times, even just myself as a TA, going into a classroom today, I'm in a really good mood, so we're getting some really good stuff done, I can cope with that behaviour, it's alright, and then the next day I'm coming in because I have [01:07:00] this really big problem.

[01:07:00] I nearly had a fight with my husband, so I get to sit down and I'm thinking about that in the back of my mind. And he does the same behaviour and I'm not coping with it today, so I put in some big strategies. So, make sure that you're consistent with the way that you're reacting to that child. And it's the same, you know, teachers sometimes can be a little bit inconsistent on different days as well.

[01:07:22] So maybe, um, explaining to that particular child. That people can be inconsistent and it's okay to be inconsistent. There might be stuff happening around them, and This is how we cope. This is what we do. It's a normal part of life. The other thing that we've got is this using consequences. I love consequences in the right way.

[01:07:44] There's so many different ways Positive consequences are the way to work with our kids Negative consequences never work, and I'll give you the perfect example of Liam, who I worked with in Hong Kong. He was a beautiful little boy, he was in grade one, [01:08:00] and he was pretty new to the school, and they had no idea about what to do with him, because he started off very enthusiastic in the first two weeks of school, he was there every day, he was trying to participate and doing work, and then as it started, the anxiety started to build.

[01:08:19] He started to do less and less work and so what they would do for him for his consequence was the less and less work that he did was that they would take him away from the playground. So he wasn't allowed to work in, uh, he'd have to stand beside the playground and watch the other kids play on the playground.

[01:08:36] Um, and so that just made it even worse because then he couldn't understand why he was being punished for not doing work in a classroom and not being able to Actually play on the playground. The two just didn't mix for him. So, what I said was that, okay, to get him to do, if he's done a little bit of work, give him some time on the playground by himself so that he has a You know, a [01:09:00] minute or so of playing on that playground without anyone else on it.

[01:09:04] And that could be his reward. So we did a reward system. So it was a positive consequence. So, the more work he did in the classroom, the extra time he got on the playground. And then eventually we got to a stage where he was allowed to take someone with him. So, we were creating friendships at the same time.

[01:09:20] So he would get to choose who was allowed to come. So, every kid wanted to be his friend in that classroom. But we were very careful of who we chose, of course. But the consequences are very important because if we're using a consequence that is what they want to see, they will do that behavior over and over again.

[01:09:39] And I think another example, uh, some teenagers, of course, they know that if they swear at a teacher, the consequence is you go down to... The principal's office. When you get to the principal's office, he's usually not there. He's usually doing other stuff. So he can't see them straight away. They get to sit in that [01:10:00] little quiet little area where parents go to when they're waiting to see the principal.

[01:10:04] It's very quiet. Has a little coffee table. Sometimes a little plant on it. And these kids can then regulate themselves in that room. They can start to feel really comfortable. The problem is, though, they've suddenly learnt that if I do this massive bad behaviour, I get sent to the principal's office, and, lo and behold, I need that principal's office so I can sit there and calm myself down.

[01:10:30] And of course, sometimes they get suspended, and of course that's even better because I get to go home and sit in my room and be comfortable in my room.

[01:10:41] Let's move straight to the next one. Mm hmm. Oh, do you need a sip of water? Ah, yes.

[01:10:49] So, Anna's just explained the reasons that often behaviour plans aren't working. So, what are you going to do instead? So, if things aren't working, this is an opportunity to go and really look

at the [01:11:00] key strategies that you have in place. So, if you've done my teacher assistant course, the first one, I go through all these strategies.

[01:11:06] Um, and, or if you've done a face-to-face course with me, or online, my five-hour course, we go through all of these things. If you haven't done those, but want more strategies, and a deep dive into like routines and structures, and using visuals and timers, Preventative breaks, simplifying your language, all of these things are in our red and blue books.

[01:11:27] Now, people often ask me, which book should I get? Their companion guide. So, it's a bit like Harry Potter. You're sort of like, you need all the series, you don't just get one. Um, but most of the behaviour strategies are in the blue book. So, if you're only going to get one, I would start with the blue book.

[01:11:42] Um, we've actually covered a lot of behaviour in the second book, but I highly recommend you get both to really complement what you're learning today. And to look at those proactive strategies, just like Anna was saying, with consequence, positive consequences. These are all the things you can put in place.

[01:11:57] So I'd love you to take a minute and just think, [01:12:00] which ones have we got in place? Which one is the child actually using? And which one should we maybe go back and think about revisiting? But the one on the bottom, Don't forget to ignore. Sometimes, if a child's just humming, let them hum. If they need to get up and go to the toilet three times today because they've got no spoons.

[01:12:19] Just let them go three times. Okay, just because it happens one day. Don't think it's gonna happen every day I get often get emails from people because they've had one bad day I always say wait till the behaviors happened a few times before you actually put in place a plan because the next part of the course is about how to create a behavior plan and Don't just do it for a one off behavior.

[01:12:40] Wait till you can see a pattern in that behavior. Try a few of these things if the proactive strategies haven't worked. Then let's make a proper plan for that child. And this is where teachers and teacher assistants and often parents have to work together to come up with a plan. But we want to give you some scaffolding, really what you can do as a teacher assistant and your role.[01:13:00]

[01:13:02] So, in this next part of the course, we're actually going to create a behaviour plan. And Anna's going to talk you through an example. And then we're going to go through commonly... Ask

questions or behaviors we see and how you can actually create a behavior plan to just give you tips and strategies with some sort of case studies.

[01:13:20] So the first thing you're going to do is, um, I would recommend print out the proforma that we've given you in the example. Um, or actually probably be straight in your handout. So, have a look now at the proforma. Basically, we're going to work out what is the behavior and make sure everyone's clear what the behavior is because sometimes people.

