



Toolkit: Addressing Aggression

Understanding what's underneath and supporting your child through emotional storms

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1. Introduction

Aggression is one of the hardest behaviours to face as a parent and one of the most misunderstood.

Whether it's hitting, biting, kicking, or throwing, these actions often come from a place of fear, frustration, or sensory overload.

This **Barney's Box** toolkit is here to help you step back from blame and step into calm, informed support. You are not a failure. You're a parent in the trenches, trying your best and we're here beside you.

2. What Aggression *Really* Means

Aggression isn't a choice. It's a **signal** — a communication that your child is overwhelmed and doesn't yet have another way to cope.

It may be your child's way of saying:

- "I'm scared."
- "I don't understand."
- "I'm in pain."
- "This is too much."
- "I need control."

Aggressive behaviour is not your child being "naughty", it's your child struggling.



Barney's Box Reminder: It's not about stopping the aggression, it's about understanding the *need underneath it*.



3. Common Triggers

- **Sensory Overload** (noise, light, textures)
- **Changes in Routine** or unexpected events
- **Communication Frustration**
- **Anxiety or Fear**
- **Pain or Illness**
- **Transition or Task Demand**
- **Emotional Spillover** from earlier stress

Use the “Aggression Tracker” to log triggers and patterns.

4. Step by Step: Responding to Aggression

Step 1: Keep everyone safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Move nearby children/pets away ● Protect yourself calmly ● Use a soft, low tone “You’re safe. I’m here.”
Step 2: Remove demands	<p>Don’t try to reason in the moment. Back off. Say:</p> <p>“We’ll talk later. You are safe.”</p>
Step 3: De-escalate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use calming tools (weighted blanket, dark room, music) ● Stay quiet. Your presence is enough. ● Offer preferred items <i>after</i> they show signs of calming.
Step 4: Reflect later	<p>When calm, gently explore:</p> <p>“What was too much?” “How did your body feel?” “Next time, can we try X?”</p> <p>Let the child lead. If they’re non-verbal, use visuals or emotion cards.</p>

5. Long-Term Strategies

Predictability

- Use visual schedules
- Give advance warnings before transitions
- Stick to consistent routines

Communication Support

- Use visual choices
- Teach phrases like “Too loud!” or “I need a break”

Regulation Practice

- Build in movement, sensory breaks, and quiet time every day
- Use calming scripts:

“My body feels hot. I need to cool down.”

Safe Expression

- Provide safe alternatives to express anger:
 - Punch pillow
 - Stomp mat
 - Scream into a cushion
 - Scribble fast with crayons

6. Supporting Siblings and Family

Aggression can create tension for siblings, they may feel unsafe or confused. It's okay to acknowledge that.

Tips:

- Validate their feelings without blaming the autistic child
- Give siblings tools to signal when they need space
- Create “safe zones” where they can retreat
- Have regular one on one time with each sibling

Say:

“Your brother had a hard moment, it wasn't your fault. Let's talk about how that felt for you.”

7. Creating Predictability and Comfort

- Make a “holiday visual timetable” - simple drawings or photos work well
- Practice transitions at home (e.g., “Pretend we’re going to a café”)
- Build in one **anchor activity** per day: something familiar and calming
- Use a “quiet space card” your child can hand to you

This gives them a sense of control in unpredictable environments.



8. Tools & Templates

- Aggression Trigger Tracker
- Visual Emotion Cards
- Safe Anger Expression Chart
- Reflection Sheets for After a Meltdown
- Crisis Plan for Parents

(Available from barneysbox.co.uk/resources)

9. Further Support

- [National Autistic Society – Managing Behaviour](#)
- [Contact – Support for Families with Disabled Children](#)



Barney’s Tip: Print and stick planners, checklists and trackers somewhere visible, or use digitally. Choose what feels right.

10. Final Thoughts

Aggression is not the end of the story. It's the beginning of understanding.

Every time you respond with calm, compassion, and curiosity, even when it's so *hard*, you're teaching your child they are safe, even at their worst.

That matters more than anything.

At **Barney's Box**, we stand with you. This is not your fault. You are doing your best - and your best is building a more regulated, supported, and connected future.

Keep going. You've got this. We've got you.

The Barney's Box Team

www.barneysbox.co.uk