# Traffic Lights

The traffic light is a system for addressing problem behaviours. This is a level system in which a child can develop an understand of their own behaviour and learn to manage themselves. In this system, the levels of behaviour correspond to different levels on the “traffic light” – green, yellow, and red. Green displays when a child a showing good/calm behaviours. Yellow is the next level when the child is showing signs of disengagement or escalating behaviours, and red is the level on which the child is entering crisis point. The child moves to different levels in the system depending on his or her behaviour/mood throughout the day. The goal of the system is to motivate the child to control his or her own behaviour, when used in conjunction with a reward system the traffic lights can become a very effective strategy/ tool. The focus is not on punishment, but rather reinforcing the child for behaving appropriately.

Step 1

Use a crisis management chart to define what each individual young person’s crisis may look like. Each child is individual and will all therefore look different at each stage.

Step 2

Define the behaviours expected with each colour and ensure all staff working with the young person understands and has a consistent approach on what this may look like.

Step 3

Create a reward system that is achievable for the young person.

For eg: if he/she is able to remain on green for 2 out of 3 morning lesson, a period of ‘choose time’ may be offered as reward.

Step 4

Positively introduce the system to the young person using symbols, social stories and other forms of visual/verbal (none verbal where relevant) communication to support embedding all information.

# Tips for Success

* Be consistent. The more you stick with your plan consistently, the more likely the plan will be successful.
* Make sure the child has the chance to be successful right away. You want to initially set a goal that the young person is likely to meet the goal. You want to be able to reward and praise good behaviour, even if only for a short time, and then work up to extending the behaviour expectations to longer periods of time. The focus should be on preventing the child from moving to red by learning to manage his or her behaviour, and NOT on punishing the child by moving him or her to red.
* This must be an inclusive system in which the staff and young person work together.

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