

Making a Plan

Use This:

To teach the parent skills for anticipating and minimising behaviour problems before they happen.



Goals

- The parent will identify high-risk situations for his or her child's misbehaviour
- The parent will learn steps to prevent misbehaviour in high-risk situations
- The parent will practise these steps at home with his or her child

Materials

- **Fear Thermometer** and **Fear Ladder** (2 unrated copies for anxiety/trauma), **Feelings Thermometer** (for depression) (pp. 318, 320, 342)
- **Making a Plan** parent handout (p. 418)
- **Checklist of Strategies** (p. 391)
- **Weekly questionnaires** and **Monitoring sheet** (see pages 277-293)
- **Therapist Note Taking Sheet** (p. 276)

⚡ If time is tight: Review the handout on how to anticipate behaviour problems and manage behaviour before it becomes disruptive.

Main steps

<input type="checkbox"/> Set an Agenda	Remember to start by setting an agenda together and reviewing any practice assignments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain Weekly Ratings	If the main focus is traumatic stress or anxiety, use the 0 to 10 scale of the Fear Thermometer to obtain Fear Ladder ratings from both the child and his or her parent. If the main focus is depressed mood, use the Feelings Thermometer to take a rating. Review Weekly questionnaires and Monitoring sheet in detail, in particular, examples of time out (if this module was covered) and how it worked/didn't work.
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify Routine Challenges	Ask the parent to identify times or events that make his or her child's behaviour especially challenging. Give examples such as grocery shopping together, going to a neighbour's house, or taking a long drive somewhere.

<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Being Caught off Guard	<p>Point out that most parents are too busy to think ahead about these kind of situations, or if they do think ahead, they are too busy or tired to get fully prepared for them. For example, some parents will enter public places, such as shops, without fully thinking through how they will manage their child's behaviour should it become disruptive. Then they are forced to respond to their child's behaviour in the moment, without an advance plan. Under these circumstances, the parent might be frustrated with the child, worried about the reactions of others who are watching the scene, and upset or angry. Note that all of these factors can work together to make it very challenging for a parent to develop a reasonable and effective method of dealing with the problem once it has started.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Making a Plan	<p>Point out how anticipating behavioural problems is a key concept in learning to manage a child's behaviour effectively, whether in public situations, across transitions in major daily activities, or in many other more routine situations. "Making a plan" means that a lot of misbehaviour can be avoided by thinking ahead about the child's potential misbehaviour and by making a plan clear to the child before entering the situation. Even if misbehaviour is not avoided completely in such situations, the parent will at least have established a quick and thoughtful reaction to the misbehaviour before it goes too far.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Review <i>Making a Plan</i> Handout	<p>Review the five steps on the <i>Making a Plan</i> handout with the parent.</p>

ACTIVITY
Making a Plan

After reviewing the steps involved in making a plan, engage the parent in a role-play in which you act as the child (**adapt for telephone delivery**). If possible, work with the parent's example on page 3 of the handout, and rehearse the time leading up to the situation (you do not need to rehearse the entire situation). For example, if the task involves going out to a public place, you could ask the parent to walk with you as if you were the child and he or she was preparing to enter a public area (perhaps walking up to the door to the treatment room or the outside door to your building).

Prior to entering the door, the parent should go through steps 1 through 4 from the handout with you. Pay close attention to the way in which the parent sets up the situation (perhaps assigning you a planned activity, or pointing out that you just had a snack), explains the rules to you, offers incentives, and explains the consequences.

After the role-play, discuss what the parent thinks about his or her performance. Provide the parent with specific feedback about his or her preparation, the rule he or she chose to use, the types of incentives offered, and the manner in which the consequences were explained. Make sure the parent's language and tone corresponded appropriately to his or her child's age. Praise the parent for his or her performance and repeat the role-play, if necessary.

