
Counselling for Caregivers

Unit 3:
Behavioural Counselling



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

Unit 3: Behavioural Counselling

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Introduction

Children and youth are learners. They are trying to make sense of the world and deal with it in the best way they can. Children need our help with this because they are vulnerable and do not have a great deal of experience to draw upon. The children with whom you work are doubly in need of support because they may have already experienced a great deal of trauma in their lives. As a caregiver, your job is to provide the nurturing and assistance children need to learn the kinds of behaviour that will allow them to succeed in life.

There is no one solution to any particular behaviour problem because every person and every situation is different. This unit provides suggestions for dealing with the specific problems of lying, fighting, cheating, bullying, and truancy. However, you will need to use your sensitivity and creativity to find the right approach for each situation. The unit includes criteria for evaluating possible approaches to behaviour counselling to ensure that they meet our goals for working with children. Several types of problem behaviour are discussed in detail.

Lesson 1 explains what is meant by behavioural counselling, and Lesson 2 talks about understanding your own background and experiences in order to provide the best possible care to those with whom you are working. Lesson 3 outlines ways to get to know and understand children, and the next lesson describes how you can establish a positive and supportive environment for children that will help them feel respected and valued as individuals. Lesson 5 talks about dealing with children who exhibit problem behaviour, and the final lesson provides some suggestions about what to do if you cannot deal with a troubled child and must seek professional assistance for him or her.



Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define behavioural counselling.
2. Describe factors involved in effective behavioural counselling and guidance: understanding self, understanding and learning about children, creating a positive environment.
3. Recognise types of problem behaviour and identify strategies to deal with them.
4. Explain the importance of referrals and collaboration with relevant individuals and agencies.

Lesson One : Behavioural Counselling



Caregivers need skill and understanding to help children and youth learn to behave in ways that will help them to be successful in their lives. When we talk about behavioural counselling, we are talking about the ways we work with children to help them change their behaviour. In behaviour counselling, we try to reduce those types of behaviour that are inappropriate or non-productive and increase those that help children get along well with others and feel good about their accomplishments.

Here are some important points to remember as you begin to study behavioural counselling:

Every person is unique—there is no one else who is the same in the world. Each is born with some characteristics and other characteristics develop as a result of his/her experiences. The more we can understand about a particular person, the more effective we will be in counselling that person.



Activity 1

Think of two children that you know. List three ways that they tend to be different from one another in the way they respond to situations (for example, in the way they interact with people they haven't met before, the way they deal with stress, their activity levels).



There is always a reason why children and youth behave the way they do. They are learning about the world, trying to make sense of what is happening to them and to find ways to deal with that. Sometimes the types of behaviour they choose to deal with their world may not make

sense to us, but they are the best the child is able to think of. As counsellors, we help children make connections between the way they would like their lives to be and the types of behaviour that will help them achieve their goal. Our role in behavioural counselling is to be a coach or helper, rather than to tell children what to do or not do. If there are ways that we can change the environment to make it easier for children to achieve their goals, we do that as well.



Activity 2

Think of a time that a child you know was involved in a behaviour problem. Why do you think the child may have acted the way he or she did?



The picture that children have of themselves—their self-concept—and the value they place upon themselves—their self-esteem—have a great influence on the kinds of decisions they make in their lives. It is our job to help children see themselves as worthwhile, capable, lovable people. We do that by treating them with respect and caring, and making opportunities for them to be successful. If we deal with children’s challenging behaviour well, we will build their confidence in their ability to make good decisions for their lives.



Activity 3

Can you think of a time when you dealt with a child's behaviour problem in a way that helped the child to feel good about him or herself? Describe it here:

The first step in becoming effective behavioural counsellors is to understand ourselves. As counsellors, we need to be aware of the influence that our past and present situation has on our work with children. This will be discussed more fully in Lesson 2.

Lesson Two



Understanding Oneself

As a counsellor, you need to be able to treat children in a positive, respectful manner. You must see them as learners who are struggling to find ways to make sense of, and cope with, their lives. You need to be able to support them in a caring way that increases their self-esteem and confidence.

It would be nice if we could always be calm and supportive with children but, as you have no doubt found, there are times when a child's behaviour "hooks" us into angry, disrespectful responses. When this happens, it is usually because something in our own past or present life is standing in the way of us responding to children in the best possible way.



Activity 4

Ms. Ngoma is normally patient and kind with the children in her care but today, when she sees Thuli throw away a piece of uneaten fruit, she feels rage rising in her body. She grabs Thuli by the arm, speaks to her sharply, and punishes her by sending her to bed immediately.

Why do you think Ms. Ngoma reacted so strongly?

What are some of the thoughts and feelings that Thuli might have in this situation?

How would you have dealt with this situation if you were the caregiver?



You might have suggested that Ms. Ngoma was having a bad day—perhaps she had an argument with her husband that morning and is still feeling upset about that. You might have guessed that Ms. Ngoma was reacting from her own childhood experience in which food was scarce and treated carefully. You might even have answered that Ms. Ngoma was concerned that other people would think she was a poor caregiver if she allowed Thuli to waste food. All of these answers could be correct.

The answers mentioned above are similar in one way: in each case, Ms. Ngoma’s extreme response to Thuli’s action comes not from her knowledge about what is best for Thuli but from something that is happening, or has happened, in her own life.

Her own “business” is getting in the way of her acting in Thuli’s best interests.

