

# FACT SHEET:



# ABIOS

Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service

**Category:**  
Behaviour

**Audience:**  
Families and  
Support Workers

## Giving Feedback About Behaviour

### Introduction

After a brain injury, some people will have difficulty with awareness and control of their communication, mood, social skills and behaviour. They may also not realise when behaviour is inappropriate or creating interpersonal difficulties.

It may be necessary to provide a person with immediate, direct and clear feedback regarding their behaviour



### When Providing Feedback.....

#### Describe the Behaviour

Be concrete and describe the behaviour as clearly as possible. A behaviour is something that you can see or observe and describe clearly. Try not to use labels (like angry, aggressive, inappropriate) as this may not be specific or clear enough to understand what is going on.

Behaviour descriptions can include:

- Something the person does e.g. shouting, interrupting, touching, hitting, pinching, slamming doors, crying, uses angry tone of voice, masturbates in public.
- Something the person says e.g. uses swear words, threatens to hit, talks about sexual/personal information, tells joke with sexual content.

The person must clearly understand which behaviours are a problem .

#### Repeat information

If the person has any difficulties with memory and learning, you may need to repeat the information at regular intervals, or try other memory strategies such as writing things down, using signs, checklists or prompts. If a person does not remember or learn what is expected of them immediately or quickly, you may need to build in regular reminders, even each time you see them.

For more information  
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## Tell the person which behaviours are acceptable or expected

**Limit setting** is essential for consistent management of behaviour because it tells the person exactly what is expected of them in any given situation and prevents them from having unclear or unrealistic expectations.

Set limits as **early** as possible with the person, and set them **often**. These limits may need to be stated clearly with the person e.g. "I am not your girlfriend – I am your support worker".

Limit setting may be about roles, tasks, activities, or about specific behaviours that are appropriate or inappropriate.

Don't set limits you can't keep to e.g. don't threaten to leave if the behaviour continues and then stay in the situation.

## Feedback should be simple and immediate

Don't assume a person will pick up subtle cues about their behaviour.

Information that is too vague or general will leave the person unclear or uncertain about what it is you do and do not like. For example, "I don't like it when you shout loudly at me" is much clearer than "I don't like it when you are rude."

## Make sure the person understands the feedback

If a person has difficulty with comprehension or understanding of information, feedback may need to be simpler. You might need to use pictures, diagrams or other communication aids. Check whether they understand what you are saying.

## Feedback should be clear

Unspoken social behaviour rules that you take for granted should be very clear. For example:

- "It is not ok to touch women on the breast"
- "Hands off"
- "I would rather you didn't talk about..."
- "You are staring at that woman ... she might feel uncomfortable."

## Talk about the behaviour

Try to talk about the behaviour, rather than the person when you are giving feedback. It is important that the person feels like you support **them**, but not the behaviour.

### For example,

"I understand why you are frustrated, but I don't want to you shout at me." Or "let's talk about what we can do about your frustration"

## Give feedback in a calm manner

Try to be calm and uncritical when you are giving feedback, and keep control of your own emotions. Angry or critical behaviour from you or others will likely **trigger** more anger or aggression. Feedback should be matter of fact and firm, without strong emotional reactions such as anger, impatience, shock, disapproval or fear.

## Give ideas about alternative behaviours

Give the person clear **alternatives** or **choices** about the behaviour you want them to stop. For example "You sound angry, do you want to talk about this later?" or "Could you wait until I have finished speaking?"

It is important for the person to know what they **should** do, not just what they are not to do. For example, ask the person to say please, or speak politely, or wait until you are finished talking.

## Give the person direction about their behaviour

**Redirect** the person to other activities or topics that are appropriate or acceptable. Sometimes a person may need direction regarding alternative topics of conversation or other behaviours that are acceptable.

**For example**, jokes with a sexual content might not be acceptable, but other jokes might be; touching on the breast or bottom may be off limits, but touching on the hand may be an acceptable alternative.

## Be consistent about behaviour

It is essential to be **consistent** in managing behaviour, especially in setting limits and giving feedback.

