

Catharsis Behaviour Policy **(includes search and confiscation guidance)**

1. Introduction

At Catharsis, we are committed to delivering therapeutic services that are trauma-informed, inclusive, and responsive to the individual needs of the young people (YP) we support. Our approach to behaviour is underpinned by compassion, respect, and an understanding that behaviour is a form of communication.

This Behaviour Policy should be read in conjunction with the policies of the host institution (school or other setting), as well as the Catharsis:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

2. Our Ethos

Catharsis therapists understand that children and young people may present with challenging behaviours due to experiences such as:

- Trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Bereavement or loss
- Exposure to domestic violence / abuse
- Social and emotional difficulties
- Communication difficulties

Our role is to support emotional wellbeing and foster a sense of safety and trust through therapeutic relationships and clear boundaries.

At Catharsis, we draw on Polyvagal Theory to guide our understanding of how the nervous system impacts behaviour, emotional regulation, and the ability to engage safely in relationships. This theory highlights the role of the vagus nerve in detecting safety or threat and shaping behavioural responses accordingly. By recognising when a young person is operating from a state of fight, flight, or freeze, therapists can tailor their interventions to help the individual return to a regulated state. Creating predictable, calm, and respectful environments allows young people to feel safe enough to engage, build trust, and begin the therapeutic process.

3. Guiding Principles to working with YP

- **Unconditional Positive Regard:** We meet YP with empathy, not judgement – everyone can expect to make mistakes.
- **Non-Punitive Approach:** Our aim is to understand and not shame; we use knowledge of the nervous system to help regulate emotional responses.
- **Consistency:** We work in collaboration with schools / settings to maintain clear boundaries and consistent behavioural expectations.
- **Rights and Responsibilities:** We support the rights of everyone to be treated with respect and all Catharsis staff will model courteous behaviour

4. Managing Behaviour

Catharsis therapists will:

- Recognise that behaviour may signal unmet needs.
- Use de-escalation strategies to support self-regulation.
- Record and report behaviour concerns in line with the host institution's MIS systems.
- Challenge child-on-child abuse or harmful language/actions in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Where a YP is excluded or suspended from school, Catharsis will continue to provide therapeutic support where possible. This may mean offering alternatives such as

online therapy or sessions at the Catharsis Therapy Centre (where risk assessments allow).

- Support the YP in exploring emotions related to a behaviour incident; help develop healthy coping strategies and explore alternative ways of behaving.

5. Risk and Safety

Catharsis holds a duty of care to its staff and clients. If any therapist or staff member is at risk:

- The school or institution must take immediate action to mitigate risk.
- Therapists reserve the right to terminate a session if safety is compromised and must report this to the relevant manager immediately.
- Restorative approaches are encouraged following behavioural incidents, including opportunities to reflect in a safe and non-judgemental environment

Catharsis understands that sometimes there will be concerns around the potential for harmful or dangerous items being brought into school, and this may necessitate checks are carried out. Catharsis therapists will not ask pupils to turn out their pockets nor look in their bags. They will however discuss any concerns with a member of the school leadership team and ensure incident reports are completed in line with Catharsis policy.

Review

Implementation / Review date	Reviewers
August 2025	Hannah Robertson
Next Review date	Keren Adler
August 2026	