How do you think Thuli might have felt in this situation? Because Ms. Ngoma is usually a patient and kind caregiver, Thuli may have felt surprised and perhaps a little frightened. If she believed her punishment was unjust, she may have felt angry and resentful, and therefore less likely to trust and cooperate with Ms. Ngoma in the future.

How would you have handled this situation? If you found yourself feeling unusually angry about Thuli’s action, you might take a bit of time to decide why you are reacting so strongly. You might realise that your real anger is with your son for something he did earlier, or that you are reacting to the messages you received as a child about not wasting food.

If you realised you were responding strongly because you were angry with your son, it would tell you that you needed to talk with him. If you realised that Thuli’s action was reminding you of your own childhood (or current) situation of not having enough food, you could explain this in a patient way, “I feel upset when I see you throwing away food because I know that some people don’t have enough food. I wonder if there is something else you could do with food you don’t want to eat.” When you treat Thuli respectfully, telling her the reasons for your concern, she will be more likely to cooperate and find another way to behave.

As you can see, it is important to know ourselves well and, when we find ourselves reacting strongly to a child's behaviour, to take the time to think about where our emotions are coming from. This will help us to deal with children and their behaviour more calmly and effectively.



Activity 5

Can you think of a time when you reacted strongly to a child's behaviour? Why do you think you responded so strongly? Were you satisfied with how you acted in that situation? What would you like to have done differently?

Lesson Three



Understanding and Learning about Children

One of the keys to guiding children's behaviour is to know children well—both children in general and the individual children with whom we are working.

We need to know about the experiences that children have had and are having in their lives and how they tend to react in various situations. We can do this by observing them, listening to them, and asking the right kinds of questions.

Getting to Know Children as Individuals

Each of us is unique and has our own way of responding to the experiences we encounter. This is true of children as well; in fact, it is possible to see differences in the temperament of children from the moment they are born (These in-born characteristics, along with the experiences children have in their lives, form their personalities.). In addition, the children who come to you will have had many experiences that have influenced their development. If you are to effectively guide the behaviour of these children, you will need to get to know them as well as you can.

What are some ways to get to know children? Observing their behaviour, listening to them, and asking them questions all help you to understand children's behaviour.

Observing Children

To observe children means to watch them in a particular way. When we observe children, we try to be as objective as possible. We look at them as if we have never seen them before, noticing what they are doing and saying in a way that is free of bias or assumptions. The examples in Activity 6 show the difference between just "watching" children and observing them.



Activity 6

Example A:

Mondi is standing beside the doorway to the kitchen, leaning against the wall. Her hands are in her pockets, her shoulders are slumped, and her neck is bent so that she is looking toward the ground. She rubs her right hand across her eyes as she traces the toe of her left foot slowly back and forth in the dirt.

Example B:

Mondi is slouching beside the kitchen door again, looking like she hasn't got a friend in the world.

What differences do you see between the two examples?



Did you notice that Example A tries to describe exactly what the writer is seeing, without making any judgements or assumptions about what is happening? This is an example of an observation. Example B includes judgements: the word "slouching" has negative meanings for some people, and "looking as if she hasn't got a friend in the world" is certainly an interpretation.

Observation keeps us from jumping to conclusions about behaviour we are seeing. When we read Example A, we can guess that Mondi might be unhappy, depressed, lonely, just thinking, or intent upon the designs she is making in the dirt with her foot. She might have dust in her eyes, she might be crying, or she may even have an eye infection that is causing itchiness. She might be waiting for someone who is in the kitchen, hoping that someone will give her food, or avoiding the other children. If we were just reading Example B, we would overlook many of these possibilities. We would be accepting a narrow, possibly incorrect, and judgemental view of Mondi and her behaviour.



Activity 7

Take a few moments to make a written observation of a child. Sit or stand in a place where you can watch without the child being overly aware of your presence. For a short period of time (3 to 5 minutes) write down everything that the child does. Describe movements, facial expressions, etc. in as much detail as possible. Be careful not to judge the child or make any assumptions—just write what you see.

Now look at the observation you have done. What questions do you have about the child, based on your observation?



As you did the observation in Activity 7, you may have found that it was hard to capture many details about the child's actions. This is because it takes practice to observe children in this way. In everyday life, we tend not to look at behaviour in such detail.

One way to practice observation is to work with a partner. You and your partner should each observe the same child for the same period of time, writing down the behaviour you see. Then compare your observations. You will probably find that you have each tended to focus on different kinds of behaviour; for example, your partner may have

recorded mainly what the child said while you recorded body movements. By looking at each other's observations, you will see possibilities for the kinds of detail you can include in your next observation.

In Activity 7, you were asked whether, having done the observation, you had any questions about the child. A good, detailed observation will show you things about a child that you haven't noticed before. You will not be able to draw any conclusions based on a short observation, but you can make a point of watching for the answers to your questions as days go by.

Of course, we would usually not be writing down our observations of children, but we can make a habit of looking at them in an open and unbiased way. We can pay attention to the details of their behaviour and remind ourselves not to make any judgements without further evidence.

We should also keep notes about significant events or behaviour we notice with each child. These notes are useful in several ways:

- They provide a record of a child's progress, so we can remind ourselves and the child how much they have grown and changed.
- When there is problem behaviour, looking back through the notes might show us patterns that give us some clues as to the causes of the behaviour. For example, we might notice that Masese tends to fight with other children just before lunch time, so we can guess it might be because he is hungry.
- Objective descriptions of children's behaviour, in the form of written observations and notes, are very helpful to a professional counsellor if we need to make a referral.

