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Melbourne, March 2012

How to handle difficult behaviour

Learn the equivalent of the DR-ABC first-aid emergency response steps for behaviour, with *Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour: A Six-Step Approach* by Murray Irwin.

“Having a huge range of possible solutions to inappropriate behaviour at your fingertips is not enough” says youth worker and author Murray Irwin. “You need to be able to work out which of those possible solutions is the best one. That is the benefit of using the six BECOME steps of B-behaviour, E-emergency, C-context, O-options, M-myself and E-enact.” The steps will guide you no matter what the situation is.

The six steps pin point **what** the behaviour is, find out **when** and **why** it occurs and helps you work out **how** to encourage change. This gives you a logical and consistent way of approaching problem behaviours. Mr Irwin bases this approach on his 13 years of experience working with young people including at-risk youth. “I wanted to be able to train others about what I had learnt through trial and error. It was then I realised there was nothing out there that covered a step by step approach that you can use in everyday situations.”

The book has been structured for practical use. *Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour* contains 14 principles of how to approach situations, 13 tools to help understand the problem, 10 different styles of responding and 20 effective strategies to try. Case studies show you how to put these into practice as you follow the six BECOME steps.

Mr Irwin said that “If a response is not working you should look at other ways of responding to the problem. There is no excuse using the same response time after time when this book offers a range of ideas to use. If you work with people, this book can become your guide to successfully encourage appropriate behaviour.”

About the Author

Murray Irwin is a freelance outdoor educator and adventure therapy group-leader with 13 years experience. For five years he worked with at risk youth and spent three years designing and delivering award winning sustainability behaviour change programs. He lives in Melbourne.

Book details:

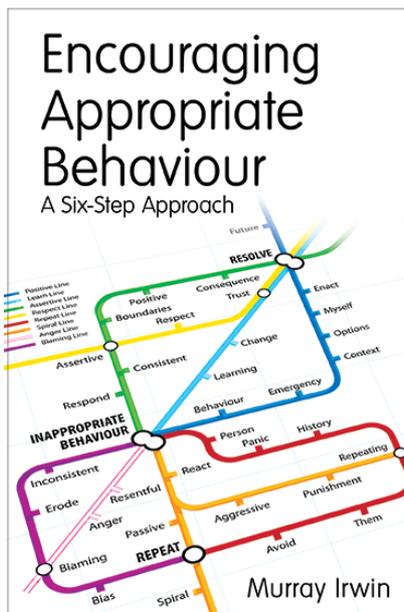
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Full media information available at www.encouraging-appropriate-behaviour.com/press-kit

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Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour: A Six-Step Approach

If you find yourself dealing with unacceptable behaviour the *Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour* can help.



Follow the six BECOME steps of B-behaviour, E-emergency, C-context, O-options, M-myself and E-enact.

These steps:

- Pin point **what** the behaviour is.
- Explore **when** and **why** it occurs.
- Help work out **how** to encourage change.

This gives you a logical and consistent way of approaching problem behaviours.

Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour contains:

- 14 principles of how to approach situations.
- 13 tools to help understand the problem.
- 10 response styles.
- 20 effective strategies to try.

Case studies show you how to put these into practice as you follow the six steps.

There is now no excuse to use the same response time after time. If you work with people, this book will BECOME your guide to successfully encourage appropriate behaviour.

Murray Irwin is a freelance outdoor educator and adventure therapy group-leader with 13 years experience. For five years he worked with at risk youth and spent three years designing and delivering award winning sustainability behaviour change programs.

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Murray Irwin - Biographical details

38 words

Murray Irwin is a freelance outdoor educator and adventure therapy group-leader with 13 years' experience. For five years he worked with at-risk youth and spent three years designing and delivering award winning sustainability behaviour change programs.

128 words

Murray has been leading groups in outdoor and adventure activities over the past 13 years.

After studying outdoor leadership through Swinburne University, he led school groups for the Outdoor Education Group and later worked at Geelong Grammar's Timbertop campus. For five years Murray worked with at-risk youth. This included a 20-day residential program at Typo Station, a employment pathways and education program for the Brotherhood of St Lawrence and 14-day residential program with Youth Enterprise Trust.

