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THE UNWILLING CHILD ADULT'S MISINTERPRETATIONS AND THE CHILD'S VOICE

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Introduction: Unwillingness is a fairly common misinterpretation of a child who does not know what is expected from him, does not know any better or who is incapable to perform. Behaviour to communicate distress can get overlooked and a communicative element can get over-rated.

Recursive reciprocal dysfunctional interactions can ensue when the behaviour remains misinterpreted.

Aim: To illustrate a few groups of misinterpretations from conversations with children.

Objectives: Any child with behaviour difficulties is assessed on his view of behaviour (ongoing assessment).

Method: For the assessment drawings, diagrams, projective, open and hypothetical questions. Role play is also used to help the child identify with the situation.

Results: 83 children, including children with a learning disability and autism, age range 6-16 years displayed opposition, challenging behaviour and self-harm. 52 had autism, one additional one was examined by Mum. 28 children had a diagnosis of ADHD. All 7 children with oppositional behaviour had autism. Only 4 self-harmers were examined. 8 children with autism articulated problems respecting rules. All other children except for one young person with deliberate self-harm (+autism) explained their behaviour as a offloading and communicative. 6 described their behaviour solely as 'stress relief'. Adolescents without autism articulated their need to anger their parents for letting 'them down'. 16 articulated specific learning problems.

Conclusion: Behaviour problems can be a substitute for expressing emotions communicatively in children who have insufficient emotional language repertoire. The offloading behaviour does not necessary have a communicative element. Their behaviour can be a result of deficient skills.