Listening to Children

In Unit 1, you learned that attentive listening is an important way to build the self-esteem of children and youth. The situations that follow show the difference that effective listening can make in helping children reach decisions about their behaviour:



Example 1

Situation 1:



Child

Somebody stole my soccer ball!

It was out in the yard when I came in to eat and now it's gone.



How do you know somebody stole it?

That's what happens when you leave things lying around. Maybe next time you'll remember to put your things away.



Counsellor

Situation 2:



Somebody stole my soccer ball!

It was out in the yard when I came in to eat and now it's gone.

I am! It's the third time that people have stolen my things from the yard.



Yes... I guess from now on I'll bring my things in when I come in the house.

Someone stole your ball?

I can imagine that you're pretty angry about that!

So this has happened before.

Then people won't be able to take them.





Activity 8

What differences do you see between the two scenarios?

In the second situation, how did the caregiver show the child that she really cared about the child's problem?

How did she help the child come to a solution?



Did you notice that in the first situation the caregiver questioned the child's interpretation of the situation, then blamed and lectured her? By the time the caregiver was finished lecturing the child, the child was not only sad about the loss of his ball but angry with the caregiver who failed to understand his feelings. In this situation, the caregiver's response would make the child feel diminished.

In the second situation, the caregiver listened carefully to the child. She showed that she was listening by repeating some of the things the child was saying. She let the child know she understood his feelings. Because the child felt understood, he was able to come up with a solution on his own. In this situation, the caregiver's response to the child empowered the child.

As you can see, attentive listening is a very powerful tool in guiding the behaviour of children and youth.

Asking the Right Questions

Asking questions is another way to learn about children's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. As you learned in Unit 1, open-ended ques-

tions encourage children to think about their situation and come up with solutions to problems. Some examples of these questions are:

What thoughts were you having when...?

I'm wondering what would happen if...?

What's most important for you now?

Can you tell me more about...?

How would you like things to be?

Would you like to talk about...?

Where would you like to begin?



Activity 9

A five-year-old child shows you a picture he has drawn. Write an open-ended question you could use to encourage him to tell you about the picture:

You see that 12-year-old Mondri is sitting in a corner crying. You go over and sit quietly beside her for a few moments. What open-ended question could you use to see if she would like to tell you what is troubling her?

Lesson Four



Creating a Positive Environment

When children feel respected, valued, and able to contribute, they want to cooperate and do their best. We have already discussed the importance of listening carefully and respectfully to children, and this is perhaps the most important way to boost self-esteem and create a positive environment.

Rules and Expectations

Another aspect of children's environment is the rules that we set. It is important not to have too many rules for children, but a few carefully chosen rules help them feel and remain safe. For example, children should not be allowed to hurt one another in body or in spirit. Ideally, the rules will tell children what to do, rather than what not to do; for example, "Treat others kindly" rather than "Don't hurt others."

Children are most likely to abide by rules if they see the importance of the rules and, when possible, have a part in setting the rules. Talk with them about why each rule is important, and be prepared to listen if they feel a rule should be changed.

It is important that the rules that are set, and the expectations you have of children, should be appropriate to their age and circumstances. Activity 10 explores this point a little further.



Activity 10

Tandy's caregiver believes it is important that 5-year-old Tandy sit quietly through a two-hour church service. What do you think?

An 8-year-old boy has just come to the Children's Home. His father died two years ago and his mother died two weeks ago. His caregiver is upset because he has wet the bed both of the nights he has been in the home. He believes the boy should be punished. What do you think?



The questions in Activity 10 are intended to show that it is important to consider the age and situation of the child when we are setting expectations for them. Usually it is difficult for a 5-year-old to sit still for 2 hours, so when adults expect such behaviour, they are setting the child up for failure.

In the second example, the 8-year-old boy is certainly old enough that we would expect him not to wet the bed, but he had been through recent traumatic events that may be affecting his behaviour. To punish him for bedwetting would add to his trauma.

Many of the children in your care have already had very difficult lives. Some have taken on heavy responsibilities at young ages because there was no choice. Sometimes it is difficult to remember that they are still children and that they have the needs that all children have—for play, activity, time with friends, and so on. You can avoid many potential behaviour problems by ensuring that your expectations are realistic given the needs of the children.



Activity 11

What chores would you expect a six-year-old child to do on a regular basis?

What chores would you expect a thirteen-year-old boy to do on a regular basis?

If possible, ask a friend or another caregiver these same questions. Do the answers agree with yours? Discuss any differences you might have found.



Any time that a child is “misbehaving,” think about whether you are expecting them to behave in ways that are not appropriate to their development or situation. It is possible that you need to change your expectations rather than to focus on the behaviour of the child.

Building Healthy Self-Esteem

Ali, the boy in the picture, thinks that he is worthless and that everybody hates him. He looks at himself negatively. He has low self-esteem. Children and adults who have unhealthy self-esteem are likely to make poor choices in life. People who see themselves as worthless are likely to become involved in relationships



with people who treat them as if they had little value; for example, girls may form relationships with men who abuse them and boys may fall into a life of crime because they feel that is all they are good for. People with low self-esteem are very vulnerable to people who are bad influences because these people can make the person with low self-esteem feel accepted and valued when in fact they are being used.