His 3 years at Environment Victoria involved development and delivery of behaviour change programs that promoted environmentally sustainable behaviours. Prior to becoming a youth worker, Murray was a commercial finance manager for 13 years. When not hiking or paddling Murray enjoys reading non fiction. He currently lives in Melbourne.

260 words

Murray Irwin is a freelance outdoor educator and adventure therapy group leader with 13 years' experience. For five years he worked with at-risk youth and spent three years designing and delivering award winning sustainability behaviour change programs.

Completing a Diploma of Recreation with Swinburne University, Murray led week long bushwalking, rafting and canoeing expeditions with school groups. Teaching outdoors skills along with environmental awareness, leadership and personal development, he has worked for the Outdoor Education Group, Evolve and Geelong Grammar - Timbertop.

Fascinated by the therapeutic aspects of outdoor adventure led Murray to work with at-risk youth. His four years experience at Youth Enterprise Trust (YET) and Typo Station forms the basis of his book. The work was intense. A remote cattle property in Queensland was the base for YET's 14-day residential program, with Typo Station's 20-day program including a nine-day hike in remote areas of Victoria. In 2005 he began documenting what he had learnt about changing behaviours.

Murray worked for the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, twice being a team leader for six-month long workplace skills training programs. He later worked for Environment Victoria promoting behaviours that reduced water and energy use and later oversaw all of their behaviour change programs.

Murray's first career was a commercial finance manger but after 13 years he gave up banking to pursue his love for the outdoors. When not outdoors hiking or paddling a river,

he enjoys reading non-fiction. His most recent major adventure was two-months trekking and kayaking in Nepal. He currently lives in Melbourne.

445 words

Murray Irwin is a freelance outdoor educator and adventure therapy group-leader with 13 years' experience. For five years he worked with at-risk youth and spent three years designing and delivering award winning sustainability behaviour change programs. He has just written his first book *Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour: A Six Step Approach*.

Murray grew up in Western Australia and his first career was in banking. After 13 years he gave up being a commercial finance manager to pursue his love for the outdoors. Completing a Diploma of Recreation with Swinburne University in Victoria, he has since spent most of the past 12 years working with young people as a youth worker and educator.

As an outdoor educator Murray led week long bushwalking, rafting and canoeing expeditions with school groups, teaching outdoors skills along with environmental awareness, leadership and personal development. He has worked for the Outdoor Education Group, Evolve and Geelong Grammar - Timbertop.

Fascinated by the therapeutic aspects of outdoor adventure led Murray to working with at-risk youth. He credits the four years at Youth Enterprise Trust (YET) and Typo Station for much of the practical knowledge that forms the basis of this book. The work was intense. A remote cattle property in Queensland was the base for YET's 14-day residential program, with Typo Station's 20-day residential program including a nine-day hike in remote areas of Victoria, of which Murray is a veteran of many expeditions. Spending days on end with groups of adolescences confronting issues was rewarding but challenging. In 2005 he began documenting what he had learnt about changing behaviours.

Murray worked for the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, twice being a team leader for six-month long workplace skills training programs. Supporting 10 young adults to gain workplace skills and experience tested his abilities in group management at times, as they completed projects like fencing, weed removal and tree planting.

Concerned about environmental issues he worked for Environment Victoria, a not-for-profit organisation running behaviour change programs. At Environment Victoria he worked with local communities and groups to promote behaviours that reduced water and energy use. Drawing on his past experiences, he taught applied learning certificate students leadership skills and sustainable behaviours. Murray later took on a senior management role overseeing all of their community education and behaviour change programs for groups as diverse as seniors, low income families, recently arrived refugees and multicultural communities.

Murray continues to freelance on outdoor programs for a variety of organisations. When not outdoors hiking or paddling a river, he enjoys reading non-fiction. His most recent major adventure was two-months trekking and kayaking in Nepal. He currently lives in Melbourne.

Author Question and Answer

Who should buy your book?

What are the benefits of using this approach?

Why should people buy your book instead of a different book on the subject?

Can you explain why this book is different?

What will you learn from the book?

What is the central idea discussed in the book?

What are some examples of solutions you propose to deal with difficult behaviour?

What evidence supports the idea's in your book?

How controversial is the approach offered?

What credentials do you have in the subject area?

What is your personal background and how did it inspire this book?

Tell us about yourself?

What do you do when your not writing?

