

The Bees Framework

An exploration tool for sense-making behaviour in early childhood

Behaviours

Emotions

Energy

Senses

Overview

The origin of outward behaviours is more complex than a child simply choosing to misbehave or be defiant. Behaviours are not always the result of an immediate trigger and may be accumulative based on ongoing stressors or unmet needs. It is important to understand the broader developmental profile of the child, and their unique developmental pathway when deciding how to co-regulate alongside the child. This Bees Framework is an exploration tool that enables you to think more deeply about behaviour and to identify developmentally meaningful responses.





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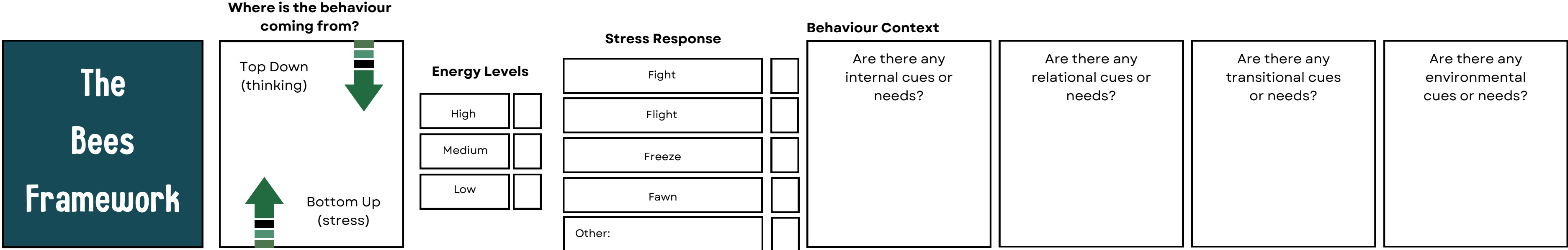
The **Bees Framework** is a reflective tool for understanding a child's regulation, healthy habits, energy states, stress responses, and underlying needs. It encourages educators to identify outwards behaviours non-judgementally and to think how this might be connected to energy states, emotions and senses (amongst other things). Importantly, the framework is not intended as an **additional piece of paperwork** (nobody needs that). Rather, it intends to guide your thinking and processing when co-regulating behaviour that is ongoing or perplexing.

So why Bees? Bees communicate through signals and dances, much like behaviours, which may look puzzling but always carry meaning if we pause to interpret them rather than swatting them away.

Through an exploration, you will explore four themes:

- **Behaviour:** The “at the surface” actions you see, which may be signalling stress, frustration, confusion, or an unmet need.
- **Emotions:** The child's feelings and how they might be experiencing them in their body and mind (e.g. anxious, sad, overwhelmed, excited).
- **Energy:** The intensity or rhythm of the child's internal state, from flat or low energy to highly charged or restless.
- **Sensory:** The child's sensory experiences, including how they respond to sights, sounds, touch, movement, body awareness (proprioception), balance (vestibular), and internal signals like hunger or toileting needs (interoception).

The aim of the Bees Framework is to move away **ABC approaches** that focus only on stopping behaviours rather than deeply understanding them and supporting the child to find sustainable self-regulation responses based on their unique developmental profile.