[01:13:37] Um, see things differently. Something annoys me doesn't annoy you. So make sure everyone's on the same page with that. Then, we're going to identify the issues and the challenges. And this is the important part. This is your job description. What are the skills that need to be taught? And this is where I need my teacher assistant often to teach those skills.

[01:13:55] Because as a classroom teacher, I don't have time to. And then we're [01:14:00] going to give you some ideas to try to teach those skills. But I just wanted to remind you that each child's individual. That not every strategy works for every child. Strategies wear out. Things work for a while, and they stop working.

[01:14:14] But in my experience, most strategies work for 1 in 10 children. And when you find that one strategy, it makes a world of difference. So that's why we're going to be giving you a few ideas. And the reason people love Anna and my books, we always have like 10 ideas to try. You know, not just one sensory break, we'll have five ideas because each child is so different.

[01:14:34] Strategies wear out, and not every strategy works for everybody. So please understand that we're not saying these are the only strategies to try. These are just some ideas to get you started and you might be like, tried it, didn't work, tried it, wore out. Oh, here's another one we can try. So just treat your listening like that because I know some of you'll be like, I've already tried that.

[01:14:55] I know. And it normally works, but it didn't in this [01:15:00] situation. So here's some other ideas to try. And we are here. You can email me after the course. If you've got any struggles or any challenges that you need some help with, I would love to help you.

[01:15:15] Well, we're going to have a look at a quick example and this is one that comes from our Red Book as well, so you'll be able to have a look at that in there as well. But here we're talking about the soccer player and Marty loves to play soccer on the weekends, OK, so he goes every

weekend, but he has a great lot of difficulty when it comes to playing soccer actually in the playground.

[01:15:37] He's not quite sure what to be doing. Um, and so, what happens is, we might see him picking up the ball and running away with it. Or, he might be picking up the ball and throwing it. Or, he's, and this is something that we've seen quite often, he just screams loudly in the kids faces, with the ball in his arms, or sometimes he's just screaming loudly at their faces, because they're not doing what [01:16:00] they should be doing.

[01:16:01] So if we have a look at, what were the behaviours that we observed, But what was the issue behind those behaviours? Why did we see those behaviours in the first place? Well, one of them that stands out to me is that the other students are not playing the rules that he knows. At soccer club, he has an umpire, there is a real, um, an adult who is the authority, who is actually telling people what they can do and what they can't do.

[01:16:29] They blow the whistle, everyone listens when the whistle is blown, and then everyone falls back into their places and continues playing. However, when we're in a playground, we have other kids who are being the umpires and, you know, sometimes they don't see things or, uh, he's my friend so I'm going to give him a free kick.

[01:16:48] Um, so they're not playing with the same rules, so they're breaking those rules. So that's some of the issues that we could see. So, what are the skills that you think need to be taught around this? Well, the first thing [01:17:00] that comes to mind is... It's showing them that there's a difference between club soccer and school soccer.

[01:17:06] And that we don't have the umpire, we have different rules, the rules can change on the run. Um, so there's a couple of different things there that we need to do. How can we do it? First of all, the first thing I would do is actually start with social stories. Start talking about the hows and whys of how kids play soccer in the playground.

[01:17:29] Point out the differences between how people in the club play soccer and then talk about how the kids play soccer in the playground. Take a video. Video the game in the playground and point out those differences as well. So you can show him the video of him actually playing soccer at the club and how it all works there and then show him the differences that are happening when you're playing soccer in the playground.

[01:17:54] And there's some big, very big differences. Um, discuss what to do when a rule is broken.
[01:18:00] So, what do I do when one of the other kids breaks the rules? Well, you know, sometimes we just let it go. Sometimes it's just like, okay, this is just, we're having fun here today. We're not going to worry too much about the rules.

[01:18:11] You may even have to do a social story around that as well. What we don't want to do is have the kids dobbing on each other all the time. Because that creates a lot of... Bad feelings. Is that a nice way of putting it? Um, so we, we have to actually teach them how not to do. Because this is one thing they are.

[01:18:31] They are the school policemen. They like to follow the rules. They like everything the same. So, let's have a look at those, um, at those things. Use, um, photos and schedules of things that are happening with those activities and point out those differences again. One thing I really like to do, and I know not everyone agrees with me here, but I like to teach the other kids how to interact and how to react to [01:19:00] someone with ASD.

[01:19:01] And yes, there's a lot of other kids that we've got to teach around this. However, if they understand a little bit about the autism spectrum, it's going to make it so much easier for these kids to understand that rule-breaking is a really difficult thing for someone with autism. And that, um, We just don't confront that person.

[01:19:20] We can talk about it later on. And we just continue playing our game.

[01:19:30] Um, I think what Anna said is really important. However, legally we're not allowed to tell the children the other child has Autism Spectrum without the parent's permission. So make sure you have permission. However, you can talk about, like, well, the behaviour they're seeing. Marty gets upset when the rules are broken.

[01:19:49] And it would be really helpful if you could just remind him that school soccer is different to the game on the weekend. Like, actually tell the children what to do to [01:20:00] support Marty. I find the kids are great if I explain, well, Marty get, you can see Marty's upset. Set because the rules are different. Can you help me support the kids?

[01:20:09] And this is where often I have to have a good relationship with the peers and help them understand. So angels, sometimes the children will be like, well, why is he getting this? Or why are

they getting that? You can't say because they have autism, but you can say because they need extra help or they need extra support.

