

# Helping Children Learn How To Feel, Think & Behave Safer Using the Protective Behaviours Process

- ✓ **It is really helpful if all** adults respond consistently using 'I' language as in "I think ...." or "I feel ....." or "I... (insert the behaviour) as in "I made that cake, drew that picture, ate the last biscuit!"
- ✓ **Acknowledge** feelings from birth - physical and emotional, and help children to understand what feeling safe/comfortable feels like for us and them.
- ✓ **Avoid** blaming someone else for how we feel as in "You're making mummy/daddy really angry" as this gives the power in the relationship to the other person regardless of age! Instead offering an assertive 'I' statement such as "I feel angry when I see people hurting each other" or "I feel really happy when people help me to tidy up" describes the behaviour we like/don't like and gives people a chance to respond positively.
- ✓ **Help children to feel good about themselves** as in it's ok to be me and I don't have to be the same size, shape, colour as anyone else!
- ✓ **Role-Model** a whole range of feelings words that illustrate more than the usual mad, sad, bad and glad. How about ecstatic, over-joyed, excited to show that we can feel happier than happy!
- ✓ **Remember feelings are simply feelings** that come and go and they can be really helpful in letting us know when we start to feel less safe. Therefore, feelings are not good or bad and I don't become a feeling as in "I'm angry!" I am always 'me' and sometimes I feel angry.
- ✓ **Remember behaviour is a choice with an effect** (compared with consequence which may only occur if I get caught!) There will however, always be an effect linked to a behavior.
- ✓ **Remember our thinking can influence how we feel and how we choose to behave** - and when we feel safe we can make safer choices for ourselves and others.
- ✓ **Say** what you need children **to do** rather than what not to do. For example "remember to walk" rather than "don't run".
- ✓ **All Behaviour** serves a function so try to understand what the child gets from, or may be trying to tell you or communicate by behaving in a

particular way and help them to find a safer way to achieve the same outcome.

- ✓ **Following** 'an incident', say 'stop', say what you want to see and give attention to the 'hurt' child. (Remember too much attention to unwanted behaviour actually rewards and reinforces this behaviour).
- ✓ **Give attention** to the behaviours you want to see - positive reinforcement.
- ✓ **Distract** from unwanted behaviour - use all your creativity and child's interests.
- ✓ **Be Proactive** and intervene before unwanted behaviour occurs.
- ✓ **Set child up** to succeed and plan activities with this in mind.
- ✓ **Remind** all children that they are learning all the time and some of them are learning how to share, use kind words, etc.
- ✓ **Acknowledge and celebrate** the good and be specific rather than just "good boy/girl". For example: "Thank you for sitting and waiting - I really appreciate it", "Wow, I find it really helpful when children share as well as you do". (Finding words that feel comfortable for all is the key here).
- ✓ **Give warnings** and cues when it is coming to the end of an activity - how might you feel if someone suddenly turned the TV off in the middle of your favourite soap?
- ✓ **Label the behaviour** rather than the child. For example, 'I think that was unkind' rather than **YOU** are unkind.
- ✓ **Remember** it takes at least 3 positives to 1 negative to preserve and build self-esteem
- ✓ **Have realistic expectations** linked to a child's developmental stage rather than age. It is not realistic to expect pre-school children to sit and listen for anything more than a few minutes or to find it easy to share one of their most precious possessions and they may see you as one of those!
- ✓ **Say sorry** for the child who does not feel sorry when they have upset of physically hurt another child/adult. *For example: "I feel really sorry that ..... hurt you - they are learning how to share/use kind words/hands etc."*
- ✓ **Encourage** children to put things right rather than insist they say 'sorry'. *For Example: "What could you do to help ..... feel better?"*

### **And Please Remember**

- ✓ **Keep your voice** at a normal volume so as to encourage the children to keep to appropriate noise levels and not shout at each other.

- ✓ **Avoid put downs & labels** at all costs - don't be afraid to walk away and hand over to someone else who has more in reserve.
- ✓ **Keep calm** and find safe ways to help you to do this
- ✓ **Reward** acceptable behaviour with a smile and an acknowledgement such as a 'thank you'. (This is also a fantastic way to role-model 'please' and 'thank you' rather than saying 'what do you say' or "what's the magic word?")
- ✓ **Stickers** are not always the best way unless all children can get them and some don't even like them!
- ✓ **A discussion** with the child about 'why' they carried out the unwanted behaviour is often fruitless as they often don't know why, they just did!
- ✓ **Use One-Step Removed** activities with stories, poems, puppets to discuss unwanted behaviours and ask the children for solutions.
- ✓ **Be Polite**
- ✓ **Be Fair**
- ✓ **Smile**
- ✓ **Celebrate & Acknowledge** - see Louise Porter and Pennie Brownlee for further examples
- ✓ **Behaviour** does not change overnight so be consistent, firm and calm working together as a team!