Manage Concerns:
Parenting in Public

Check in to see if the parent feels that setting rules and administering rewards and consequences would be comfortable in public. If the parent thinks he or she might be embarrassed or uncomfortable, these concerns can often be addressed by explaining that behaviour problems are less likely to develop in the first place if the parent follows the steps of prevention you have just reviewed. Suggest that the odds of a problem developing are further reduced by the parent's use of ongoing attention, praise, and rewards for his or her child's good behaviour in the public place. Explain that even when misbehaviour does develop, it will often be at a much-reduced level of disruption because the parent will respond to it swiftly and with a clear plan before the behaviour gets out of hand. Reassure the parent that such steps are more likely to reduce opportunities for the parent to experience embarrassment in public.

<input type="checkbox"/> PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT <i>Practice Runs</i>	Review the practice assignment for the coming week with the parent. Explain to the parent that during the coming week he or she is to plan at least two “practice runs” of the situation chosen on the last page of the handout. The practice run should look as much like the actual situation as possible – for example, if the activity is shopping, the parent should plan two “fake” shopping trips solely for the purpose of making and practising the plan (no real shopping needs to get done). Ask the parent to record information about these practices on the Monitoring sheet for review at the next session.
<input type="checkbox"/> Send the materials for the next session	Tell the parent/s you will send a written summary and the materials for the next session. Remind them that they <u>do not</u> need to be completed for next session as you will go through them together in the session. Tell the parent/s you will also send the Weekly questionnaires, Monitoring sheet and Checklist of Strategies (if necessary) which need to be completed for the next session.
Confirm date and time of the next call.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Summarising	Ask if they would like you to summarise the session, if they want to summarise or if you should do it together.

Leave ‘Em Laughing

End the session on a positive note with the parent by perhaps talking about things that are unrelated to his or her child, or discussing an area of interest you have in common with the parent. Also, the parent might be feeling overwhelmed by the challenging tasks he or she is undertaking; it can sometimes be helpful to leave a few minutes at the end of the session for the parent to share concerns or the challenges he or she has faced with the child since the previous session. The end of each session should be used to praise the parent’s efforts and to convey support and encouragement.

Share with Child (if possible)

At the end of the session, if the child is available, it can be helpful to brief him or her on the materials covered.

<input type="checkbox"/> Review Concepts	Explain to the child that this week his or her parent is going to practise a special task with him or her, such as going to the shop or getting on the bus together (the situation should be the same one the parent role-played with you). Indicate to the child that there will be certain rules that he or she is expected to follow, and his or her parent will discuss these rules with the child beforehand. Ask the child if he or she has any questions about the new rules that he or she will be asked to follow when practising together with his or her parent.
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If possible, repeat the role-play you performed earlier with the parent, now with the child taking your place (**adapt for telephone delivery**). The parent should focus on going through steps 1 through 4 from the handout with the child. Pay close attention to the way in which the parent sets up the situation (perhaps assigning the child a planned activity or occupying him or her with a toy or book), explains the rules, offer incentives, and explains the consequences. After the role-play, thank and excuse the child and discuss with the parent his or her thoughts about his or her performance. Provide the parent with specific feedback about his or her preparation, the rules he or she chose to use, the type of incentives offered, and the manner in which the consequences were explained. Make sure the parent's language and tone corresponded appropriately to his or her child's age.

Helpful Tips

- When discussing incentives for the plan, consider items from the child's formal reward system, if one is already in place.
- Remember that incentives do not have to be large or costly. Examples of small incentives might include stickers, stamps, pencils, choosing the dessert at home that evening, or extra time to play a game with the parent.
- If the consequences in the plan involve removal of the child from a public place, explain to the parent that short intervals of time out (e.g., 2 to 3 minutes), generally work well in public, given that the child is missing out on many interesting activities and is most likely embarrassed about having to spend time in a boring location.

How's Your Style?

- Did you praise often?
- Did you review often, by asking questions?
- Did you simplify the steps as needed?
- Did your pace match that of the child or family?
- Did you stay on track?