[01:20:25] Um, I would love you to be able to tell the other children they have autism, but just a reminder, be very careful around those things. Um, so one of the common behaviors Anna and I see all the time is swearing and bad language. So when people say the child's swearing, the first thing we need to know, are they swearing at an adult or are they swearing in frustration?

[01:20:48] Do they even know they're swearing? I mean, some children, they hear swear words all the time at home, so they don't know it's a swear word. One of my, um, ODD boys, Opposition Defiant Disorder boys, [01:21:00] would ask me like, is fart a swear word? Like, He didn't know which were swear words and which weren't swear words.

[01:21:06] So, neurotypical children actually work this out. And, um, I always love this story my mum tells where my brother said to her one day, Do you know I talk two languages? He was, like, five. And she's like, no, what do you mean? He said, I have one language for the playground and one for home. He knew he could say words in the playground to his friends he would not be allowed to say in our house.

[01:21:27] Neurotypical children work this out. They don't need to be taught it. But some of us actually have to teach explicitly these things, so I'll come to that in a minute. But remember, some of my teenagers are swearing, trying to fit in. They just haven't learned where to swear. Some of them have, well, haven't learned that it's a playground, not a classroom.

[01:21:47] So you might actually need to make a list of where you can swear, where it's appropriate, not appropriate. But again, understand their home and school, home might be okay, some homes are, some aren't. And I think we [01:22:00] all know that the rules change. So what are the school skills to be taught? Obviously, where, when and why you can swear.

[01:22:06] And swearing at people isn't normally okay, by the way. I'm talking about swearing as part of a sentence. And what is a swear word? What is bad language? Like, some people go, don't use bad language. Some use swear word. What? What are people labelling it? Do you know? Um, Inappropriate, well what's inappropriate?

[01:22:24] These are all problem solving skills, remember what we said? And for some of my children, you're going to get fluctuations. There'll be days they don't swear, and days they do

depending on their problem solving and their good and bad days. So, I know none of this is easy, but if you're getting a lot of swearing, I want you to be proactive.

[01:22:43] I want you to look at writing social scripts about where and when you can swear, but most importantly how to fix it up as you swear. My guess is you have all sworn, but you quickly fix it up. I have learned over the years, one of the mistakes my neurodiverse children do is they go, [01:23:00] but they forget to go, Oh, sorry, Mrs.

[01:23:02] Larky, because that's all it takes. If you swear, all it takes is acknowledging it. So sometimes actually teaching to say, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that, that's for the playground, but actually practice that, practice them saying it. One of the challenges I have is often teachers go, they don't look like they mean it.

[01:23:23] And that can be a problem, so you might need to teach them facial expressions. I know Anna with Daniel actually had to teach him to go, Let me think about this when he was processing. Sometimes we need to teach the whole gestures that go with the, Sorry, you know, like when you go, Sorry, I shouldn't have sworn.

[01:23:42] Sorry, I shouldn't have sworn. Can you see the difference? Actually, showing the child the gesture and videoing them doing that can be great, too. Um, and again, this is where you might need home and school and talk to home about swearing and um, bad language and saying, well, look what's [01:24:00] happening. That's coming to school.

[01:24:02] And is there a chance that if you do swear, can you practice the apologies at home and just get that consistency? So, hiding and running away is one that we hear from so many teacher assistants because often when this happens, the teacher looks to you to sort it and you're like, what is going on? So, you need to identify the issue.

[01:24:23] Is it flight? Fright? Is it Sensory, Anger, Anxiety? Those of you who have done my full 5 hour course will know we actually do this as an example. Child runs away and we're looking at the child actually at their gesture, what they're doing, whether it is anger, anxiety, sensory, or a tantrum. Because sometimes it can be a tantrum.

[01:24:46] But, please remember That a lot of the time it is those spoons, the emotional build up and not being able to regulate those emotions. Some children are actually taking themselves out of the

room to get [01:25:00] their anxiety down. So, what are the skills that need to be taught? Well, they need to ask for a break.

[01:25:05] Instead of using behaviour, they need to be able to ask. So you might have a take a break card. You might teach them to ask, can I go to the toilet? Can I get a drink? But this is where you need your teachers to know. This is the child regulating. The worst thing that can happen, a child asks for a break and they're told no.

[01:25:23] Yes? Um, some of my children, the skills that actually need to be taught is choice making. Because they've become overwhelmed by choices. So therefore they take a runner or go under the table. Some might retreat, some might run. So, you need to actually teach them how to make choices. Which remember we've already talked about.

[01:25:42] And recognising the emotions and what to do. Which, again, we've already talked about. So a lot of these skills Anna and I have already covered. But please model it. You must model it. You must model anger, anxiety, where you feel it in your body and what to do when you feel them. Now, ideas to try. [01:26:00] Often when a child runs or hides, just give them space.

[01:26:03] My normal rule is five minutes. Just give them five minutes and then check in. Just to have a look, see where their anxiety levels are at. But if you start approaching and then they keep moving, that's telling you they still need space. And this is where you have to often put in the preventative breaks.

[01:26:20] When you see the anxiety rising, you're going to give them those preventative breaks that we talked about. They can be sensory, movement, they can be, um, going in a tent. Um, personally, I wouldn't give them technology. If they're a hider, I tend to find if I give them technology as a preventative break. I then can't get them off the technology.

[01:26:42] So I'd prefer they were doing a quick little activity, normally something sensory and remember sensory can be going on the monkey bars or doing a job for you. So many things you can do, but I would avoid technology because normally they then hyper focus because they feel better, right? They want to feel better.

[01:26:59] So hope [01:27:00] that makes sense. If not, um, have a look in our books or join me for a full-day course where we do a massive deep dive into these things.

