

Four Ways — Primary

Professional Learning, Coaching and Capacity Building: A school-wide approach to behaviour support and self-regulation. This school-wide model places an equal focus on positive outcomes for staff, students, families, and the whole school community.

Introduction

Four Ways provides primary schools with the knowledge, practical skills, resources and support to introduce and implement a consistent approach to behaviour support that has benefits for students, staff and families. It begins with a one-day professional learning course that teaches a set of responses to guide student behaviour and support emotional regulation in the moment.

The challenges that difficult student behaviour presents in primary schools are not something that can be solved quickly; it takes a long-term approach. Improving self-regulation and executive functioning involves the building of skills and maturity over time. Evidence supports that *Four Ways* will effectively contribute to this development; however, when problematic or disruptive behaviour occurs, teachers require methods that are effective in lessening such behaviours to create an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching. To do this, staff will select how they will respond depending on the category in which the behaviour sits. Every observable behaviour has context, and this will influence which category it belongs to and the response the teacher provides.

Four Ways has demonstrated effectiveness across diverse student populations, including neurodivergent students, students with experiences of trauma, learning disabilities and difficulties, and those experiencing social, emotional, and behavioural challenges. Where individual behaviour support plans are in place, the same four responses can be used, although it is common that they be tailored to what we know about the student.

What the initial training covers

The foundation. Participants explore the relationship between emotions and behaviour using the accessible framing of a reactive “old brain” (the mental accelerator) and a developing, reasonable “new brain” (the mental brakes) and how these two areas interact: often referred to as ‘*toggling*’. This is the back-and-forth traffic between these two areas: emotional signals travel up from the old brain, and the new brain sends thinking and calming signals back down. *Toggling* is a skill requiring repeated practice, which supports the brain development necessary for executive functioning, self-regulation, and self-control. The *Four Ways* methods are designed to guide behaviour and support emotions in the moment while at the same time achieving the long-term benefits mentioned previously. The course highlights the importance of avoiding emotional overload when supporting behaviour and why fewer words and calmness reduce demands on the student *and* the adult.



Training involves theory and practice to implement the *Four Ways* methods. These methods include:

Monitoring low-level behaviours. This involves making discrete observations without responding. The case for this strategic non-intervention is that low-level behaviour frequently decreases or corrects without action, and unnecessary intervention costs teaching time and adult composure. Participants work through a set of decision criteria — *What am I trying to achieve here? Is this behaviour impacting others? Can/will the student self-regulate?* — and practise techniques for holding position when the instinct to intervene is strong, because choosing our battles can be difficult.

Signalling to set limits on behaviours that are Not Ok. Prior to implementation, students are explicitly taught behaviour expectations, which behaviours are Not Ok, and what the signal — delivered in the form of a 1, 2 or 3 — means and represents. The signal is delivered clearly, calmly, discreetly and — critically — without over-explaining. On reaching a “3”, the student will be given the opportunity to Reset; this is a circuit breaker and a time for self-soothing. It is not a punitive measure. This is an important point for teachers and students to understand. The section closes on the importance of providing a fresh start following Reset and, if necessary, when to revisit or repair.

Emotion coaching to support regulation. The course covers the elements of emotion coaching, the first of which highlights the importance of being aware of situations where students are, or are likely to be, dysregulated, which allows for pre-emptive support. An emotion coaching template provides a simple process, preparing teachers to be more effective in co-regulation and building emotional intelligence in students. A further benefit is the building of trust and strengthening relationships.

Prompting positive behaviour. This is a method to encourage a specific response or positive behaviour by providing cues, reminders, or assistance. It helps create a structured and predictable environment where students know what is expected of them. Prompting involves four key components: teaching positive behaviour, prompting it, reinforcing it, and finally *fading*, so that it builds independence rather than dependence. It is important that we set limits on problem behaviour, but teaching the replacement or positive behaviour is more important. Most of the included resources are lesson plans that teachers can use to do this.

Delivery is participatory: behaviour categorisation activities using staff’s own contexts, group synthesis tasks, script writing and rehearsal, guided practice with the Reset decision pathway, live polling, and independent planning tasks. Participants finish with all the resources and information required to get started immediately.