How come the book price is so cheap?

What's the hardest part in teach people how to deal with difficult behaviour?

Who should buy your book?

I wanted this to be a practical guide for anyone dealing with inappropriate behaviour. So it should appeal to a range of users from parents looking for help to those who work in jobs that bring them into contact with people who have behaviour problems. That might be jobs like teaching, counselling and youth work. Also volunteers who coach or run groups for young people will find it offers suggestions. And students studying humanities at university level will also find it useful in connecting the theory and practice of dealing with behaviour.

What are the benefits of using this approach?

Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour gives the reader four things:

- Six steps to follow
- 14 principles
- 13 tools
- 20 strategies

The benefits of these are:

Using the six steps:

- creates a structure that helps give you a sense that you have control of the situation
- helps you maintain a calm and consistent approach even when your really emotional
- allows you to remember what to do
- sheds light on the situation in a fair and unbiased way
- can help you to choose where to focus your energy, based on the circumstances
- helps come up with new ideas and possibilities to explore as you address each step
- allows you to quickly and simply analyse situations.

Having the principles to follow:

- helps you avoid pitfalls
- gives you important insights
- builds your self confidence to handle situations effectively.

Having a range of tools to choose from:

- can change the way you see peoples behaviour
- reveals other possibilities and perspectives
- helps you use and role model assertive behaviour
- builds your knowledge and understanding about the behaviour.

Providing a range of possible strategies:

- allows you to create new ways of dealing with issues
- empowers you by giving you more response choices
- gives you powerful and proven options for taking charge of situations.

Why should people buy your book instead of a different book on the subject?

What Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour does is provide a generalised approach to any behaviour. It shows how to narrow down what the behaviour is and then help you understand when and why it is occurring. Now you are in a position to make an informed decision on how to respond.

It gives you the six BECOME steps of behaviour, emergency, context, options, myself and enact. These steps enable you to make an informed decisions on choosing options and strategies. It offers suggestions on ways of responding and specific strategies to try. The difference is that I have not been too prescriptive on when or why you should use a strategy. I give a menu of options for the reader to choose from and then a way in which they can work out which of those is most likely to work for their situation.

Can you explain why this book is different?

The key differences is who I was trying to write for, what I thought they needed to know and how do you remember it all. I tried to write for anyone who has to deal with inappropriate behaviour. Step by step instructions about what to think about and then what options they have. It can be adapted to any setting.

Having theory is great but for many people just want to know what to do in practice. There is always going to be a need for some background information but that is kept to the bear minimum. I made sure all the information gets used at some point within the 6 steps.

Because it uses a general framework - the six BECOME steps - that can be used in any situation it helps you remember it all. It is just like first aid training that uses steps to help you remember what to do. Providing lots of great stuff can lose its usefulness if you cannot remember what to do. I have provided a system to help overcome this.

What will you learn from the book?

The short answer is how to deal with unacceptable behaviour. There is a range of things that helps achieve that. The book provides the six BECOME steps of B-behaviour, E-emergency, C-context, O-options, M-myself and E-enact. Following these steps enables people to:

- pin-point what the behaviour is
- explore when and why it occurs
- help work out how to encourage change.

This gives you a logical and consistent way of approaching problem behaviours.

Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour also discusses:

- 14 principles of how to approach situations
- 13 tools to help understand the problem
- 10 response styles
- 20 effective strategies to try.

Case studies are used to demonstrate how to put this into practice as you follow the six steps.

What is the central idea discussed in the book?

To address inappropriate behaviour it is helpful to have a process to follow. Especially when emotions are high. It helps ensure the problem gets addressed and does not make matters any worse. I developed six steps to follow which cover the what, when, why and how. The six BECOME steps are:

Behaviour

Many people get stuck focusing on the person when it needs to be all about the specific behaviour. We generalise too much and that does not help the person understand what needs to change.

Emergency

Well we need to ensure everyone is safe so this step focus attention on this issue.

Context

We can be too quick to blame the person without considering the situation they are in. The context of the situation needs to be understood but also possible reasons behind the behaviour. If you do not address the underlying reason it is unlikely that you can resolve the behaviour effectively. There is a tendency to simply want to stop the inappropriate behaviour rather than look to encourage replacing it with something that is appropriate to meet the persons need.