How do you think Ali, the boy in the first picture, came to the conclusion that he is worthless? Children learn their self-esteem from an early age, from the people around them and from images they see on television, in movies, etc. Did it ever occur to you that adults actually teach children their unhealthy self-esteem? Yes, it is adults who place negative evaluations on children. Every day adults lecture children. They scold, belittle, and criticise children. Many times adults tell children that they are worthless, stupid, and good for nothing. After hearing these negative evaluations for some time, children begin to accept what the adult says. Children decide they are worthless, stupid, unlovable, and worthy of punishment. Soon the negative feelings the child has developed affect the child's motivation, relationships with others, and future success.

Negative self-esteem can be difficult to reverse. However, it is never too late to make changes. We know from research that one supportive adult can have a great influence in a child's life. Ali is lucky because he has come to live with Ms Monde who is an understanding caregiver. She is helping the boy to develop a more healthy self-esteem.

Strategies to Enhance Self-Esteem

How has Ms. Monde gone about building Ali's self-esteem? She says that she provided Ali with opportunities for success. How did she do this? Here are some strategies she uses with her children:

- She provides opportunities for the children to succeed.
- She recognises and encourages the children's behaviour

whenever possible. She does not use artificial or forced compliments. She knows that children easily recognise forced compliments.

- She discusses with the children what they would like to do or accomplish. She works with them in setting realistic goals and in a step-by-step programme guides them to achieve their goals. This guidance continues until the children feel they can work toward their goals alone.
- She allows children with poor self-concepts to help someone else. Why does she do this? She has realised that when the children are able to teach their friends (peer teaching), they feel better about themselves. Doing something special for someone else helps the helpers feel better about themselves.
- She involves the children in group activities. She encourages the children to join organisations such as Scouts, church groups, or clubs in which they will feel accepted and achieve success. She does not encourage children to join groups requiring skills they do not possess. In addition, she gives the children tasks at which they can feel successful.
- She also helps children by asking each child to list situations that he/she finds comfortable or difficult. Then she discusses ways of behaving in these situations, and role-plays new types of behaviour. The children are encouraged to try them in realistic situations and report the results to her.
- She listens attentively to children and teaches them the skills they need to solve problems they encounter. She finds that being able to solve one's own problems builds self-confidence.

These esteem-building strategies help all children, not just children who have particularly unhealthy self-esteem. We all need to have experiences that remind us we are valuable, worthwhile people.



Activity 12

What are some of the ways that you help children feel valued and worthwhile? Give examples of times when you have done these things.

Lesson Five : Dealing with Problem Behaviour



We have discussed some of the principles for guiding children’s behaviour: understanding ourselves, understanding and learning about children, and creating a positive environment. These principles will not only help you to deal with challenging types of behaviour but, more importantly, will help you to prevent them.

In this lesson, we will look at some specific types of problem behaviour and some ways to deal with them. While the types we discuss are not all of the types of problem behaviour you will encounter in your work with children, the ideas provided should help you to think of solutions for types that are not mentioned.



Activity 13

What are some of the types of problem behaviour you find in your work with children?



Did you include behaviour such as fighting, lying, teasing, stealing, running away, and truancy from school? These are some of the problems that caregivers encounter.

Before we look at some possible strategies for dealing with such behaviour, let’s consider what it is that we want to achieve. If we only wanted to stop the behaviour, it might be quite simple. However, we want more than that. We want to find a way that builds children’s self-esteem and teaches them new skills and ways to behave. This can take longer, but the results last longer. Children who learn to deal with one situation will be able to take that learning into other situations as they arise.

There is more than one possible solution to any problem. In fact, because children are different, the best solution for one child may not

be the best solution for another. Any solution, though, must fit these criteria:

- Children (or youth) must feel that the adult is concerned about their well-being, wants to help them, is listening to them, and believes them.
- Children must come to see that their behaviour doesn't fit with the goals that they have for their life.
- Children must take the lead in finding a plan for behaviour that will help them meet their goals.
- Children must understand that their caregiver will support them in developing the new behaviour.

As you read about each of the specific problem behaviours below, think about how these guidelines can help you to find solutions to the behaviour.

Fighting

Children don't have the skills and self-control that adults do for handling frustration. They have to learn that it is unacceptable to hurt other people and to be taught ways to solve problems that don't involve fighting. An important message to give children is: "I won't let you hurt others and I won't let anyone else hurt you."

If a fight is happening, stop it immediately. (Be sure to distinguish between a fight where there is anger, and wrestling in fun.) The children may need a little time apart to calm down. Then give each of the children an opportunity to tell you the problem. Listen calmly and without blaming. When the children have each had an opportunity to explain his or her side of the story and hear the other person's version, ask them to come up with ideas for solving the problem and for avoiding such a problem the next time it occurs. Keep discussing with them until they find a solution with which they both agree.

Caregivers may use many different strategies to deal with fighting, depending on the situation. For example:

- Use group/family discussions to focus on how fighting helps or hurts the fighter, how it makes others feel, its consequences, and more effective ways the fighter could solve conflicts.

- Have the fighters write their side of the story or tell it to a tape recorder then read or listen with them. Discussion of the stories provides a release for emotion and a stimulus for evaluating the behaviour and its consequences and for planning other ways to resolve such situations in the future.
- Bring the two children together and ask them one at a time, "What is the problem that makes you fight?" While one fighter narrates his/her story, the other one should listen silently. Now ask each to restate the problem as stated by the other and to think it over carefully. Ask the children, "What are some ways we could deal differently with this problem instead of fighting?" Help them agree on a plan and promise that you will follow up by reminding them of the decision. If fighting occurs again, you will help them refine the plan to make it work better. (You may have to keep a record of "no fight" days for the two and commend them at the end of each day to reinforce the behaviour.)