Learning outcomes

On completion, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the relationship between emotional arousal, brain development and behaviour in terms accessible to colleagues, students, and parents.
2. Categorise observed behaviour into the four categories quickly and confidently.
3. Select and deliver the matched response for each category, across the school environment and according to students' needs.
4. Set limits on behaviour that is Not Ok without reasoning, explaining or escalating, and support students to Reset effectively.
5. Construct and deliver an emotion coaching script that names and validates emotion before moving to problem-solving.
6. Teach and prompt positive behaviour across multiple modes, reinforce it, and *fade* prompting to build student independence.
7. Recognise and avoid the practices that contribute to emotional overload in students and teachers.
8. Contribute to a consistent school-wide language and approach to behaviour guidance and reflect on its practice.
9. Explain the role of follow-up support in embedding the *Four Ways* model and sustaining consistent practice to attain identified outcomes across the school.

Included resources to support implementation and embed practice

Twenty-two resources are included in the training and support package: 5 for leadership and 17 for teachers, all structured around the four methods and communications. They are a connected set rather than a collection of handouts. More resources are always under development and are made available to schools that partner with us.

The resources provided include:

Signalling Resources

- **Categorising Behaviour Template:** It is recommended to categorise behaviour regularly in your classroom. Use this worksheet to help you review the behaviours as well as to identify when students are becoming dysregulated.
- **Signalling Lesson Plan:** One of the resources to help you prepare for conversations and lessons around the 1-2-3 with your students.
- **Signalling PowerPoint:** A PowerPoint resource to support the Signalling Lesson Plan and future classroom follow-up meetings highlighting behaviours that are 'Positive' or 'Not Ok'. It also includes information on the signalling and the Reset.
- **Cartoon Illustrations:** These can be used to support conversations and lessons around teaching 'Positive' behaviours and behaviours that are 'Not Ok'.
- **Role Play Scripts:** These scripts are very effective with younger students to illustrate the 1-2-3 process.
- **Classroom Posters:** These can be used as visual prompts with students.

Coach Resources

- **Emotion Coaching Template:** Use this worksheet to prepare for when emotion coaching may be needed. These are the times, places or situations you have identified in the dysregulated category on your categorising behaviours worksheet.
- **Emotion Coaching – Catalogue of Emotions:** Expand your emotional literacy with the Feelings Wheel.

Prompt Resources

- **Stay In Your Lane Lesson Plan:** Teach students when and how they can focus on themselves and the role of the teacher in behaviour support.
- **Stay In Your Lane PowerPoint:** A PowerPoint resource to support teaching students when and how they can focus on themselves and the role of the teacher in behaviour support.
- **Smart Ignore Lesson Plan:** Teach students to stay focused on themselves when another student's behaviour is distracting.
- **Smart Ignore PowerPoint:** A PowerPoint resource to support teaching students to stay focused on themselves when another student's behaviour is distracting.
- **Assertive Communication Lesson Plan:** Teach students to communicate assertively – in “just the right” way.
- **Assertive Communication PowerPoint:** A PowerPoint resource to support teaching students to use assertive communication – in “just the right” way.
- **Tap into your Wise Part Lesson Plan:** Teach students the concept of the “Wise Part” of the brain as a key self-regulation and decision-making strategy.
- **Tap into your Wise Part PowerPoint:** A PowerPoint resource to support teaching students to “tap into your wise part”.

Other resources

- **Tailoring *Four Ways* to Individual Students – 1-page template:** Use this to tailor the *Four Ways* implementation to support individual needs and as a communication tool to share modifications with other teachers, education assistants, support staff, leadership and parents. It holds a space where additional support and resources may be included.

Leadership resources

- ***Four Ways* letter for parents:** Introduce the *Four Ways* Program to families via your newsletter or handout.
- ***Four Ways* introductory video for parents:** Introduce the *Four Ways* Program to families via a video produced by Behaviour Tonics that can be shared with parents and caregivers.
- ***Four Ways* Flow Chart:** This flowchart and the processes described are intended to support the education and implementation of a school-wide approach to behaviour support and self-regulation. This is a guide only. Each school will select, adapt, and implement processes appropriate to its own context. Behaviour Tonics will be there to help if needed.
- ***Four Ways* School Certificate for your foyer:** Display in your administration foyer for families and prospective families.
- ***Four Ways* Staffroom Posters:** Display in your staffroom for staff only. These help keep best practice front of mind and prompt conversations.