Options

We can fail to use a variety of options in response to behaviour and tend to do the same thing all the time. There is lots of ways to resolve and respond to situations, so lets use them.

Myself

There can be plenty of ways and times when you are dealing with a behaviour that is the result of something you did. That means you are a part of the context. Stepping back and thinking about what your part it in all is can help ensure that you act fairly and consistently.

Enact

Doing nothing basically means the same as agreeing. If you do nothing, nothing will change. So once you have gone through the what, when, why and how in the other five steps it is time to do something about the behaviour.

What are some examples of solutions you propose to deal with difficult behaviour?

One of the simplest tools is using I-messages to communicate. It is structuring sentences stating with **I feel** (*then stating your feelings*) **when** (*and then stating the behaviour that triggered the feelings*). What is great about it is that it lets the person know how you feel and the behaviour they need to change. Not only that, it helps stop blaming and putting down the other person which generally does not help the situation.

Teaching others to use I-messages gives them a way to effectively communicate when they have problems with others behaviour. That way they can sort out their own issues without needing outside help. The thing to remember is that while I-messages are simple, that does not mean they are easy. Like any skill practice is needed to get them working well.

A favourite strategy of mine is building and eroding. It works on the concept that any behaviour will build or erode the expectations of others. Lets take being late as an example. If someone is always on time that builds the expectation that they will be somewhere when they say they will be. People begin to trust the person to be there on time and that they can believe them when they say something. If they are late all the time that erodes people trust in what they say and do. So I would be saying something like "I feel annoyed when people regularly turn up late. It erodes the level of trust because I do not know when to belief them about what time they will turn up."

There is a chapter on forming behaviour agreements. Many groups and settings like schools have rules to live by. What should be in those rules and how do you frame them? Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour goes into detail about that. A downfall of some agreements is they focus on the things you should not do. You really need an agreement to focus on what you want people to do. Take *we will respect ourselves, others and the environment* for example. These eight words sum up lots about how you want people to act. One of the key points is having a discussion about the expectations with everyone involved. People will need to know how you show respect. If you don't then you generally get excuses like "I didn't know".

What evidence supports the idea's in your book?

Using a framework or steps has been used in many area's to help people understand and develop solutions. It is widely practiced in emergency management so the methodology is nothing new. I just developed a new series of steps to use, the BECOME steps. The content comes from well established branches of practical and theoretical psychology and counselling.

The foundation of response style curve in the book is based on behaviour therapy which goes back to the 1950's. This lays out 10 possible styles with which you can use to try and bring about change. Behaviour therapy focuses on what is happening in the environment that effects behaviour. It produced foundation psychological theories like operant conditioning and social learning.

Many strategies in the book are based on cognitive behaviour therapy approaches. This began to integrate what we were thinking (called cognitions) with what was happening in the environment or situation. Cognitive behaviour therapy developed out of behaviour therapy. People like Ellis, Beck and Meichenbaum developed their own ways of approaching this along with others.

Many of the principles and a number of strategies come from solutions focused practice. This has been around since the late 1970's when Steve De Shazer & colleagues began developing it.

The aggression risk assessment is based on training used by the San Francisco Police Force, as well as assault response training that has been run overseas and Australia since the early 1990's.

Understanding why the behaviour is occurring is important in trying to choose the most effect strategy to use. Many people would have heard of Maslow's theory of needs which dates back to 1970. While the book does not advocate trying to psychoanalyse others, this theory does offer a helpful way of understanding why a behaviour might be occurring.

How controversial is the approach offered?

Unsurprisingly, there still continues to be controversy about how to deal with inappropriate behaviour. Is it okay to use physical aggression like smacking a child? I think opinion either way comes down to more about the values the person holds then to what is being suggested by the social and psychological research. So when I suggest you should focus on encouraging appropriate behaviour rather than on the bad behaviour there is going to be people who will disagree.

I want to stress that when I say focus on encouraging appropriate behaviour it does not mean you totally disregard or never use consequences. We need to have balance so I do not recommend using just one way of going about things. That is why I created the style curve to show 10 various ways you can respond to situations so you are not locked in to one way.

