CPNI
Cyprus Paediatric Neurology Institute
Παιδονευρολογικό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου

LEAFLET FOR PARENTS AND PATIENTS

Understanding and managing behaviour

All children sometimes behave in ways that are hard to manage. For children with ADHD, autism, epilepsy or developmental difficulties, behaviour can be more challenging and is often a way of communicating a need. Understanding what lies behind the behaviour is the first step to helping.

Why behaviour happens

- Difficulty communicating needs, feelings or pain
- Tiredness, hunger or poor sleep
- Sensory overload: noise, crowds, lights or certain textures
- Changes in routine, or not knowing what will happen next
- Frustration when a task is too hard
- Medical causes, such as pain, constipation, seizures or medicine side effects

Look for patterns

Try the ABC approach: write down what happened just before (Antecedent), the Behaviour itself, and what happened afterwards (Consequence). Patterns often show what triggers the behaviour and what keeps it going.

Positive strategies

- Notice and praise good behaviour straight away, and be specific: "Well done for waiting"
- Give clear, simple instructions, one at a time
- Use visual timetables and warnings before changes ("5 more minutes, then bath")
- Offer limited choices to give your child some control
- Keep routines predictable and plan ahead for difficult situations
- Make time each day for one-to-one play your child chooses

During a meltdown or outburst

- ✓ Stay calm and keep your voice low
- ✓ Keep your child and others safe; remove dangerous objects
- ✓ Use few words, and give space and time to calm down
- ✓ Talk about what happened later, when everyone is calm
- ✓ A meltdown in autism is not a tantrum: it is a response to being overwhelmed, not a choice

Looking after yourself

- ✓ Managing challenging behaviour is exhausting; it is not a sign of bad parenting
- ✓ Share the load with your partner, family and school, and agree the same approach
- ✓ Parenting programmes and support groups can make a real difference
- ✓ Ask for help early

When to ask for help

Please contact us if:

- Behaviour puts your child or others at risk of harm
- Your child hurts themselves, for example head-banging or biting
- There is a sudden change in behaviour, which may mean pain or illness
- Behaviour is stopping your child going to school or taking part in family life
- You feel unable to cope

ABC behaviour record

Fill this in for one or two weeks and bring it to your appointment.

Date and time	What happened before (A)	Behaviour (B)	What happened after (C)

Contact CPNI

If you have questions or would like an appointment, please call our office on +357 22 476 627 or email cpni2007@gmail.com.

More leaflets and information: www.cpni.com.cy

This leaflet gives general information. It does not replace advice from your child's doctor.

Reviewed by Dr Paola Nicolaides, Consultant Paediatric Neurologist, November 2026.

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