Outcomes and benefits of a school-wide approach

The framework benefits any single classroom that adopts it. However, its value increases substantially at school-wide scale. Here are just some of the outcomes and benefits gained by a school-wide approach with *Four Ways*:

For Students:

- repeated practice in self-regulation and a sense of empowerment when it comes to behaviour choices;
- knowledge of behaviours that are positive and those that are Not Ok;
- clear and consistent boundaries;
- predictability in the responses adults provide to behaviour and emotions;
- more time spent learning;
- development of self-regulation and executive functioning;
- development of positive behaviour, empathy, kindness and social skills;
- an environment supporting physical and psychological safety through attunement, relationships, trust, and support.

For Leadership, Teachers and Education Assistants:

- a documented, defensible and evidence-informed approach that supports school behaviour and well-being practice;
- a concrete, transferable skill set that is simple and easy to remember;
- when working side by side, teachers and EAs use *Four Ways* to be more effective;
- less time and energy spent on behaviour and more time spent teaching;
- less stress and improved well-being;
- stronger collegiality, teamwork and shared professional language — consistency without loss of flexibility;
- increased job satisfaction;
- confidence and clarity when communicating with parents around student behaviour;
- continuity of practice...year on year.

For Parents and Carers:

- shared understanding of the school's practices;
- transparency about how behaviour is guided and why;
- knowing the two-way process for communicating behaviour concerns;
- education around children's emotions and behaviour and how the *Four Ways* helps growth at school and home;
- far less variation from one classroom to the next...year on year.

Measuring outcomes. All staff will be asked to complete a short online survey before the training day and again 4–6 months post-training. Separate survey links are issued to Years K–1, Years 2–6, education assistants and specialist teachers, so the data is specific to each cohort rather than averaged across the school. Responses are anonymous and gather both the behaviours that staff are experiencing from students and their views on what is working and what could be improved. Two meetings are included (1 pre- and 1 post-training) for reviewing and analysing the findings of these surveys. These meetings include consultation on how to improve and maintain the outcomes over time.

School-wide Partnership Package – For New Schools

Packages can also be tailored to a school's circumstances.

Inclusion	Included
Full day professional learning (7 hours; can be delivered over 2–4 sessions)	✓
Pre- and post-training survey (online), collation of data, sharing of results	✓
Training workbook	✓
Lesson plans and classroom resources	✓
Certificates (aligned with AITSL Standards)	✓
Phone and email support for Leadership and Teachers (12 months)	✓
Online Q&A, 1 per school term	✓
Full day on-site coaching, consultancy and capacity building	✓
Whole staff refresher session (after school)	✓
Parent information session on <i>Four Ways</i> Primary	✓
OPTIONAL EXTRAS: can be added to the first-year package by request	
Half or full day on-site coaching, consultancy and capacity building	
Capacity building masterclass	
<i>Four Ways</i> course for PARENTS	
Parent Workshops – Emotion Coaching, Supporting Anxiety, Teaching Independence	
New resources and lesson plans as they are developed	
Discounted training vouchers to train new staff (after the initial training)	

Descriptions of inclusions:

The training day. Seven hours of professional learning. Participants receive a training manual containing course notes, worksheets and lesson plans, and a Certificate of Completion. A promotional flyer is supplied for internal promotion to staff, and course list management, registrations and participant communications are handled through the Behaviour Tonics digital platform.

Delivery of training and support. As per our training agreement, *Four Ways* training can only be delivered by Behaviour Tonics consultants. The coaching component builds staff capacity to implement and sustain the approach successfully; schools may select members of the leadership and behaviour support team to work closely with our consultant to achieve this. Schools that partner with us are required to train new staff in the *Four Ways* professional learning with Behaviour Tonics. They may then access support and resources as per the school-wide approach partnership.

