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Meeting the emotional needs of children with challenging behaviour and developmental disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Research on the utility of combining behavioural interventions with emotion-based components of intervention for children with developmental disability and challenging behaviour is limited. The current study aimed to gather empirical evidence identifying the importance of considering emotional and motivational needs in addressing behavioural difficulties in children with developmental disabilities. The four component model (Meyer & Evans, 1989) for intervening with challenging behaviour was utilised as the theoretical framework for this study, with each component being addressed in four single case designs. The four children and their families involved in this study were; Simon (aged 12), William (aged 5), Lily (aged 5) and Hohepa (aged 15). Results across baseline, intervention, and three- and six-month follow-up assessments indicated the difficulty in determining which component was most significant in creating change in challenging behaviours. However, the results consistently indicated benefits for each child through involvement in this study. Interviews with parents at three- and six-month follow-up also provided information on the benefits of this study, including improvements in their child's behaviour and benefits for themselves as parents. This research provides support for the four component model and implies the utility of adding an emotion-based component to behavioural interventions when working with such children. Future research would benefit from increased sample size and time periods to continue to document the utility, or otherwise, of this mode of intervention.

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