

Communication and Direct Work with Traumatised Children

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Children and young people occupy a very unique time in the human cycle that deserves our special attention, and the best of our resources and investments.



Children learn best from repeatedly seeing and hearing actions or ways of thinking that we would like them to emulate or “model”

Our role therefore must be to portray positive models for what we want children to **do** (such as being generous, fair, honest, caring and responsible) to reinforce positive action and thought.

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Barriers to communication

We need to be patient, empathic, imaginative, respectful and tactful in order to help troubled children and young people communicate. In helping children to make sense of their world, we can explore their thinking, their emotional self and their internal view and then help shape their external presentation to achieve all they can be.

Rose 2012





That truth is that monsters are real,
and ghosts are real, too. They live
inside us, and sometimes they win”

King, S (1977) The Shining



“A major aspect of direct work is listening for the child’s perceptions. Until we do this, we won’t know if we are to expand their information or correct their misperceptions”

Fahlberg 2004



Communicating effectively with children requires a multitude of skills which include listening, reflecting, enquiring, challenging, understanding and responding to what is being communicated by children, young people and those caring for them.

Rose 2012

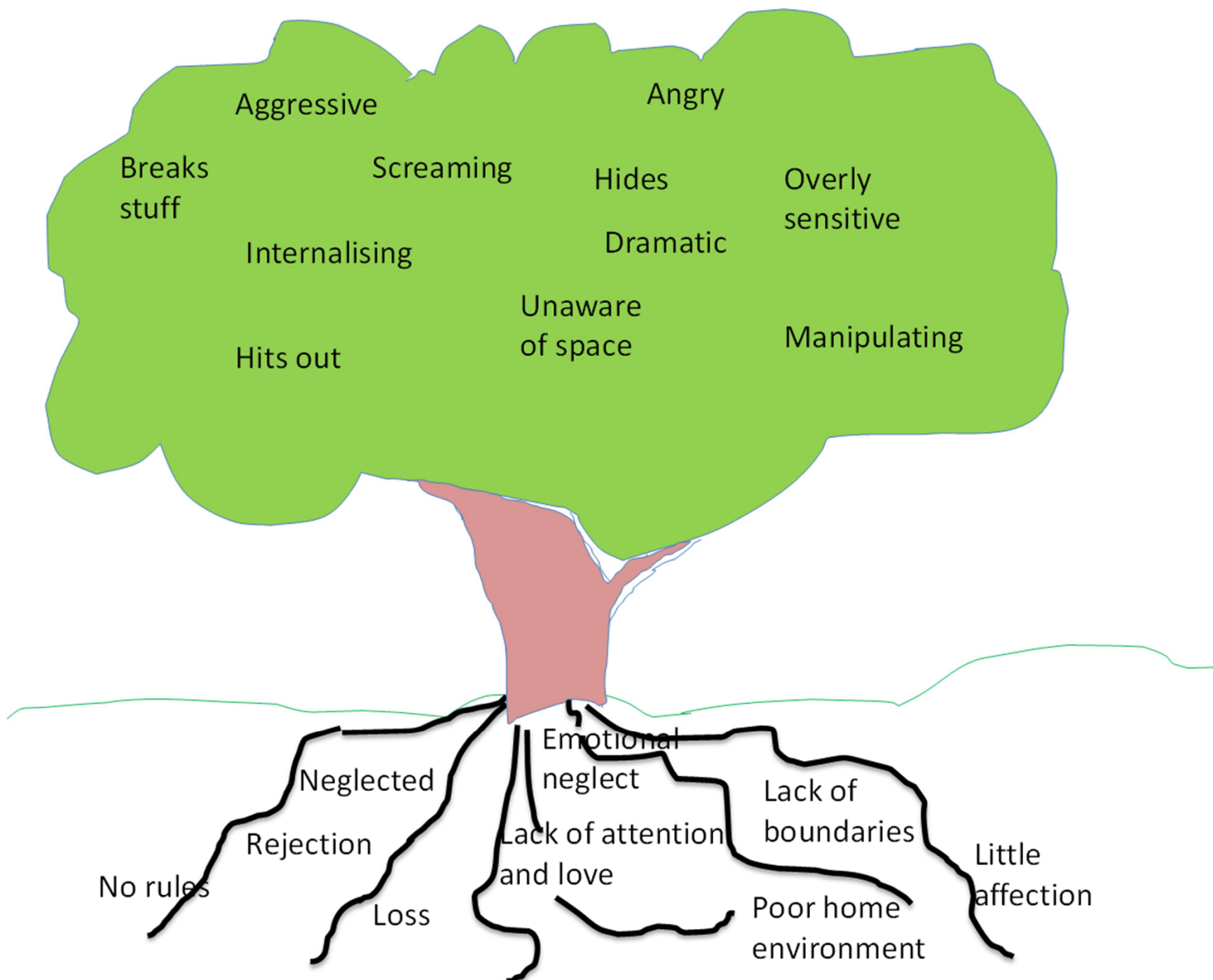


All behaviour is Communication

Understanding the roots of the presented behaviour and reflecting what is being communicated verbally and non-verbally will empower the child to refine and reframe their communication process so as to be more effective in achieving their best interests.

Rose 2012





Recovery Process

‘Like taking the tender seedling and replanting it in a place where it has a better chance of growing. This is an enormously difficult task – attention to detail in their everyday life is vital in bringing about this rehabilitation’ .

Lanyado, M (2003)



Prolonged exposure to stress and a child's continued use of coping strategies may result in behavior patterns that are difficult to change if the child perceives the strategy as being effective

(Kochenderfer- Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Stansbury & Harris, 2000).



Children who grow up in families that spend time talking about emotions are more academically successful, have better friendships, fewer infectious diseases and can handle difficult social situations, (such as getting teased) more effectively than children whose families do not talk about feelings.

Gottman and DeClaire 1997



Emotional Vocabulary

+

Emotional Literacy

=

Emotional Intelligence





Attachment (Love)

Attunement for Pleasure and Security

Focus on own wellbeing

