

Why we need  
to pay  
attention to  
them

What they are

What are the  
differences?

Problematic and Harmful

Sexual Behaviours

Understanding  
the behaviours

What next?



# PROBLEMATIC SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

1

## Definition

Sexual behaviour that is **developmentally inappropriate** or **socially unexpected**, but **not necessarily abusive**.

\*often used for sexual behaviours in children **under 10yo**



2

## Key Characteristics

- Often linked to **lack of knowledge** or **exposure** to safe boundaries, healthy relationships or sexual development
- Occurs in **inappropriate contexts**
- Can cause **confusion, distress, or rejection** for the child engaging in the behaviour
- No intent to harm



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## Examples

- Talking repeatedly about sex
- Sexual gestures without contact
- Touching self in public settings



# HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

1

## Definition

Sexual behaviour that is outside of the expected range for their age. Sexual behaviour that is **harmful, coercive, manipulative** or **abusive**.

\*often used for sexual behaviours in children **over 10yo**



2

## Key Characteristics

- **Power imbalance** (age, size, status)
- **Coercion, force, manipulation**, or secrecy
- Violates another person's rights
- Can be towards others or self-directed
- Harm towards others is often not the intention, however is the outcome



4

## Examples


- Forcing another young person to engage in sexual behaviour, including touching, kissing or simulating sex
- Persistent or excessive masturbation





# SUMMARY OF KEY DIFFERENCES

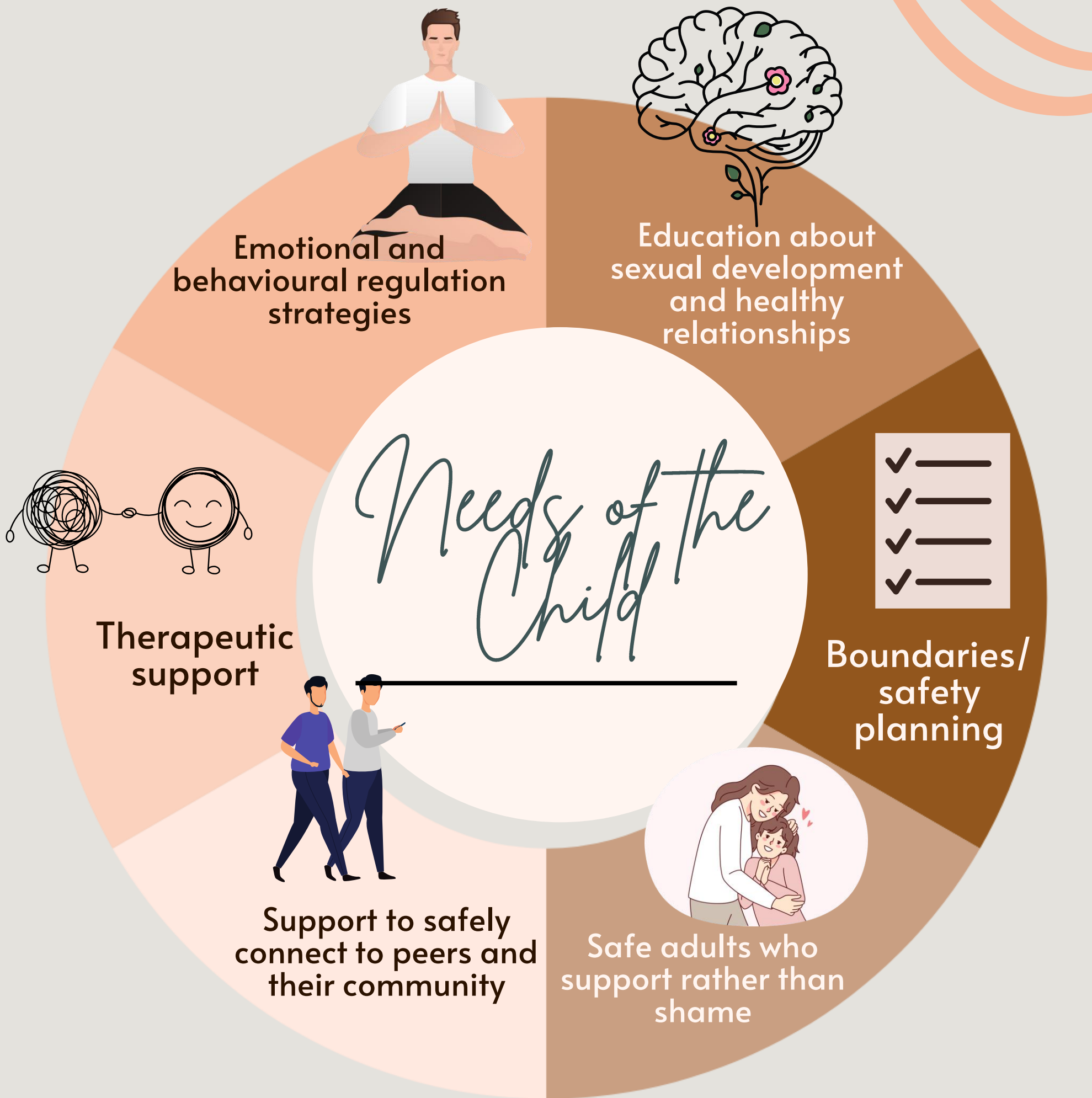
Feature	PSB	HSB
Harm to others	Not the defining feature	Occurs regardless of intention
Power imbalance	May or may not	Often present
Consent	Sometimes unclear	Victim cannot consent
Context	Child is often unaware of the implications of their behaviour	The young person often engages in secrecy regarding the behaviour
Response requirement	May be early warning sign- be alert but not alarmed. Often requires low level intervention	Often results in a system response and requires intervention and safety planning



Why is it important to understand the difference?

- Helps adults respond safely & supportively
- Early understanding can prevent escalation
- Ensures appropriate intervention based on behaviour type





# If you, or someone you know, needs support you can:



Speak to your child's school/day care and ask to be linked with services



Speak with your child's GP for a referral for support



Contact your local sexual assault or other local community services for advice, support and/or referrals



Visit websites such as the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF) or Bravehearts as well as peak body's such as Queensland Sexual Assault Network (QSAN)



Contact As You Are (AYA) Therapy Services for advice, support, consultation or therapy services

