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Behaviour as Communication- The Behaviour Kaleidoscope

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Please find below some questions & reflection activities around understanding, being curious, & reflective on various behaviours. These are by no means exhaustive or prescriptive; & acknowledge that each child, family, worker, & context is unique. These questions often are most helpful as a guide in formulating, having discussions about a child/family/specific behaviour, during an assessment, or to inform what further assessment & questioning might be useful, & in considering approaches/ interventions. This is just one part of a wider puzzle, so it is to be used as a guide & as a prompt; & whilst being integrated into other thinking tools & reflection areas. There are numerous questions to cover breadth, however, the amount you consider will

depend on timing, information already gathered, & the relevance of the questions to your purpose. It can be particularly helpful to visually draw, map-out, doodle, chart-out, connect the dots as you go through the questions.

1. Think about a behaviour you would like to understand in more depth (e.g. Rejecting behaviour, hitting, kicking etc). *What is the behaviour? What does it look like? Can you give an example of when the behaviour happened?* It is important to use specific descriptions which clearly define the behaviour, rather than vague descriptions such as, “He’s naughty”.
2. *How does this behaviour look in relation to other children of their social, emotional, developmental, and chronological age? (Think about the parenting patchwork).*
3. *When did, the behaviour start, first appear, and how frequently does the behaviour occur?*
4. *What is the child’s relationship with the behaviour? Where might they have seen it, learned it from, developed it, needed it? Why might the behaviour have started at the time? What might be the story and history of the behaviour, and how, and why might it have developed?*
5. *Where does the behaviour occur? Are there differences depending on the context?*

6. *What other variables and factors do you think might influence and impact the behaviour? Are there particular patterns or themes of the behaviour? It can be helpful to track, map-out, chart, and/or diarise the behaviour's patterns. Consider what happened before, during, and after the behaviour.*
7. *What triggers, hotspots, factors (e.g. Environmental, sensory, autobiographical, physical, cognitive, relational, emotional, and contextual) make the presenting behaviour bigger, smaller, absent, present etc.? What fuels /amplifies/changes/ calms the behaviour?*
8. *What happens when these triggers occur? What do they look like? What is the impact of them? What is the child's relationship to the triggers? Are there ways in which the child could reduce the triggers? How might others be able to support them on reducing and responding to these triggers?*
9. *What happens in the times when the behaviour is absent or less? What is different and why? How can these times be noticed, increased, and celebrated?*
10. *What is the impact of the behaviour on the child and on those around them? For example, on their: self-care, sleep, eating, mood, school life, relationships, learning, hobbies, daily living skills, and self-esteem. What is the presenting behaviour making trickier or stopping the child/adults from doing?*

- 11. What function/meaning/purpose might the behaviour be communicating and having for the child/ for their relationships/ for their coping; and why? When, might the behaviour be the child's friend, be useful to them?*
- 12. What might the story and hidden messages be behind the behaviour and underneath the surface? (Think about the onion, Russian Doll, and iceberg examples).*
- 13. What different responses, reactions, and feelings does the behaviour evoke in different people? What clue does the way we feel, when at the receiving end of this behaviour, give us into the child's feelings and inner world?*
- 14. If the behaviour could talk/had a voice what do you think it might say and sound like?*
- 15. If the behaviour was a puzzle, what pieces do you think it might be made up out of, and what picture might it form when put together?*
- 16. What might it look like/ feel like (Advantages and disadvantages) if the behaviour disappeared or was absent?*
- 17. What is the child's sense-making, meaning-making, attributions, explanations about the behaviour? How are these similar or different to other surrounding people's conceptualisations of the behaviour? How stressful is the behaviour to the child and/or Team around the Child?*

- 18. What strategies/ interventions have been tried already? What bits of these were helpful or less helpful, and why? What responses/reactions from others has the child had when showing the behaviour?*
- 19. What skills are needed to understand, modify, and shift the behaviour? (E.g. Think about the child's experience of relational and developmental trauma, their survival strategies, their developmental stages, and executive function skills etc.).*
- 20. How does knowing a bit more about what the behaviour might be communicating shape your feelings/thoughts/conceptualisations/ descriptions about the child, and the presenting behaviour/s? How does the behaviour change when viewed from a different angle and lens? How might this lens impact on your way of understanding, responding, and supporting change?*
- 21. Is there a particular behaviour that really pushes your buttons, or gets under your skin? (We all have some!) What is your story of, experience of, and relationship to that difficulty/theme? Which of your values/beliefs are being challenged by the behaviour? What, if anything, is being triggered, resurfaced, pushed in you?*
- 22. What are some of your own emotional, cognitive, sensory & physical responses to the behavior/child? Which of your own stories, values, beliefs, and experiences are influencing your meaning-making of the behavior and your response to it?*