[01:27:10] Well, everyone doesn't like leaving an activity that they're really loving doing. And you know what? Time passes differently when you're really loving something and when you're really not liking something. Think about it when you're doing something really exciting, and you're really having a great time.

[01:27:26] It could be, like, ten minutes can be like, gone in just a sec. But when you're having something really boring happening, then... 10 minutes can feel like half an hour to an hour, and you're just thinking when is this going to be finished? So, what we need to do is identify the issue. What is it that they don't like about the activity?

[01:27:46] Is it the activity that they're just really loving so much that they're not able to just stop doing the activity so they can't switch the task very quickly? Is That isn't about them [01:28:00] not knowing when they're going to get that activity back again because sometimes when you take something away They feel like it's gone forever, and they're not going to be able to do that once more And like we said before about that hyper focus sometimes if I'm really having such a good time.

[01:28:15] I Really can't see time passing, so I use a lot of timers and those sorts of things. I'll talk about that in a second, but some of the things The main skills that we need to teach when we're doing this is, first of all, how to finish something. So if you're doing something really exciting that you really love doing, it's really hard to put it down.

[01:28:34] However, we know for ourselves, because we can problem solve, that at the end of the activity we have to put it down, we have to put it away, we have to pack away. Um, so we need to show them how to finish an activity, even if it's not completed. The other thing is, how to watch time passing by. And, of course, we do that using those beautiful timers.

[01:28:55] You know those visual timers where they can see the time actually, um, [01:29:00] counting down? Oh yes, these ones. They're perfect. They can actually see the time, I'll get this way, disappearing. As the time is going. And that makes that visual timer work really well. Because some of our kids just don't respond to time on a clock that's passing down because, well, you know, 10 minutes can be really fast.

[01:29:19] Um The other thing is, is watching that clock as it's, as it's um, going down, as it's disappearing, actually keeping on referring back to it so that you know how much time is left. But we have to be really careful there because that can also cause anxiety about clock watching and, oh my god, I've only got one more minute to go, I've only got one more minute to go.

[01:29:39] So we have to be really clear about, okay, we can do this activity again in a little while when, once we've done this other thing first. Um, so we can use things like now, next, later, uh, so we're going to do this now, we're doing this activity, next we've got to go off and do this other thing, but once we've done that we can come back to this activity and [01:30:00] finish that, so that's going to be later.

[01:30:02] So those visuals work really, really well for our kids. Um, most visuals, uh, when they're, when they're a bit anxious, will actually help them. Uh, direct, uh, their focus onto what they should be doing. Um, and verbally, um, once the anxiety starts to build verbally, it usually just goes out the window. So we need to be really clear on what the expectation is around that.

[01:30:26] Um, pre warn. Pre warn, uh, you know, during, uh, before you even start the activity, and say, well, we've only got this amount of time to do this activity, so however far we get into it, then we're going to have to pack it away. So, get that pre warning in before you even start it and then also tell them how often you're going to remind them so they're not getting anxious that they're going to be missing that.

[01:30:50] And consistency in a time limit. That one's a hard one because, well, actually I shouldn't say hard. It's actually hard for parents, but it's much easier for teacher [01:31:00] assistants. Because as a teacher assistant, you have this amount of time to get stuff done. You've got, you know, 20 minutes of this lesson where you've got to get this particular thing done.

[01:31:09] And then the next 20 minutes of that lesson, you've got to get this other thing done. So, So, when we are setting those time limits, be really consistent, and make sure that if we've given them 10 minutes, that they do get the whole 10 minutes, that we don't change our mind halfway through. Because remember, they can't problem solve.

[01:31:27] If you can't problem solve, then how can you finish an activity?

[01:31:36] So, one of the other behaviours that we see in a classroom is that calling out in the middle of the class. So, we need to figure out why this person is calling out in the middle of that class. Sometimes it's because they don't know how to ask for help. Sometimes, um, it's because they're really worried that they're going to forget their idea if they don't get it out straight away.

[01:31:56] And, you know, and then they, you've got to listen to the whole idea. [01:32:00] Um, sometimes they don't realise that the other child hasn't stopped talking or that the teacher hasn't stopped talking. And so we need to help direct them in those areas. Um, some of the skills that we need to teach. Well, the biggest one is waiting your turn.

[01:32:15] Waiting, um, for your time to speak. Ahem. The second one is how to ask for that help when you need it, and then you have to teach them how to put their hands up. So, here's a couple of ways that we've done in, um, in the book, How to Stop Your Words. When you want to stop someone interrupting your words, what you, what you can do is, um, move towards the person that you want to speak.

[01:32:40] Oh, no, that's not working. Sorry. That's alright. I think we had the wrong one. I think we did too. So, in our book, um, How to Stop Your Words from Bumping, we have a social story, um, that we've put in there about asking for help in the classroom. So, what it is, it [01:33:00] teaches the, the child In words, how to do it, and then it shows them a picture at the bottom of this is what it looks like.

[01:33:07] So, it's about, put your hand up to attract the teacher's attention. So, you put your hand up, you look towards the teacher so that she can see that you're wanting to talk, and then you call out in a medium voice. We always say that medium voice, because otherwise they could talk out very loudly. Wait for the teacher to call your name first before you start talking, because she might be still talking about some other things.

[01:33:31] And then when the teacher has actually answered you, then you can say thank you. Um, what we need to do is make sure that we are teaching this skill very explicitly. And we need to use some signals. So, what are the signals that we would use to say, um, that you have to put your hand up? And one of them would be, do that sort of signal.

