

Behavioural challenges - communication and social skills

There are many aspects to behaviour, and below, we take a look at how immature emotional and social development impacts those with PWS, together with how their environment can affect behaviour. We will then look at a positive behaviour approach and how this is changing the way we react to challenging behaviours.

- **Difficulties with social skills:** Individuals with PWS do find difficulty in making friends and seem to relate to children and older people better. A dual diagnosis with autism is quite common but we find that those with PWS do want to interact with others, which is the difference.
- **Very child-like and self-centred:** Just like a young teenager, little respect for others, very much all about me.
- **Difficulty reflecting on consequences of own actions:** Again, child-like behaviour. You may get an apology, but they will probably do it again - things are forgotten very quickly and they are not able to learn from something they have done wrong.
- **Language difficulties; articulation and/or understanding:** Some with PWS are diagnosed with speech and language difficulties but their comprehension may be much better. Some appear very articulate; however, their understanding may not be to the same level.
- **Often acute hearing but only partial understanding; homing in on key words:** We are sure many of you can relate to this! You can be a room away, speaking quietly and they can still hear. Plus, they often only pick up on part of the conversation and get the wrong end of the stick. Only certain words may register with them and so misunderstandings may occur.
- **Tendency to listen/relate only to people in authority (actual or perceived):** This is reported quite a lot, whoever is highest at school, college or within an organisation is the one they want to speak to!

External Factors in behavioural changes

So, we have covered the typical behaviours in PWS and the challenges that can be as a result of poor communication and social skills but there is also the introduction of external factors which contribute to challenging behaviours, such as:

- Changes in daily/meal routine, environment, or unexpected events.
- Presence of food nearby or cooking smells.
- Conflicts of opinion amongst others in close relationships to them.
- Being unable to get their own way.
- Individual/personal triggers.
- Life stresses such as bullying, bereavement, relationships.

Using a Positive Behaviour Support approach

In the last few years, Positive Behaviour Support in the UK has become embedded in government policy. It is at the heart of the Department of Health policy document 'Positive and Proactive Care' published in April 2014, and **The Care Quality Commission (CQC)** require evidence that a Positive Behaviour Support approach is implemented in all care homes and residential setting for those with learning disabilities.

All behaviours happen for a reason. Being observant and knowing your child/adult as a parent or carer can help you to understand the triggers, i.e. what leads to the behaviour and what makes it escalate. More often than not the reason a person may display challenging behaviour is to get a 'need' that has not been met, especially if they feel they are not able to communicate this need and what they want via other means and/or they feel they may not be listened to.

Therefore, to try to avoid the person having to use a behaviour, it is helpful to identify what their need may be and look for ways this can be proactively met, as appropriate. This in turn should hopefully reduce the need for unwanted behaviours. It is important to work out the function of the behaviour and they generally fall into one of the following 5 categories, remembered by the acronym TAPES.



Tangible	To get something
Attention	Social interaction
Pain	In response to something physical
Escape	To avoid something
Sensory	For sensory stimulation

'Listen to me'

help

'I'm cold

I want a drink

'I don't like it here'

'I feel ill,

I like how this feels'

Can you match the need to the function of the challenging behaviour?

'I need a chat'