

Understanding Stress Behaviour for Parents

What is Stress Behaviour?

Modern science is showing that there is a **HUGE** difference between misbehaviour and stress behaviour.

It's critical for parents to understand this distinction because if we treat them in the same way, it can be worse for the child—and is very hard on parents!

Misbehaviour

The key to *misbehaviour* is that the child *could* have acted differently: that she was aware that she shouldn't have done something, and was perfectly capable of acting differently.

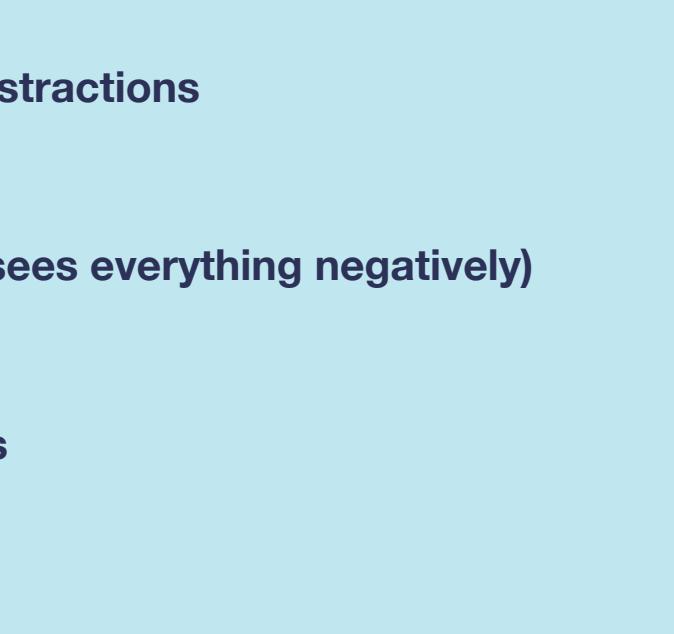
Stress behaviour

The key to *stress behaviour* is that the child *is not* fully aware of what she is doing, or why: she has *limited* capacity to act differently.

Stress behaviour is caused by too high a stress-load. The big challenge in doing Self-Reg is figuring out why our child's stress is so high.

5 Primary Domains of Stress

- * **Biological**—noises, crowds, too much visual stimulation, not enough exercise
- * **Emotional**—strong emotions, both positive (over-excited) & negative (anger, fear)
- * **Cognitive**—difficulty processing certain kinds of information
- * **Social**—difficulty picking up on social cues, or understanding the effect of his behaviour on others
- * **Prosocial**—Difficulty coping with other peoples' stress



Signs of Stress Behaviour

1 Heightened impulsivity

2 Difficulty ignoring distractions

3 Problems in mood (sees everything negatively)

4 Erratic mood swings

5 Trouble listening

6 What she is saying doesn't make sense

Parent Tips to Deal with Stress Behaviour

1

Figure out & reduce the stressors

2

Help our child learn what it feels like to be calm

3

Help our child develop strategies that help him get back to calm when he feels himself becoming agitated