[01:33:55] Or, if we want the child to wait a little while, we might be going [01:34:00] like this. So we're giving them that visual cue as well as the verbal cue at the same time, um, so that they're understanding. Um, but social stories work really, really well, and especially if the picture that, that you have goes with that social story at the same time.

[01:34:22] So another behavior that we see is when the child doesn't want to do their work. So we need to... Remember our, uh, behavior plan that we've got in place, so we need to identify that issue first. So maybe the child doesn't know where he has to start. Maybe he doesn't know what to choose to start. Maybe, um, he doesn't know how much work is required to be done.

[01:34:47] Or, um, he doesn't like who he's working with. You know, the whole group thing. That doesn't work sometimes. Sometimes, it might just be that he's just too sensory overwhelmed. So much stuff is happening around him that he just [01:35:00] can't even start the work. Um, It might just be something simple like, uh, they don't really like the subject that they're doing.

[01:35:07] Or, if we even take one step back, it could go back to anxiety that he's having, maybe about the subject, maybe about the day that he's had so far. Maybe someone said that they're going to take his lunch money at lunch time, and so his his anxiety is already starting to to build. So, what are some of the skills that we're going to be teaching?

[01:35:26] Well, unfortunately, it's not about teaching skills in this place. It's about... Finding those accommodations and making those adjustments as much as we can at that time. Um, and especially if we're talking about anxiety. There's very little we can do at that particular stage because we need to bring that anxiety down first.

[01:35:47] So go back and have a look at all of those strategies that we talked about before. Uh, but look, we're going to look at some other ideas that we can look at. What we want to do is limit choices. Maybe we've asked him to, or [01:36:00] her, to write something about what happened on the weekend. We may need to narrow it down, just like we said before.

[01:36:06] And what happened maybe on Sunday morning between 9 and 10. Um, so break it into much smaller segments and, and smaller pieces, so it's much easier then to take on board and to, um, reorganise your thinking around it as well. Um, build in lots of breaks, if, you know, there are particular days when the child is really struggling with, with the workload, uh, because of all of those sensory issues or anxiety or all those things that we've talked about before, maybe what we need to do is give them extra breaks.

[01:36:37] So instead of just one or two breaks, he may need three, he or she may need four or five breaks. And, uh, at shorter intervals instead. Um, sometimes it's because... of this whole perfectionism thing. You know, if I don't get it right, if I'm if I don't produce the amount of work that's it's supposed to be, if it's not it doesn't look the same as Joe Blow's Next Door Um, I [01:37:00] won't even start it because in my head I can't do it to the same level.

[01:37:03] So, show them an example of what is required, and don't necessarily only show them A work, show them C work, show them B work, so that they can actually compare how much they're

able to do each day. Because sometimes they're capable of doing A work, but other days they're only capable of C work, and that's still good, that's still okay.

[01:37:25] Use their special interest. I love that one as much as possible. I try to use their special interest in lots of different ways. Um, and yes, I know spiders is not a great topic. And you know what? I have a phobia about spiders. But oh my goodness, I know a lot about spiders now. But it's a really great way to actually get them to start that work.

[01:37:47] Um, Explain why they need to do something. Now, I know this is a tough one because a lot of our, um, people are what we call adult learners, and they [01:38:00] will only learn something if there's a reason behind it. So why is it that I have to do this? And a good example is when we're doing tests. Why do I have to do a test?

[01:38:09] Why do I have to do a test every day? Well, link it into something that they might be doing in the future, like a driver's license test. If you, you need to know about what, you don't know the questions that are going to be coming up on that test, so you need to have a good overall image of what is going to be on that test.

[01:38:27] So this is why you're learning how to do a test now, so that when it comes time to do the really important things in life, like doing a driver's license, you know how to sit that test. The other thing I love doing is those timers. I use those timers all the time. The one that I showed you before with the time counting down.

[01:38:46] I love that one, especially if we're doing a subject that they don't like very much, that they find difficult, or that they're really not that interested in. And they can see the time passing, and yes, look, it's getting closer and closer to the end of that session. [01:39:00] So that'll work really well.

[01:39:08] Well, the fear of making mistakes. This is another big one for behavior because a lot of times they will not do something because they're thinking that they're going to make a mistake. So what we need to do is do our behavior plan again, identify that issue, have a look at the skills that we need to teach and have a look at some of the ideas that we can try because we need to try sometimes a few different ones.

[01:39:31] So let's identify the issue. First of all, is it? Is it decision making? Is it that choice making? Is it, can I not make a decision? Is this, is this why I won't even start it? Because if I make a mistake

then it's, it's not right. Um, is it about that perfectionism? Is it? I can't start something unless I know how I have to finish it.

[01:39:53] Um, look, I love this example, um, um, I'm just trying to think it was, [01:40:00] um, I'll call him Jono, that's easier. Jono, um, He, his parents wanted him to learn how to do, um, tennis at school when they were doing tennis lessons. Um, but for him, he knew that he was a little bit uncoordinated and he wasn't very good at it, and he really didn't want to do it, and he wouldn't even pick up a racket.

[01:40:18] It took a long time for us to get him to actually start the game. So, he really loved physics. So we actually taught him about the physics of how a ball would hit the tennis racket and how to get it to bounce over the net. Once we taught him that, he was... He was keen on trying it because he wanted to try out this new skill that he had learned about bouncing the ball at different angles off the racket.

[01:40:44] And once we started that, he felt much more confident that he wasn't going to make a mistake in playing, um, in, in joining in in a game of tennis. So, once we got past that you don't have to be perfect issue, that you can actually do it and that [01:41:00] lots of other people have. different ways of playing tennis, um, he was much easier, he felt much more at ease at trying something like this.