Pre- and post-training surveys. All staff will be asked to complete a short online survey before the training day and again 4–6 months post-training. Separate survey links are issued to Years K–1, Years 2–6, education assistants and specialist teachers, so the data is specific to each cohort rather than averaged across the school. Responses are anonymous and gather both the behaviours that staff are experiencing from students and their views on what is working and what could be improved. Two meetings are included (1 pre- and 1 post-training) for reviewing and analysing the findings of these surveys. These meetings include consultation on how to improve and maintain the outcomes over time.

Phone and email support for teachers and leadership (12 months). Teachers and leadership are encouraged to reach out by phone or email for individualised support in the first 12 months following the initial training. This helps to embed practice, clarify understanding, and receive support for higher tier behaviour.

FREE Online Q&A (1 per school term). These are offered by invitation only to all who have completed the *Four Ways* training. Held via Zoom after school, these sessions invite participants to submit questions in advance and to explore scenarios to troubleshoot any difficult situations. This is also an opportunity to gain further knowledge and understanding of *Four Ways* and embed practice.

On-site coaching and capacity building. Schools may select from the items below:

- Leadership team brief
- Observe teachers and students in classrooms before a 1:1 coaching and feedback session; this may include education assistants. Staff bring real classroom and playground situations for troubleshooting, and in-the-moment guidance is provided as challenges arise. The model builds staff confidence and competence in:
 - Connecting and co-regulating with students.
 - Setting limits calmly on difficult and disruptive behaviour.
 - Implementing and reviewing behaviour support plans.
 - Modelling empathy and kindness.
 - Drawing on practical skills that help staff stay calmer and less stressed when a student is distressed.
- Capacity building with leadership and the behaviour support team can include:
 - Using a template to develop school-wide philosophies and processes around the *Four Ways* that are relevant to each individual school.
 - Capacity building is a two-way street in that schools may have identified areas for improvement or that require troubleshooting. Behaviour Tonics will work with our partner schools to find solutions.
 - Preparing, reviewing and modifying Individual Behaviour Support Plans for students and communicating these to parents and Allied Health when required.
 - Increasing teacher and leadership skills in supporting and debriefing parents and carers following behaviour incidents or concerns about dysregulation.

Ultimately, capacity building aims to develop a group of the school's own in-house consultants who champion and drive the *Four Ways* school-wide approach.

Whole staff refresher session. An after-school session, usually involving all staff, providing Q&A, practical skill-building activities and troubleshooting of the situations in which behaviour or emotions are most challenging.

Parent information session on *Four Ways* Primary. A 30–60 minute session, giving parents and caregivers an overview of the school-wide approach, how it guides behaviour and promotes self-regulation, what it means for the school’s learning environment, and how it may help them and their children at home. This is one of the first steps in familiarising families with the *Four Ways* and building transparency and trust around it.

Optional Extras

Capacity building masterclass. An extension of the initial training and the capacity building completed previously.

***Four Ways* course for PARENTS. Running over two sessions.** A course for parents and caregivers of children aged 2 to 12, teaching the same four responses for use at home. It includes a parent workbook and handouts, a certificate of attendance, and follow-up support through four 60-minute live Q&A webinars across twelve months. Extending the same responses to home increases the exposure to the methods that support effective parenting, maturity, relationships, and positive behaviours.

Parent Workshops. Usually 90 minutes to 2 hours in length, they cover the following topics: Emotion Coaching, Supporting Anxiety, Teaching Independence. Content and methods taught are drawn from the evidence-based research behind *Four Ways*.

New resources and lesson plans as they are developed. As these are released, our school-wide partners will be provided with access.

Discounted training vouchers to train new staff after the initial school-wide PL. When schools partner with Behaviour Tonics, they will be given the option of pre-purchasing a bundle of training vouchers at the group discounted rates. The school will be allocated a coupon code that they will be able to use when registering participants in any of our regularly scheduled *Four Ways* training events – at the discounted rate.

Four Ways – The evidence and research base

References

All sources published 2005 or later. ▲ marks Australian studies, authors or agencies. Notes in italics give the setting, age group and study type.

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Next steps

For *Four Ways* course dates, package pricing, or to discuss an implementation plan for your school:

https://bit.ly/FourWaysPrimary_EnquireNow

<https://bit.ly/SchoolsWeWorkWith>

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