But I do not believe that physical punishment should be used. As a youth worker I never used it and we had great outcomes. Really what physical punishment communicates is that I am bigger or more powerful than you so do as I say or I will hurt you. It is not a good message and there is plenty of evident that this leads to increased aggressive behaviour when you use physically punishment.

What credentials do you have in the subject area?

Much of what is in the book comes from my own practical experiences working with youth. I studied a Diploma in Outdoor Leadership and then spent two years full time leading outdoor education groups. When you take a new group of students bushwalking and rafting every week you get to see a lot of different personalities and behaviours. I then spent five years with various organisations working with youth at risk. I learnt a great deal from the other staff I worked along side. There was plenty of behavioural issues to deal with, especially because I was involved in residential programs where you live along side the young people. One residential program I worked on was for 20 days.

I like to learn new things, especially when I can put it into some form of practical use. So I have done lots of research and reading. It is sort of come about the opposite way around. I got the experience then learnt the relevant theory.

What is your personal background and how did it inspire this book?

I wanted to know how do you change peoples behaviour? I realised was that I was doing it but only on auto pilot - unconscious competence they call it. I began to wonder how would I ever be able to teach someone what I did. I left school and went into banking ending up a commercial lending manager. I travelled for year around Australia and loved being out in the bush. That lead me to studying outdoor leadership. I was going to be an adventure tour guide but then I found out about outdoor education. Teaching young people by using the outdoors and adventure seemed so natural and it made the work more challenging and meaningful.

Eventually working in outdoor education led to me working with at risk young men at Typo Station. It was a residential program where you live onsite with the young people. Each program lasted 20 days broken up by two weekend home visits. The biggest challenge was the nine day hike but the rewards were great as well. I did that for three years.

But I never really answered the question that I had arrived at Typo with. How do you change peoples behaviour? So in 2005 I began to write out idea's about what I had been doing. Then I started research it and eventually came up with a set of actions and tools that has finally over time become Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour.

Tell us about yourself?

I am generally reflective and a private sort of person. I think most people see me as being more introverted than extroverted. I like to focus on what is real and of practical value so some might describe me as analytical and objective. I always try and do the best I can with what I have got. I also like to read. I am an inquisitive type and am always asking myself why or how does that work so most of what I read is non fiction.

Being outdoors is a big part of making myself feel happy. I can happily work inside but I really notice it if I don't get to spend much time in the outdoors. I try and walk or ride my bike everyday or at the very least sit on the balcony to read. But every time I head to the bush I notice myself relaxing and feeling content. I need to get a regular outdoors adventure fix.

This goes back to my teenage years when I used to surf. I was never any good but just loved the freedom and being out in the surf trying to work with it. I learnt some good lessons surfing. The biggest was you have to work with nature, it's too powerful to be able to tame or control it.

Human nature really intrigues me. Once I started to work in outdoor education I then began to delve deeper into how people learn and change. That started the search that ended up in me writing Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour.

What do you do when you are not writing?

Writing has never been a full time occupation for me. I doubt if it ever will. I really enjoy working with people in the outdoors so I do freelance work leading groups. I do outdoor education, some youth at risk work and work with people recovering from mental illness. I am also establishing a training course based on my book.

How come the book price is so cheap?

I did not want the price to become a huge barrier for people because Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour includes useful life skills. I have been inspired by all the open source and creative commons projects on the internet which provide information for free. While I cannot afford to give the book away, I want it within reach of most people's budgets.

Also publishing is changing which helps reduce the cost of book production. I have been able to keep production costs down by outsourcing it to professionals which means only paying only for the time they worked on the project. There is no full time publishing team to pay. Now with printing on demand available, when an order comes in and it can be printed overnight and then sent out. That means you do not have to print a huge number of books to have in stock that you have to recoup the cost of. For smaller publishers like myself it is now possible to produce high quality books for really reasonable prices.

What's the hardest part in teaching people how to deal with difficult behaviour?

They are trying to find solutions and are sometimes hoping to find one magic trick that will solve all their problems. In reality there is no instant solution and in fact it is a process that takes time. So managing people's expectations is difficult as it is a delicate balancing act. You want to give people hope and encouragement that it is within their ability to resolve issues but you do not want to promise the impossible. Unrealistic expectations lead people to giving up when they do not see instant results. Behaviour problems usually build up over time - sometimes a long time - so you cannot expect one solution will fix everything overnight.