[01:41:09] Now remember, they don't problem solve very well, so we need to help them understand how to problem solve, and that if you do make a mistake, you can problem solve your way out of it. Um, I'll just give you an example of what I used to do with my son. Um, when he was much younger, not, not now that he's 37.

[01:41:31] Um, this goes back to the day when he was, um, oh, probably about 6 or 7. And we used to take him to McDonald's if we wanted to, um, uh, if, if we wanted to give him a little, um, happy moment. Because he didn't eat the food or anything, he just wanted to play on the play equipment, okay? Because back 30 years ago, only a few McDonald's had those, those play equipment.

[01:41:54] So... I would get in the car, and I'd get out, I knew which way to go, I'd turn left, [01:42:00] and then all of a sudden I'd hear this great big scream in the background, and he was going the

[01:42:07] wrong way, and I would just simply stop, and I would start problem solving out loud, and I would say things like, oh my, I should have turned right instead of turning left, what will I do? I know, I'll drive down to the next set of lights, I'll do a U-turn, and I can come back and then that way, we can get down onto the right road to get down to McDonald's.

[01:42:31] So what I was doing was actually talking out loud the problem solving process that I was using. Now, we can do that in a classroom quite easily without disturbing other kids. So, if you've sharpened your pencils too much and they, and they keep breaking, What am I going to do? Do you know what? I just sharpened this too much, and the lead just keeps falling out.

[01:42:53] What am I going to do? I know I'm going to take my sharpener and my pencil and I'm going to not sharpen it [01:43:00] quite so hard. I'm going to do it a little bit more gently, and then I'm going to see what the result is. And so once you've done that, you pull it out and you say, Oh, look at that. That was a much better idea.

[01:43:11] So, you're teaching them how to problem solve while you're going, and you're taking away that fear of making a mistake, because once you take away the fear, then you can make a mistake because you know how to fix it up. The other thing that's really important that we do as teacher aides is to make sure that we acknowledge that it's alright to make a mistake, and that as long as you acknowledge that you've made the mistake, Then we can move on and we can do something else.

[01:43:42] So even if it's just apologizing, that's a mistake. Oh, I'm really sorry I did that. You know when we talked about swearing before? Oh, I'm sorry that that wasn't supposed to come out. I didn't mean to say that word. An apology. You made a mistake, you apologized and then you move on. So what are some of the things we [01:44:00] can do?

[01:44:00] Model your making mistakes. The more you model, the more it becomes natural. The more it becomes, oh, everyone makes mistakes. I'm not the only one. Because remember, a lot of our kids think that they are the only ones who are feeling this emotion, that they are the only ones who are coping with this emotion.

[01:44:21] They don't realize that others actually have them as well. So, model as often as you can. Always coactively fix that mistake together, so that, that, the person that you're with can actually see you fixing it, and what you're doing. And you may have to fix that mistake 15 times before it suddenly goes, Oh, lightbulb moment, I can do that by myself.

[01:44:42] But that's okay, it doesn't matter. We're just role-modelling each and every other, each and every time it's made. The other thing is that we can show alternatives and ideas and opinions that other people think differently. So... Someone else may have made a mistake, and it's okay [01:45:00] that they've made that mistake, and we've noticed that mistake, but they may not have noticed that mistake, and that's okay.

[01:45:06] Um, they can apologize, but sometimes they might not apologize that they've made that mistake, and that's okay too.

[01:45:18] This is so important, Anna. And I know you've always talked about, with Daniel, about purposely making mistakes. But I just want to remind you, on a good day. On a bad day, little mistakes will set them off. Anna's not going to take a wrong turn when he's already anxious, right? That's right. So that's so important.

[01:45:34] But the reason many of our children don't like making mistakes, is that what we call one track mind with a limited problem solving. Yeah, but also why they get like become police officers, which I know Daniel went through a phase of correcting everybody else and wanting everyone else to be perfect. Um, a lot of our students do that because of what I think called mind-blindness, which is the ability to understand what other people are thinking.

[01:45:58] Um, and one of my friends, [01:46:00] Oh, she's became a friend, a parent of a child. With her son, she would constantly be saying to him, well, what do you think that person was thinking? And so often what he thought they were thinking was just so left field, like you must ask the children. Like ask them, why are you scared to make a mistake?

[01:46:17] Why are you correcting that child? Because often they can tell you and you, you need to know why they're doing the behavior. There's nothing wrong with asking the child. You will be shocked sometimes a bit like you saying a child saying about your perfume or like some of my kids who are perfectionists, um, they'll pick on a specific child.

[01:46:36] They'll like target that child and constantly be correcting that child. But in fact, they think they're being friendly. Yes, exactly. They think they're being helpful. Yes. They think I want to be friends with that person, so I'm going to constantly correct them. And this child... Because that's what we do. Yes.

[01:46:52] And this child is like, I don't like that kid, they're always correcting me. And they think that they're [01:47:00] being helpful, so please ask them, they're like, oh, they're my friend. And they're like... No, they're not. And you've burnt them out because some of my children burn friends out. So yes, I highly recommend with mistakes asking them.

[01:47:11] Cause I had, uh, my shame James that I named my son. Um, one day we were doing the enormous hippopotamus and that beautiful book. Yes. And I went over, and he'd written the big hippopotamus. I'm like, why did you write big? I don't know how to write enormous. He was what he would do; he was so scared of making mistakes.

[01:47:33] He would only write about things he knew how to write about. So, and he was so fearful of making a mistake and people correcting him. So all those things that Anna talked about worked really well for him, actually saying well, Just have a go, put down the letters you can hear. But I actually visually had to show him other children's attempts at Enormous.