Healthy Habits & Established Strengths	Behaviour/s:
Children do well if they can. It helps to notice what healthy habits they already have, and which strengths we can draw on so the child builds capacity rather than feeling on the “behaviour backfoot.” Example: A child may sometimes find group times overwhelming, but they have already developed the healthy habit of seeking out a quiet corner when they need space. Their strength is in recognising their own need for regulation. By honouring this and giving them choice, such as enabling them to sit on the edge of the group or join in later, we build on their existing self-awareness instead of focusing only on the behaviour of “not sitting still.”	It can be helpful to identify the primary behaviour you want to support, as well as any secondary behaviours that might follow. This makes support more manageable and prevents the child from feeling overwhelmed. If there are multiple behaviours, focusing on the primary one often has a ripple effect that eases the others. Example: A child may become frustrated when trying to navigate play with peers (primary behaviour). This frustration can then lead to withdrawal and low energy, where the child disengages from play altogether (secondary behaviour). By supporting the frustration in the moment, through scaffolding, co-regulation, or giving the child alternative ways to join play, you may also prevent the later withdrawal.
Are there any obvious stressors?	Emotions, sensations and cues
- Think about internal, environmental, transitional and relational stressors. - Are there any demands being placed on the child? - Do they appear to be in fight/flight/freeze or fawn?	- Are there any cues to the child’s emotions or experiences? For example, crying, pacing, being red faced. - Are they able to body map i.e. point to where they feel it in the body? - Are you able to model or engage in emotions talk to help make connections?
Sensory differences and needs	Co-Regulation Approach
- Consider the top five (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste) - Consider movement needs (proprioception and vesitbular needs) - Consider self-care needs - Consider interoception (body sensations, bodily functions and emotions) - Are there environmental factors that could be triggering, disrupting or do you know of glimmers and glows?	- What are the strategies, techniques or co-regulatory support you will try? - how long will you utilise if before reviewing? - How are these shared with family, and other key people?

The Bees Framework

Where is the behaviour coming from?

Top Down (thinking)

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Bottom Up (stress)

Energy Levels

High

Medium

Low

Stress Response

Fight

Flight

Freeze

Fawn

Other:

Behaviour Context

Are there any internal cues or needs?

Are there any relational cues or needs?

Are there any transitional cues or needs?

Are there any environmental cues or needs?

Healthy Habits & Established Strengths	Behaviour/s:
Are there any obvious stressors?	Emotions, sensations and cues?
Sensory differences and needs	Co-Regulation Approach

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Review	Next steps?



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Lineage and Reference Influences

This work draws on and is deeply indebted to a lineage of thinkers, practitioners, and visionaries who have shaped contemporary understandings of behaviour, regulation, rest, liberation, and neurodiversity:

- **Mona Delahooke** – psychologist and author of *Beyond Behaviours* (2019), who reframes child behaviour through a neurodevelopmental and relational lens.
- **Stuart Shanker** – originator of the Self-Reg framework and author of *Self-Reg: How to Help Your Child (and You) Break the Stress Cycle and Successfully Engage with Life* (2016).
- **bell hooks** – Black feminist scholar and cultural critic, whose works such as *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) and *All About Love* (2000) illuminate the intersections of love, justice, pedagogy, and liberation.
- **Jennifer Mullan** – psychologist, activist, and author of *Decolonizing Therapy: Oppression, Historical Trauma & Politicising Your Practice* (2023).
- **Tricia Hersey** – founder of The Nap Ministry and author of *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* (2022), reframing rest as a portal to liberation.
- **Sandra Dalton-Smith** – physician and author of *Sacred Rest: Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Restore Your Sanity* (2017), articulating seven types of rest.
- **Dr Amy Laurent and Dr Jacquelyn Fede** – co-founders of Autism Level Up, whose frameworks reimagine energy regulation and engagement as accessible, affirming tools.
- **Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson** – authors of *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind* (2011), bridging neuroscience and relational caregiving.
- **Sonny Jane Wise** – activist and author of *We're All Neurodiverse* (2022), whose work amplifies neurodiversity as identity, culture, and lived experience.
- **Lori Desautels** – educator and author of *Connections over Compliance: Rewiring Our Perceptions of Discipline* (2020), integrating neuroscience into trauma-informed practice.
- **Warda Farah** – speech and language therapist, educator, and writer centring anti-racist and neurodiversity-affirming approaches in communication and education.
- **Dr Abi Miranda** – educational psychologist and researcher advancing inclusive and strengths-based practice in early childhood education.
- **Hailey R. Love** – researcher and advocate whose scholarship on inclusive early childhood education challenges deficit framings of disability and calls for justice-oriented practice.
- **Liz Pemberton** (The Black Nursery Manager) – anti-racist trainer, consultant, and speaker amplifying equity, justice, and critical reflection in the early years sector.
- This lineage is partial and ever-evolving; I remain indebted to the wider communities of scholars, practitioners, activists, and children themselves who continue to inform and inspire this work.