

Relational Approaches: Building Strong Connections





"When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not to join their chaos."

L.R. Knost

"Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued."

- Brene Brown

Principals of Relational Approaches



1

Dependable Relationships, Improving Emotional Development and Health

Young people with strong social and emotional support networks have better social, emotional, and academic outcomes

2

Understanding Behaviour as Communication

All behaviours are understood to be communicative of an individual's needs. Needs must be understood and met in a compassionate and informed way, rather than seeking to manage and contain behaviours alone.


3

Kindness, Compassion and Respect for the Individual Matters

People who are kind and compassionate in their close relationships experience the greatest happiness. Respect for individual context, circumstances and needs means responding to individuals in a differentiated manner.

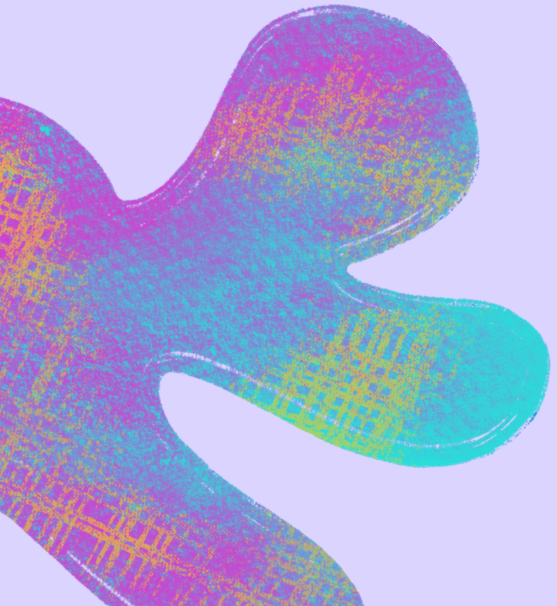


**What is the Relational
Approach?**



The relational approach provides an emotionally safe way to support behaviour and development, rather than a system to manage it.

It views behaviour as telling us something about the needs and regulatory systems of an individual, rather than viewing behaviour as an intentional choice.



Key Differences Between Behaviourist and Relational Models

Behaviour Model	Behaviourist Model	Relational Model
Main means of behaviour management	consequences	relationship
Children and young people are...	learning	developing, error-prone, & highly responsive to environment
Boundaries are to ...	make standards clear	to meet everyone's needs
Behaviour is something to ...	manage	listen to
Consequences are ...	ways to shape behaviour	a last resort, only used within a process of rupture and repair
"Inappropriate" behaviour is ...	learned, not necessarily voluntary	a sign either of an unmet need, difficulty coping, or lack of knowledge
The causes of difficulties are ...	learned poor responses, lack of appropriate reinforcement	mostly in the environment, felt relationships, or developmentally appropriate
Solutions lie in	adjusting consequences	understanding what the behaviour tells us about the child and their needs

Developing Relationships

Building relationships

This involves creating a foundation of trust, connection, compassion, and understanding.

Supporting inclusion

Ensuring every child feels a sense of belonging and that learning activities are adapted to meet the individual needs of each child.

Setting boundaries

Create an environment where conflict can be tackled constructively and in a way that supports ongoing relationships.

Approaches that Foster Relationships at Mandeville:

- **Intensive Interaction:**
Focusing on individualised communication.
- **Sensory integration into the curriculum:**
Incorporating sensory experiences for holistic development.
- **Play-based learning:**
Using play as a medium for education.
- **Total Communication:**
Utilising various forms of communication for better understanding.

Responding and Calming

Regulating Emotion

Helping children manage their emotions.

Keeping Calm

Modelling calm behaviour for effective communication.

Managing Crisis

Dealing with challenging situations effectively.

Approaches that Support Responding and Calming at Mandeville:

- **Being attuned to the child:**
Remaining attuned to a child's needs.
- **Understanding and responding to emotions:**
Recognising and appropriately reacting to a child's emotional state.
- **Co-regulation:**
Collaboratively regulating emotions with the child.
- **Sensory diets:**
Implementing sensory activities to support emotional and physical regulation.
- **Change of face:**
Altering approaches based on the child's cues.
- **Behavioural Support Plans:**
Custom plans to address behaviours that challenge based on individual need.

Repairing & Restoring

Repairing Harm

Mending relationships after a negative incident or crisis.

Supporting Change

Facilitating positive changes in behaviour.

Approaches that Support Repairing and Restoring at Mandeville:

Model and teach good cooperation, communication, and emotional literacy skills:

Demonstrating and teaching positive, calm, and appropriate behaviours and interactions.

Social Stories/Boards:

to help communicate what happened and what could be done differently next time

Positive Interaction:

For our pupils repairing the relationship through re-engaging in positive interactions after an incident or crisis crucial.

