

# DEBUNKING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR



Written by Rachel Bridge (Mama Be Frank), Child and Family Psychologist  
Co Authored by Dr Virginia Williams (Doctor of Clinical Psychology)

# Mama BE FRANK

As parents and carers of children, I think we can all agree that there are often moments upon moments where our child presents us with a behaviour that we find challenging or undesirable...brewing up uncomfortable feelings within ourselves.

No wonder our first line response is usually... 'how can we stop this behaviour, how can we change this behaviour, how can we prevent this behaviour in the future' .....

What we don't commonly think is.... *What is our child trying to tell us???? What can behaviour tell us about our child and what our child needs from us????*

Children show how they are feeling through their behaviour.  
This is as true for young children as it is for young adults.

What children need from the adults around them is appropriate responses to their behaviour and the ability of parents to regulate their own emotions so they can respond to their children's needs, the needs children express through behaviour.

When we meet the needs of our children, we often see the behaviour change as a result. If we are not meeting the need of our child, we may see the behaviour escalate.

The role of the parent is to be safe and nurturing so that children can leave to explore their world knowing that they can always return for further nurturing.

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Purposefully listen to the child's feelings...

- stop what you're doing
- get down to your child's level
- look at child (their focus is on the expression on your face)
- speak using a calm voice (their focus is on the tone of your voice)

Put your child's feelings into words...

Eg: "It looks like you're feeling angry/sad/scared about that."  
"You sound cross."

Help him to notice what's happening in his body...

Eg. "How does that feel in your tummy/head?" "Your arms look stiff and tight."

Empathise with him...

"It's tough when ..." "I can understand that you might feel annoyed when..." "If my friend did that, I'd feel angry too."

Help him to solve his own problem...

"What could you do about that?" "What could you do next time that happens?"

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