Example 1

Two boys, Chimuka and John, are fighting over the use of a bicycle. They are pushing and yelling at one another. The caregiver goes to the boys and puts her hands on the bike to stop either of them from using it.

Caregiver (calmly): It looks like we have a problem here. What's happening? Chimuka, will you tell me what the problem is?

Chimuka: I had it first!

Caregiver: You're saying that you had the bike first, Chimuka, so you feel you should use it now. Is that right?

Chimuka nods.

Caregiver: John, I noticed that you were pulling at the bike. It seems like you want to use it now?

John: I asked Mr. Phiri if I could use it right after lunch.

Caregiver: Ah! I see the problem now. You saw that no one was using the bike, Chimuka, so you felt you could have it. But John had made arrangements earlier to use it now. That is a problem. What solution can you think of for this problem?

Chimuka: I should have it because I had it first.

John: But I asked Mr Phiri!

Caregiver: I hear you saying that you both feel you should have it first and I can see you each have a good reason to feel that way. What should we do right now to solve the problem?

Chimuka: I could have it first and John could have it after.

John: I could have it for 5 minutes and then you could have it.

The negotiation continues until the boys reach a resolution that they both seem ready to agree to. The caregiver restates that solution and checks with each of the boys to make sure they agree. Because the solution involves each boy using the bike for a certain amount of time, she agrees to time them and remind them when it is time to change.



The problem-solving process outlined in the example above takes some time but pays off in the end because the children eventually learn to solve problems without the help of the caregiver. They will have learned an important skill that they can use throughout their lives as an alternative to violence. Their learning will be reinforced by seeing caregivers communicating calmly to solve problems among themselves.



Activity 14

Think of a situation you experienced in which two children were fighting. How was it handled? What do you think the children learned from the way it was handled? What suggestions would you make for handling the situation, knowing what you do now?

Sometimes children's own needs are so strong that they can't respect the needs of others. Counsellors need to use their creativity, then, to

help children learn strategies for coping with difficult situations. Observe how the counsellor in the example below helps Masese find a way to wait more patiently in the lunch line.



Example 2: Masese

Counsellor: Masese, why do you push the others in the lunch line?

Masese: [thinking] What am I going to say? The line is slow yet I am always hungry because I haven't had breakfast.

Masese: Madam, the line moves too slowly yet I am hungry.

Counsellor: Is shoving others the best way to get to eat quickly?

Masese: No, the cook stops dishing and waits for order in the line.

Counsellor: Do you want to get food quickly, sit, and enjoy it?

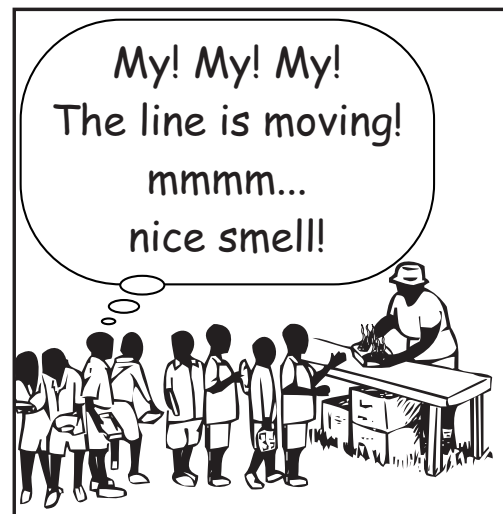
Masese: Yes madam, because there is no breakfast at home.

Counsellor: Now I understand why you are in such a hurry. Let me help you find a way to wait patiently and get your food quickly.

Masese: Yes, yes madam!

Counsellor: You will definitely get your food. Close your eyes and listen to this:

- Masese, it is lunchtime, move and get to the line.
- Follow whoever is in front of you patiently.
- Listen to the prefect and move with the line.
- Allow the prefect to monitor your moves and guide the whole line and you may chat with him or with the other children to control your mind.
- The line is moving. Masese is getting closer to the dishing spot. He can hear the cook calling for bowls.
- Whoa! The line has moved. Masese has reached the dishing spot. He is producing his bowl and the nice, warm food is being dished up for him.
- Masese is finding a sitting place and starts to enjoy his lunch.
- Open your eyes. How did you like that?



Masese: [thinking] My! My! My! The line is moving, one foot in front of the other, nice smell!

Masese: Madam, that was fast! I am going to try my best and obey the prefects. I'm already hungry!

Counsellor: I am happy you like the dream exercise Masese. Use the dream when lining up for lunch next time. I will ask the prefects to help monitor you and give me a good report of your behaviour. If you can wait quietly in the line, the children and the cook will not quarrel with you and you will actually get your food more quickly.



Lying

There are many reasons for lying. Children who lie might be unable to distinguish fact from fantasy. They may fear disapproval and punishment by adults. They might be trying to win approval from their peers. Here are some strategies for dealing with children who lie:

1. Observe areas in which lying occurs most. Does it have to do with being late, school, money, or aggressive behaviour. If lying commonly occurs in one context, try to change the circumstances in this area to decrease the temptation to lie.
2. Note that the child's behaviour might be a cry for attention or help. Avoid punishment but focus on his/her strengths and encourage them. Reinforce his/her positive behaviour to promote success. Pair the child with someone he or she admires for group activities.
3. Ask the child to identify a person in the community or the home whom the child admires. Have the child make a list of the admirable qualities of that person. Discuss with the child how he or she can develop those qualities and rehearse them with the child.
4. Adults should not pay attention to or respond to lying behaviour, fantastic stories, or things that are exaggerated or incorrect. Lack of attention will discourage the lying behaviour.

