

## Reframing Behaviour: What You See vs. What's Beneath the Surface

If it looks like...	It might really mean...	Try responding by...
<b>Defiance / Rudeness</b>	Anxiety, overwhelm, or needing a sense of control	Offering choices, reducing demands, using a calm and steady tone
<b>Not listening / Ignoring instructions</b>	Processing delay, cognitive overload, needing clarity	Giving extra time, breaking instructions into steps, using visuals
<b>Refusal to engage</b>	Fear of failure, needing predictability, feeling unsafe	Offering reassurance, scaffolding tasks, setting clear expectations
<b>Shouting / Aggression</b>	Communication struggle, unmet sensory need, emotional dysregulation	Staying calm, validating feelings, offering a safe outlet
<b>Withdrawal / Silence</b>	Shutdown, exhaustion, feeling unheard or unsafe	Giving space, using non-verbal check-ins, offering a quiet moment
<b>Disruptive behaviour</b>	Seeking connection, struggling with self-regulation	Providing proactive positive attention, teaching self-regulation strategies
<b>Demand avoidance</b>	Anxiety, lack of autonomy, feeling overwhelmed	Reducing perceived pressure, providing choices, using indirect language
<b>Overreacting to small issues</b>	Emotional dysregulation, sensory overload, past trauma being triggered	Naming emotions, offering self-regulation tools, helping co-regulate
<b>Perfectionism / Avoidance of mistakes</b>	Fear of failure, low self-esteem, needing control	Encouraging a growth mindset, celebrating effort over outcome
<b>Interrupting / Talking over others</b>	Excitement, difficulty regulating impulse control	Acknowledging enthusiasm, setting clear communication cues
<b>Work refusal / Task avoidance</b>	Task feels too difficult, low confidence, sensory or attention fatigue	Breaking work into smaller steps, offering support, building self-belief
<b>Overly 'silly' or attention-seeking behaviour</b>	Feeling anxious, needing connection, struggling with self-awareness	Acknowledging feelings, providing structured social opportunities

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