[01:47:54] And it was so fun. So I got him to go around the room and go, Oh, they've only got two letters. Oh, they've [01:48:00] got four letters. Oh, they've got the letters around the wrong way. So we talked about all the different types of mistakes, but everyone had had a go. And then I'd go like, Well, Anna had a go, Jack had a go, everyone had a go, and so then I was always like, I'd say to James, if you had a go, cause he would just like, he was on what I call a passive child, who can be very frustrating, that he would just, if he couldn't do something, he didn't do behaviour, he just sat there and did nothing.

[01:48:24] Oh, wow. Yeah. And sometimes those kids are really challenging because they just do nothing, and you know they're capable. I knew he was capable. He would just sit and do nothing. Yeah. Wow. And it's just amazing, isn't it? Yeah. And he was one of those kids who didn't get much aid time. Because he was quite impassive.

[01:48:42] Yeah. But he needed lots of help because of that fear of making mistakes. So anyway, ask the kids questions, you'll be surprised.

[01:48:56] Well, another issue that we see quite often in the classroom is that the [01:49:00] student just doesn't want to work with you. That makes it very hard, doesn't it? There's a lot of issues around that. We need to identify why he's not work, he or she, uh, don't want to work with you. We need to have a look at the skills that this person needs to be able to work with you, and we've got lots of ideas that we can try.

[01:49:18] But let's have a quick look at identifying the issue. Is it, first of all, a sensory issue? Make sure you're checking yourself. around perfume, around any of the smells that you might have. Um, remember I said before about one of the students that I was working with who just said, I can't work with you today miss because your perfume your perfume is too much.

[01:49:39] Now, he was great that he was able to tell me that, but many of our students can't. There are quite a few who will just have a meltdown or who will just sit there and turn away from you, although I did have one child who would actually just hold his nose. And I thought, oh, I must have had B. O. or something.

[01:49:59] We worked it [01:50:00] out. It was my perfume, again. Um, but this was early in the day. Uh, so now I don't wear perfume. But make sure, is it a sensory thing? It might even be the clothes that you're wearing. It might be a colour thing. It might be the feel. Um, I know, uh, a number of... Um, Children that I've worked with really used to love stockings and they'd rub their hands up and down the stockings and we couldn't get any work done because they just wanted to feel stockings.

[01:50:24] So be aware of what the sensory issue might be. Also, have a look, though, because it might be something around peers or, you know, that whole social aspect in the classroom. They don't want to be feeling like they're being. Point it out as being someone different, as um, someone who needs that extra help. So that can really make a huge issue in a classroom if other kids are noticing.

[01:50:48] Um, also, the other thing there is, have you built a rapport with that particular child? If you haven't built a rapport with that child, you may find it very difficult to work with them. And the worst part [01:51:00] is, sometimes if you start off on the wrong foot, You may never be able to work with that child, um, you'll get very little done for, for most of the year because somewhere along the line something has gone wrong, the rapport got broken right from the beginning, it's not a sensory thing, it's not about the social thing, it's an individual thing with you, don't take it personally, a lot of our kids just have issues with particular people, so don't take it personally, it's not you you.

[01:51:29] Um, as such, it's just something that they've, uh, something that you may have said that they've taken the wrong way, might be something that they've, you've done that they've taken the wrong way, and of course being the social policeman, that's it, you've done it wrong and then there's no way you're going to come back from that, not for a long time.

[01:51:48] So make sure you start building that rapport when you first start working with them immediately. Start finding out about them and what they like, love doing. Um, a lot of the time... Um To get [01:52:00] a child to work with me, I used to find out what their special interest was and we would talk about their special interest before we even started to do any work.

[01:52:08] Before we even thought about what we were going to do. We'd talk about when was the last time he accessed something that he really loved doing. Um, or, one of the boys that I worked with, he loves soccer. You know, our little Marty. It wasn't Marty, it was someone else. But, he loves soccer. And so, I would always talk to him about his soccer on the weekend.

[01:52:29] And how that went. And, um, you know, because he loved playing different positions all the time. Would you believe it? Um, but he always loved talking to me about the position that he played. And what he liked about it and what he didn't like about it. So, that helped build that rapport with that particular student.

[01:52:45] Now, I did have a student whose special interest was weapons, so that was a little bit more difficult. Um, we did, we, to get around that we would talk about particular movies and the weapons that they used in the movies. And then we talked about, you [01:53:00] know, how it wasn't such a great, it was a great thing that we don't allow lots of weapons in Australia.

[01:53:05] So, you know, we did a lot of talking around that as well. So, what are the skills that we need to be looking at? Well, the very first one is always asking for help when it's needed. How do I do that? What am I going to do? How do I... Stick my hand up. But sometimes if you're working one on one, he doesn't have to put his hand up.

[01:53:25] He just needs to be able to talk to you. But if you've built that rapport in the first place, he's going to be able, he or she, are going to be able to actually talk to you about whatever it is that they're struggling with. The other thing there is teaching them to accept the help that is being offered.

[01:53:43] Now, I have one boy that I've worked with for quite a long time, and he still, even now, finds it very difficult to accept the help. If I'm offering to help him do his sentences, if I'm offering to help him think up some ideas of what he's got to [01:54:00] write about, he finds it very, very hard. The only way I can do this work with him.

[01:54:05] is, I actually work with the other students first. I walk around the classroom, I talk to the other students and make sure some of those students are settled. And so he can see that he's not the only one that's getting help. And that's important because you don't want to be singled out. You don't want to be the only person in the classroom.

[01:54:24] Who's getting someone sitting beside them all the time. So it's really helpful to go out and talk to the other kids. And it's a great way of building rapport in that whole classroom too. Um, and then that way you can actually start friendship groups happening as well. Because you know which kids to put together in a group as well.

