

Managing Behaviour in PWS

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(Mom of PWS daughter of 15)



IPWSO Family Meetings

Case Study: Bianca Clarke

Strategy for coping at school

OT – specialising in working with children with ASD



We found challenging behaviour at school was a lot more of an issue than at home

- Home is a stable environment
- There is a routine
- Boundaries are known by all
- Family know and can see the signs of a meltdown
- She comes to me for calming

- School involved a lot more people peers and teacher involvement
- Changing environment
- People don't know her as well
- No one to go to for calming
- Teacher turnover

Examples of things that could cause upsets at school

- Class mate helping (example pack bag)
- Class mate specifically irritating her
- If a choice always wanting green
- Always wanting to finish a chapter when reading
- Task switching
- Being rushed
- Not waiting for her to talk (slow processing of speech)
- Or not listening to her issue
- Food related issues
 - Birthday ring if all cakes the same good if different she wants first choice
 - Not being allowed to keep a wrapper of a treat



Step 1 Identify feelings

How do you feel



calm



angry



sad



happy

Emotional IQ often overestimated by adults

- Use their words
- Often more than 1 per situation
- Happy and calm
- Annoyed and upset but can carry on
- Very upset
- Angry
- Asked her to explain when she has these emotions
- Get adults in the environment to help identify their emotions
 - As they don't always know how they feel

Step 2 validate their feelings

Step 2 validate their feelings

- You can't stop them from feeling the feelings
- If you are angry, you are angry
- If you are upset for example about a class mate helping you pack up you can't say it is inappropriate to feel upset about it or if you are upset the teacher took away your cupcake wrapper. You can't say you should not be upset about that
- Acknowledge the emotions and that they are big emotions



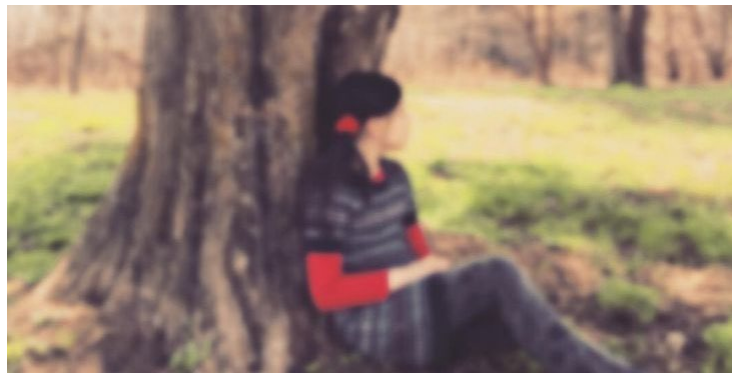
Step 3 Identify what is not appropriate

- “Yes you do feel that upset and its ok to feel that upset, but its not ok to..
- Scream and bang the table and disrupt the class or shout at the peer trying to help. Disturbing other classes due to the outburst is also not appropriate behaviour
- This is explained by the OT to her in a calm session when talking about these emotions



Step 4 Identify what you can do

- We often tell people what they shouldn't be doing such as “don't scream, don't throw things, don't break things” but forget to tell them what they should be doing instead
- It is important to find a strategy that they can do when they feel these emotions
- Therefore its important to say what you can't do but its more important to say what you can do “re-programme”
- At first might need help to implement the strategy, encourage it and trial it
- For example, the class mate helping, the OT explained that before she gets annoyed she can tell the classmate that she doesn't need or want help nicely
- For other occasions when the emotions get too big to talk the OT arranged with the school to allow Bianca out the classroom to a quiet place in the playground to self calm
- A choice of strategy can be too hard to implement with big emotions, better to have one plan and encourage it



- Sensory calming may help – linear movement, chewing, deep pressure, tight squeezes, ear phones, calming music

Step 5 Explain theory of mind

- It has been really helpful to teach Bianca what other people are thinking in a calm session (possibly after an upsetting event)
- She didn't realise that the class mate doesn't know she doesn't like help with packing up. Or that they might be upset by her behaviour or scared of the noise of a meltdown or that teachers might get frustrated or not understand what has upset her
- She didn't realise her behavior could effect other people as in the "heat of the moment" she won't recognise or can even think about if she upsetting other people
- However making other people sad or upset is not a motivator to change the behaviour. For Bianca the motivator is that she doesn't feel so nice or good after having meltdowns..



Step 6 Plan for upsetting events

- Ultimately you want to try and pre-empt the meltdown and identify emotions before they become a significant meltdown. This requires other people know you and see the signs, works for regular teachers but new teachers need time to get to know Bianca
- If there is an outing or a food-related event where upsets could happen, social stories before the event and planning for the event can help a lot

Summary

In summary these strategies have helped Bianca in school and she has been doing it for about 3-4 years now

It doesn't always work and we still have meltdowns but she knows to go to her quiet place

She sees the OT on a regular basis to discuss upsetting events or social situations she is unsure of and the plan is tweaked

Things go wrong – quiet place is already occupied, teachers try to call her back, try to engage when she is upset, sometimes she wants to scream to make a point when she could have held back

Re-educating new teachers can be time consuming and every year there is a “teething phase” as they all get to know each other