On the following pages is a counselling scenario with a child, Thuli, who does not do her assignments and gives many reasons which are not always true.



Example 3: Thuli

Caregiver: Thuli, your teacher tells me that you aren't finishing your assignments. She says that you haven't handed in the Maths assignment from last week. I'm wondering if you are having a problem with the work.



Thuli: No, it's easy.

Caregiver: You say the work is easy, but you haven't handed it in. I don't understand.



Thuli: It's boring. I hate school!

Caregiver: It sounds like you're unhappy at school. Am I right?

Thuli: [crying] Everybody's mean to me. I hate it here. I wish I were home!

Caregiver: You miss being at home? What do you miss most?

Thuli thinks a moment.

Thuli: I miss coming home from school and my mommy saying, "Hi! Did you have a good day?" and my dad sometimes telling me stories.

Caregiver: You miss your mom and dad a lot, it sounds like.

Thuli: [sobbing] I just want them to come back!



Once a child feels that an adult understands her/his feelings, he/she can move on to discuss and find solutions for a situation. In this scenario, once Thuli has expressed her grief and feels like her caregiver understands and cares, the discussion can move on to problem solving (that is, involving the child in thinking about possible solutions and arriving at one or more to try).

Caregiver: You really want things to be the way they were before.

Thuli: Yes. I know they won't come back, but I think about them all the time.

Caregiver: Do you pretend sometimes that things are different than they are?

Thuli: Sometimes.

Caregiver: What kinds of things do you pretend?

Thuli: I tell people that my mom is coming and is bringing me lots of nice clothes and toys.

Caregiver: What happens when you tell people that?

Thuli: Nelima and Elfi laugh at me and say I'm a liar.

Caregiver: How does that make you feel?

Thuli: Bad. I want to be their friend.

Caregiver: You want to be their friend but they are laughing at you because you're pretending. Can you think of a way to make things work better between you?



Thuli: I guess I could stop pretending. They think I'm lying, but I'm really not.

Caregiver: I know. You're pretending that things are the way they used to be. Does that happen in school sometimes too?

Thuli: Sometimes when I'm in school I think about being at home with my mom and dad.

Caregiver: Do you think that might be why you aren't finishing your work?

Thuli: I guess so. I used to get my work done when I was at my other school. I was the top student in the class.

Caregiver: I wonder if you could be one of the top students here if you finished your work.

Thuli: I think I could. The work is really easy.

(continued on next page)

Example 3 (continued)

Caregiver: Can you think of some things you could do to help you finish your work on time?

Thuli: I could pay attention in class so I would know what we have to do.

The caregiver encourages Thuli to think of ways to remind herself to pay attention, etc. Together, they make a plan. The rewards for Thuli will be internal—her satisfaction with achieving good grades and having friends. The caregiver will support her in this.



Usually a child who feels that someone understands and cares will, with enough support, be able to work constructively toward changing his or her behaviour. External rewards tend to take responsibility away from the child.

Sometimes written behaviour contracts are used to help children remember the plan you have made with them. In the contract, write exactly what each of you will do (the new behaviour that will help the child to reach her/his goal and how you will help the child to behave in the new way). You could include a date for meeting again to discuss how it is going. Then both of you should sign the contract.

Cheating



Activity 15

Anita is a nine-year-old girl. Both her parents were killed in a road accident two years ago. She was an only child. She was in the fourth grade when her parents died. She lived with her father's cousin for a few months, but ran away because she was abused. She stayed in the streets for some weeks. A children's group found her and placed her in a home for orphaned children. At the children's home, she entered school again in the fourth grade. A few months later she was caught cheating several times in class. Her caregiver/teacher was at a loss.

What do you think might be the cause of her cheating?



Anita has no history of cheating but has suddenly begun to cheat. The caregiver's search for answers leads her to a school psychologist at a bigger school near the children's home. The psychologist suggests that Anita's cheating behaviour could have something to do with what is happening in the new school. She argues that the present school system and society strongly encourage competition and high grades. This pressure to achieve can contribute to cheating.

In this case, Anita probably felt that she had to cheat to show that she was not behind in terms of fourth grade work. She also thought that she could impress her peers by achieving high grades.

The psychologist suggested that the caregivers place less emphasis on competition and more on cooperation with others. In fact, he said that any emphasis on competition should be on competition with self. The children should be encouraged to continually improve their own performance, rather than to do better than others. He also mentioned that the home caregivers should let children know that they value and expect honesty.

Sometimes children are asked by their friends to cheat and many have

trouble knowing how to handle the situation without losing friends. A group discussion focusing on a question such as “What would you do if your best friend asked you for the answer to a question during a test?” can help children find an alternative to cheating or helping their friends to cheat. Group discussion is good because nobody is accusing anybody or trying to force a confession from any child. There is no name-calling, scolding, lecturing, moralising, or preaching. All children learn something from the discussion. This is one way you could help children like Anita solve their cheating problem.



Activity 16

Identify children under your care who cheat. Choose one of the children and do the following:

- Think about the type of pressures the child may be encountering.
- Talk with the child about the expectations that the child feels that caregivers and others have for him or her.
- Determine why this child is cheating. Is the child trying to impress someone, earn recognition, please caregivers, or cover up a special need or disability?
- Consult others about reducing temptations to cheat in the home and school.