[01:54:42] So, check, check the sensory issues. These are some ideas that you can try. Check that those sensory issues are not happening around you and maybe around some of the other kids as well. It might even just be the classroom has had a clean vacuum, uh, not a vacuum, a, what do you call it, um, you know, when they [01:55:00] wash the floors, the carpet gets steam cleaned, that's the word I'm looking for.

[01:55:04] Um, sometimes it leaves back that residual smell, and sometimes it might just be something as simple as that. So, taking them outside might be able to get them to start working with you. Um. As I said, work with the other students first, and, and, uh, so that he can, he or she can actually see that you're doing other stuff.

[01:55:22] Model helping the other students, um, often, you know, and, and do that in a big way so that your person, that you're actually supposed to be working with, can see that everyone else is getting help around here. And I say overact. Because that way they can see. A lot of the time, they miss the subtleties.

[01:55:42] They miss the little things that are happening around them because it's not actually happening to them. So do that overacting. And you probably have noticed that um, my face moves a lot when I'm talking. And it's because over the years, that's what I've done to model expressions and how I'm feeling with the kids [01:56:00] that I've been working with.

[01:56:01] And it's very hard to stop that once you've started doing it. Um, use social scripts. as well about starting work and how much work is going to have to be get have to be done by the end of that period of time that you've got them for. Tell them what to do and not not what to do. So, don't tell them to stop something, to redirect them to what they should be doing.

[01:56:26] That's a much better way of helping them. So that subtle redirecting. Sometimes it's even just a simple, um, putting your finger on, uh, on their line, where they're supposed to be writing, so that you're actually redirecting them right down to that piece of paper. It's a visual. Remember, they can see this finger, they can see where it's heading to, and they can see that it's heading to that piece of paper.

[01:56:49] So, their eyes are going to be following. The other thing is, don't jump in all the time and help them straight away. Just take a step back [01:57:00] until they really start to need the help. Sometimes, what I've seen in classrooms is that we have these beautiful teacher aides who are really lovely people and who really want to help the students, but they're a bit helicopter-ish.

[01:57:15] So they're hanging over the kid, waiting for him to make a mistake, waiting for him or her to do something that needs to be corrected. Take a step back and teach them how to ask for that help, or even just walk past the desk and have a look. Do they need the help? If not, just keep walking past to another section and go to another child.

[01:57:38] So don't helicopter around them and do the subtle redirecting. That is always going to work much better.

[01:57:49] Well, I hope that you have got some amazing strategies and behaviour ideas from Anna and myself. Remember what Anna said at the beginning about what is the student [01:58:00] trying to convey? Behaviour is a second language. Please always see behaviour as communication and think what is this child trying to communicate?

[01:58:09] Behaviour always serves a purpose. And it's a result of interaction with the environment. Remember we said, you know how to get zero behavior? Let them do what they want, yes? But remember, you're going to get those fluctuations. They mightn't be able to generalize things. And behavior can be changed. And we're hoping we've given you lots of strategies to help change that behavior.

[01:58:30] Because our passion is that you are able to support children to engage in learning, that you're not spending all your time on behavior, that you actually have time to support children to learn, because you know, that is what you're there for. My guess is that is why you became a teacher assistant. So, I truly hope that in these two hours, you've got some amazing tips and strategies.

[01:58:52] You're feeling all inspired to go and try some new things. Um, I know a lot of teacher assistants work together. Sometimes it's worth asking people who [01:59:00] have known the child in the past, like did this, did you see this behavior? Because remember, you don't want to suddenly be that helicopter that Anna was talking about.

[01:59:07] You really got to choose your battles. So I saw this, I just happened to see this on Facebook yesterday and I thought it was perfect. Beneath every behavior is a feeling. And beneath

every feeling is a need and when we meet that need rather than focus on the behavior, we begin to deal with the cause, not the symptom.

[01:59:31] I'm truly hoping that through all the tips and ideas that Anna and I've been giving you, that you're going to get better at noticing the causes, that we've given you an understanding of autism spectrum and neurodiversity that you go, the child can do it here, but not here. Oh, this is a fluctuation issue, you know, actually going, Oh, I can see that because I love what Tony Atwood says that really without a diagnosis, children are judged [02:00:00] with a diagnosis they can be supported.

[02:00:02] So my guess is the fact they have a teacher assistant is saying this child does need support. And that you can put in place positive, proactive strategies to support this student. And have fun with them. I think Anna and I would say one of the most important things, and we've been having lots of laughs making this video for you, that actually having a sense of humour.

[02:00:22] One of the things many people don't talk about is these kids have the most amazing sense of humour. So, use humour to your advantage. I know we talk about that quite a lot in our book. So, if you don't know Anna's books, Anna's written a lot of books. We have written five books together. We, if you want to connect with us after this workshop, there are other workshops you can do that I've mentioned today.

[02:00:45] Um, but also I have a weekly podcast that's had over a million downloads. I highly recommend you have a listen to that. Um, If there's things you want to know more about, like how to set up routines or timers, listen to the podcast. I've got a whole half [02:01:00] an hour on all those topics. And you can join me on social media, on Instagram, Facebook, all of those.

[02:01:08] And please email me if you have any questions from this course. I love helping people and making a difference. And I hope you have enjoyed learning from Anna and myself. As I said at the beginning, I think when a teacher and a teacher assistant work together, and Anna having that parent hat as well, it really does take a community to raise a diverse child.

[02:01:30] And I just want to thank you for being there for that child and also wanting to learn. I really appreciate you giving up two hours of your time to actually learn and make a difference to your students.