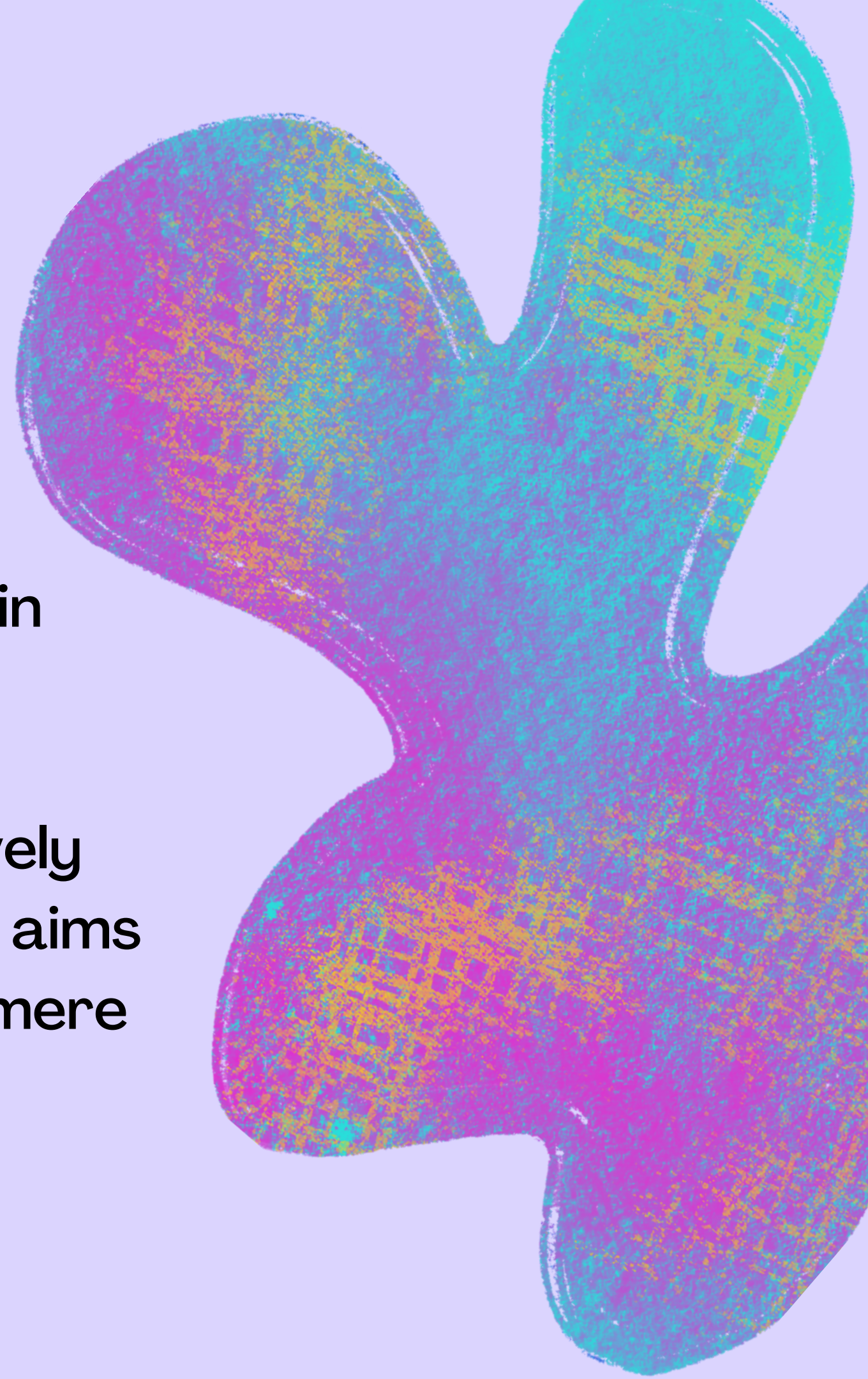
Supporting change by adults reflecting on:

- What was the behaviour communicating?
- How are the unmet needs being addressed?
- What skills does the child need to develop?
- What additional learning opportunities are in place to enable this?

The Relational Approach

In conclusion, relational approaches play a vital role in supporting child development.

By focusing on building positive relationships, effectively responding to emotions, and repairing harm, Mandeville aims to demonstrate a holistic approach that goes beyond mere behaviour modification.



References

- **Wakefield Educational Psychology Service** -
www.wakefieldscp.org.uk
- **Devon County Council** -
<https://www.devon.gov.uk/support-schools-settings/document/quick-guide-to-developing-relational-practice-and-policy/>

