Webinar

14 November 2013

Growing healthy minds

Supporting children’s mental health
Panellists
Professor Donna Cross (WA based Professor of Child and Adolescent Health, Edith Cowan University)
Ms. Tracey Simpson (NSW based Early Childhood Consultant)
Dr Louise Porter (QLD based Clinical and Child Psychologist)

Facilitator:
Mr Mark Sparvell (Associate Director of Professional Learning, Principals Australia Institute)
By the end of this webinar you will...

- Be better equipped to recognise, understand and respond to emotional, social and behavioural difficulties in children who attend early childhood and primary school settings

- Take home tips and strategies for building a positive community in schools and ECEC services, including engaging families and promoting emotional and social well being
Ground rules

To help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to gain the most from the live webinar, we ask that all participants consider the following ground rules:

• Be respectful of other participants and panellists. Behave as if this were a face-to-face professional development activity.

• Please post your comments and questions for panellists in the ‘general chat’ box. For help with your technical issues, please post in the ‘technical help’ chat box. Be mindful that comments posted in the boxes can be seen by all participants and panellists.

• Your feedback is important. Please provide your feedback by completing the short survey which will appear as a pop up when you exit the webinar.
Professor Donna Cross
Professor of Child and Adolescent Health, Edith Cowan University
“You can’t pull up your socks if you don’t know what your socks are”

Guru Bob 1998
Changeable: Protective Factors

- Social competence
- Positive thoughts about self
- Optimism
- Moral beliefs and values
- Good coping skills
- Internal locus of control
- Successful achievement
- Decision making skills
- Physical activity

From: Commonwealth Dept of Health and Aged Care. 2000 Promotion and Early Intervention for Mental Health.
Relationships are hard

• Positive relationship with children who have difficulty controlling their emotions and behaviours can have a positive effect on their outcomes.
• But positive relationships with some children are hard to establish.
• Easy to feel like you are ‘in a rut’ or that you are playing out a ‘script’ – and not a good one!
Why a Good Times Bank?

- In dealing with children who have difficulty with emotions and behaviour, you can quickly exhaust the ‘store’ of goodwill.
- Banking up positive experiences to ‘draw upon’ when needed.
Why use the Good Times Bank?

• Relationships can get ‘stuck’ in patterns that are hard to break out of; the GT Bank helps you work a way out of a stuck relationship

• Provides context to understand a child’s interests, strengths, weaknesses better

• The GT Bank allows child to see you in a different light (and vice versa) and provides an opening for new modes of interacting
The Adult Role …

Follow the FONLD Plan…

• Follow the child’s lead
• Observe the child
• Narrate what the child is doing
• Label the child’s emotions
• Develop and communicate relational themes through core messages
### Relational Messages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Message</th>
<th>How to Develop It</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in you</td>
<td>Use of observation and narration</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can be a helper</td>
<td>Indicate verbally “I am here to help you with that if you need me”</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am consistent</td>
<td>Establish and maintain schedule and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will support you</td>
<td>Maintain contact and composure even when child is upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am safe</td>
<td>Create contexts where it is okay to make mistakes</td>
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How to help...

Listen without interrupting
Sit / walk shoulder to shoulder
Take their concerns seriously
Encourage them to talk in detail about incident
Prompt with open ended questions
Show you believe them
Talk about what tried / worked / could work
Talk about options
End with encouragement

It’s about relationships...
Most teaching successful strategies

- Proactive classroom management
- ‘Formal’ grouping
- Cooperative group learning
- Clear agreed rules and rewards for compliance
- Increase contact with pro-social peers
- Peer support for behaviour change
- Social skills training
- More emphasis on whole-school involvement and support
Some students truly need help to maintain self-control …regulating emotions is a big job.
Children need support as they learn to do it for themselves.
Tracey Simpson
Early childhood consultant
Unpacking the story

• Always look through different eyes
• Finding the opportunities for multiple perspectives
• Take time
Creating a sense of belonging

• Every new child and their family brings new culture
• Beginning the relationships
• Working together- trust and power
Observe, discuss, reflect

• The very best observations, interpretations and actions for this child and this family

• It’s easy as ABC- or is it?

• Including children in the discussion
Everyday professional responses to social and emotional difficulties

- Modelling
- Supporting and reassuring
- Stories
- Talking
- Practice
Making the links - other supports

- Preschool and school
- Families and community
- Expertise and services
- Resource material
  - KidsMatter resources - all accessible online
Dr Louise Porter
Clinical and child psychologist
Fostering friendships

• Around one-third of individuals are introverted.
• They tend to have a depth of friendships, not a breadth.
• No one has more than one or two intimate friends at any one time.
• It is not the number of friendships, but their quality, which determines individuals’ social satisfaction.
Fostering friendships

- Children choose friends at their developmental level.
- If there is no one available at their developmental level, they will either gravitate to adults or play alone.
- Although it can look as if these children lack social skills, in fact they lack social peers.
- Therefore, we need to ensure that children have access to older children or to children at their developmental level.
Social groupings

- **Form activity clubs** with vertical age structures, to meet at lunch times. Clubs not only meet children’s needs for activity and for social inclusion, but are also a powerful way to prevent school bullying.

- **Examples:** a gardening group could grow produce for the junior chef group, to make goods for sale by the group responsible for the tuckshop. Also a book club, chess club, computer group, art group (in various media) and woodwork group.
Parent collaboration

- Recruit the expertise of parent volunteers to lead these groups.
- Invite local agencies (e.g., Mothers and Babies nurses) to deliver their services in school grounds.
- Provide weekly coffee mornings for the parent volunteers and those attending services.
- Ask community specialists to present monthly talks on topics of interest to parents.
- Invite cultural elders and community leaders to present (during class time) their cultural knowledge and stories.
• Meeting their children’s needs is the best way to win parents’ respect.

• Arrange for an IQ assessment for Sophia, to gauge the extent of her learning advances (possible giftedness).

• On the basis of those results, develop and individualised education plan that offers her advanced work, and access to intellectual peers (e.g., subject skipping or, if giftedness is found, perhaps grade skipping).

• Ask community specialists to present monthly talks on topics of interest to parents.

• Once these measures have earned the teachers the trust of the parents, ask if they would be willing for their son to see a speech pathologist and audiologist, to give his teachers the information they need to assist his language skills.
Further resources

Social skills
• Elman & Kennedy-Moore  *Unwritten rules of friendship*
• Haber, J.  *Bully-proof your child for life*
• Thompson et al.  *Best friends; worst enemies*

Giftedness
• Niehart, Reis, Robinson & Moon  *Social and emotional development of gifted children*
• Porter, L.  *Gifted young children*

Collaboration with parents
• Porter, L.  *Teacher-parent collaboration*

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Q & A session
Thank you for your participation

- Please ensure you complete the exit survey before you log out (it will appear on your screen after the session closes). Certificates of attendance for this webinar will be issued in 4-5 weeks.
- Each participant will be sent a link to online resources associated with this webinar within 1-2 days.
- Keep an eye out for more webinars like this next year.
- For more information about KidsMatter visit www.kidsmatter.edu.au.
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  - www.facebook.com/KidsMatterForFamilies
  - www.facebook.com/KidsMatterPrimary
  - www.twitter.com/KidsMatterAus
Becoming a KidsMatter school ...

• If you would like any further information on how to become a KidsMatter school visit the website.

• Simply click on *Primary Schools* and follow the link on *How to be involved*. This also provides a contact for you to speak with KidsMatter staff in your state or territory.