Summarise what you have learned from this activity:



Activity 17

Conduct a group discussion on cheating with the children in your care. Summarise what you learned from talking with the children:

Bullying



Activity 18

Do you notice children bullying one another? What kinds of things do they do? What is the effect on the person being bullied?

What are some of the reasons that children might bully others?



Bullying is when a person or group of people keeps saying or doing things to try to get power over other people. They might write or say nasty things, damage or take their possessions, make them do things they don't want to do, leave them out of activities, make them feel uncomfortable or scared, hit or kick them, or threaten them. The abuse may focus on differences in race, religion, gender, or culture.

Bullying involves a power imbalance. The children who bully tend to be more aggressive, stronger, and more confident, while the children who are bullied tend to be quieter, more passive children who lack friends and social support. The bully sees these children as “safe” targets because they tend not to fight back.

Bullying can make the person being bullied feel uncomfortable, lonely, and afraid. Children who are exposed to bullying at school (by other children or teachers) may not want to go to school any more. Bullying can result in depression and even suicide.

Children are more likely to bully if they:

- Have experienced or observed aggressive behaviour at home.
- Are poorly supervised.
- Don't receive enough warmth and attention.
- Have active, impulsive temperaments.
- In the case of boys, are physically strong.

Often adults are not aware of bullying, because it is done away from adults and the victims are ashamed to tell.

Some strategies to prevent bullying are:

- Providing good supervision for children.
- Helping children to see the effect their actions have on others; for example, a young child can be told, “Look, Efi is crying. He feels sad because you called him that name.”
- Ensuring that children know that bullying is not allowed. You could work with the children to develop a code of conduct that outlines how they will treat one another. The code would name acceptable and unacceptable types of behaviour.
- Keeping good communication among the adults in children's lives (parents, caregivers, teachers).
- Helping children develop good interpersonal skills.
- Using group discussions, role plays, puppet plays, and stories to encourage children to talk about bullying and help them understand the effects of bullying and what they can do if they are being bullied or see someone else being bullied.

- Expecting that children will treat one another kindly and making sure that they are aware of this expectation. Model kind, respectful behaviour in your own relationships with children and adults.
- In group activities, including timid, less popular children with children who are positive and accepting.
- Recognising and encouraging positive, friendly behaviour among children.
- Intervening immediately when bullying behaviour occurs.
- Creating opportunities for children to help each other.

Teach children that if they are being bullied they should:

- Try ignoring the bully, telling them to stop and walking away when the bullying starts.
- Tell an adult that they can trust.

Teach all children to stop bullying when they see it happening, by intervening in the situation if it is safe to do so and/or by telling an adult. Here are some steps for dealing with bullying incidents:

- Stop the behaviour as soon as you see or hear about it.
- Talk to the victim and the bully or bullies separately to find out what has been happening.
- Expect that the bully will deny or minimise the behaviour. Tell the bully why the behaviour wasn't acceptable and what behaviour is expected of him/her. Say what the consequences will be, if these have already been outlined in a code of conduct or other rules, or work with the child to decide what the consequences should be. For example, if the bullying is happening on the way home from school, the bully might have to come directly home from school each day so that there is no opportunity to see the victim.
- Reassure the victim that you will do everything you can to prevent the bullying from happening again.
- Involve the victims in situations and groups where they can make friends, develop confidence, and learn social skills. You could also help them practice being assertive in responding to bullies.

- Carefully watch the behaviour of the bully and the victim. You could include other caregivers, teachers, etc. in this.
- If the bully or bullies do not change their behaviour, they may need to be removed from the group. If they are allowed to continue, all of the other children will be affected. They will be afraid because they will feel you are unable to protect them. They may begin to copy the bullying behaviour.

School Phobia and Truancy

Excessive fear of school (phobia) and deliberately absenting oneself from school without a valid reason (truancy) are major problems. Let's listen to two caregivers discussing causes of school phobia and truancy:



Activity 19

Ms. Monde: I am very worried about Kasim. The school told me on Monday that he has missed almost half of his classes. When I asked him why he had missed, he said that school was boring and he didn't like the other children. But I think there is something more. He looked a bit frightened when he talked about school and at one point I thought he might start to cry.

Ms. Ngoma: I wonder if maybe he is being bullied by the other children. He is small for his age, and he's quite shy.

Ms. Monde: His teacher seemed quite harsh when she called. Maybe he is afraid of her.

Ms. Ngoma: And of course he just lost his parents last year. The world must seem like a scary and uncertain place to him. Maybe he feels safer when he's here with us.

The two caregivers in the story have discussed a number of causes of school phobia and truancy. List the possible causes they have mentioned along with any others you can think of:



As we have seen above, there are a number of possible reasons for truancy. The child may feel unsafe at school because he or she is being bullied by other children or treated harshly by the teacher. The child might be bored at school. It could be that the child is afraid of being rejected or unpopular, or of not doing well in academics or athletics. Some children, particularly children from families where there is violence, avoid going to school because they feel they need to be at home to make sure no one is harmed.

If a child has experienced trauma, such as the death of a parent, it can set off anxious, disturbed behaviour that is associated with school phobia.

School phobia is a type of anxiety disorder and it can show itself in various ways such as:

- Refusal to go to school.
- Frequent stomach aches and other physical complaints.
- Constant thoughts and fears about the safety of self and others.
- Sleeping problems or nightmares.
- Fear of being left alone.
- Fear of the dark.

Here are some strategies for dealing with school phobia:

1. Actively listen to the child to try to understand the phobic child's underlying feelings and to establish a feeling of trust and security. Practice attentive listening as described in Unit 1.
2. Because school phobia may be related to special educational needs, review the child's academic progress and provide needed help. Children who find school an unpleasant place because they continually fail often become phobic.
3. Ask the teacher to involve phobic children in pleasant group activities. The more pleasure the children derive from learning, the more they will want to attend school. Successful learning, good peer relationships, pleasant caregivers/teachers, and enjoyable activities can encourage the children.

To deal with truancy:

1. Look over the truant's class schedule and academic progress. Determine if the classes are too difficult or if the tasks are beyond the child's capabilities. Are there other ways of learning through which the child might find more success and relevance?
2. Hold a group discussion about truancy. Discuss with the truant children how their presence or absence in school is helping or hurting them in reaching their goals. Work with them to make a plan to avoid truancy in the future.

Lesson Six : Referrals and Collaborations



Changing children’s behaviour takes effort and time. Sometimes you will find that all of your patience, skill and creativity is not enough to help a troubled child. When this happens, you should seek help from a professional counsellor.



Before you make the first contact with the counsellor, gather as much information about the child and the problem as possible. Written observations and notes can be very useful in giving the counsellor a picture of the child’s exact behaviour.

Activity 20

If you have referred a child or children before, what were their problems and where were they referred?



Some of the organisations and individuals that provide special case behavioural counselling are:

Organisation/Individual	Behaviour Treatment
Anti-child abuse organisations	Child sexual and physical abuse
Guidance teachers and school counsellors	All children’s problems
Psychiatric centre	All children’s problems
Mental hospitals	Mental disorders
Assessment centres	Children’s special educational needs
Religious organisations/churches	Spiritual counselling
Traditional counsellors	Behavioural problems



Activity 21

Conduct some research around your town and/or community and identify organisations and individuals to whom you can send children for special counselling. Specify the problems that children can be referred for.



Summary

The role of caregivers is to help children and youth learn to behave in ways that will help them to be successful in their lives.

This unit includes knowledge and ideas that will help you, as a caregiver, to become more effective in guiding children's behaviour.

Even though their behaviour may not make sense to us, there is always a reason why children and youth behave the way they do. The more we can learn about a particular child—for example, by listening, observing, and asking questions—the more effective we will be in counselling that child.

Children's self-esteem greatly influences the decisions they make in their lives. It is our job to help them see themselves as worthwhile, capable, lovable people.

Effective counsellors will understand their own behaviour and responses and have appropriate expectations of children.

Dealing with problem behaviour such as fighting, lying, truancy, or cheating requires understanding, skill, and creativity. Because every child and every situation is different, there is no one ideal solution. However, there are certain criteria that we can use to judge whether or not a solution will help us to reach our goals.

Despite your best efforts, you will not always be successful in helping children learn new behaviour. It is important to be aware of the counselling resources in your community so that you can access them confidently when the need arises and refer children to them when necessary.



Self-Assessment Exercise

Question 1

What do we mean by “behavioural counselling?” Give an example of a problem that might be addressed through behavioural counselling.

Question 2

Explain how self-awareness can help you to be more effective when you are responding to problem behaviour of children or youth.

Question 3

Why is it important to help children/youth build self-esteem?

Question 4

How can you decide if a particular approach to behavioural counselling will help you meet your goals for working with children or youth?

Question 5

Choose a behaviour problem that you sometimes see in children that you know. Describe how you would go about working with a child to help her or him change that behaviour.



Suggested Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise

Question 1

Behaviour counselling involves working with children and youth to change their type of behaviour from that which is inappropriate or non-productive to a type that helps them get along well with others and feel good about their accomplishments. Examples of problems that might be dealt with through behaviour counselling are cheating, lying, stealing, bullying, fighting, and truancy.

Question 2

Knowing ourselves, or self-awareness, helps us to realise when a child's behaviour is triggering a need or message from our own lives. When we are aware of that happening, we can make an effort to get past the old "business" to treat the child fairly and calmly.

Question 3

Self-esteem, or how we value ourselves, has a very strong influence on the choices we make in our lives. Positive or healthy self-esteem means that we value who we are. When children value who they are, they tend to make choices that reflect that valuing. When they feel they are worthless, they are likely to choose friends who fit with that belief; for example, they might choose friends who treat them badly.

Question 4

To decide if a behaviour guidance approach will be appropriate, consider whether the children

- will feel that you are concerned about their well-being and want to help them; that you are listening to them and believe them.
- will come to see that their behaviour doesn't fit with the goals that they have for their life.
- will take the lead in finding a plan for behaviour that will better help them meet their goals.
- know that you will support them in developing new behaviour.

Question 5

To evaluate the approach that you described, check the criteria in the previous question. If the approach meets all of the criteria it should be appropriate. If it fails to meet one or more of the criteria, change it so that it does.



References

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Glossary

Assumptions: Ideas that we accept as being true even though we have no proof that they are.

Behavioural counselling: Working with someone to help change his or her behaviour.

Bias: Prejudice.

Bullying: When a person or group uses strength or power to force or persuade someone through fear.

Personality: Our particular patterns for reacting to or interacting with others. Personality results from our temperament and the interactions we have in our environment.

Self-concept: The picture that people have of who they are.

Self-esteem: The way that people judge themselves.

Temperament: A set of core qualities and response patterns (moods and styles of behaviour) with which we are born.

Trauma: An emotional shock as the result of a stressful event.