Obedience with some protest

Full range of emotions

Cohesive and competent

Trauma Bond (Slave)

Attunement for Survival

Focus on other's needs, wants and desires

Unwavering obedience

Stay Close or Stay Absent

Exaggerated expression of feelings and internal state

Fragmented and less competent to incompetent.



Our work is dependent on us understanding our own life, values, ethics and morals. It also requires us to consider unconditional positive regard and the need for us to become narrators and facilitators and avoid the concept of judgement.



Once upon a time, there was a woman named Abigail who was in love with a man named Fred. Every day she would cross the river, which was filled with Piranhas, by a footbridge to see Fred. One night a storm came up and the bridge was washed away. So Abigail decided to ask her neighbour Sinbad for help. Sinbad told Abigail he would help her by taking her across the river in his boat, but only on one condition....that she sleep with him. Now Abigail didn't know what to do. If she tried to swim the river she would be eaten alive, and yet she did not want to sleep with Sinbad. She went to her mother for advice on this, and her mother told her, "Abigail, I reared you to make your own decisions on matters such as this, and I won't tell you what you should or should not do." Abigail desperately wanted to see her lover, so she gave in to Sinbad's conditions.

Once she got across the river to Fred's, she felt so guilty she told Fred what she had done. Fred got furious and threw her out of the house. Abigail was crushed and didn't know what to do until she remembered Fred's neighbour Slug. Upon hearing Abigail's story, Slug got furious with Fred for the way he had treated Abigail. He ran up to Fred's house and beat him up. When he got home, he told Abigail he had always loved her and asked her to marry him. She accepted.



Communication Through Play

Play is our first language, and can be said to be the natural language of children. By using the safety of play with toys, puppets, symbolic and representational play, as well as creative and expressive arts we can gain insights into the child's inner world.

West 1996



Communication and Complex Needs

Working with children with complex needs, particularly when they are experiencing turmoil and distress, demands a facilitative, enabling and empowering technique, and a high level of skill, sensitivity and self-awareness.'

M. Brandon et al, 1998



- Jenga
- Squiggles
 - Walls
- Emotional Work
 - Air Balloon
 - All About Me
 - Memory Boxes

The Power of Play

Play is how children learn about their world. Play is essential for healthy development and so Play needs to be accepted as a serious, purposeful business through which children develop mentally, physically and socially.

Oaklander 1989



Sharing our Stories

Telling family stories - sharing our stories of the past helps bring adults and children closer and creates a wonderful opportunity for intimacy and relationship building.

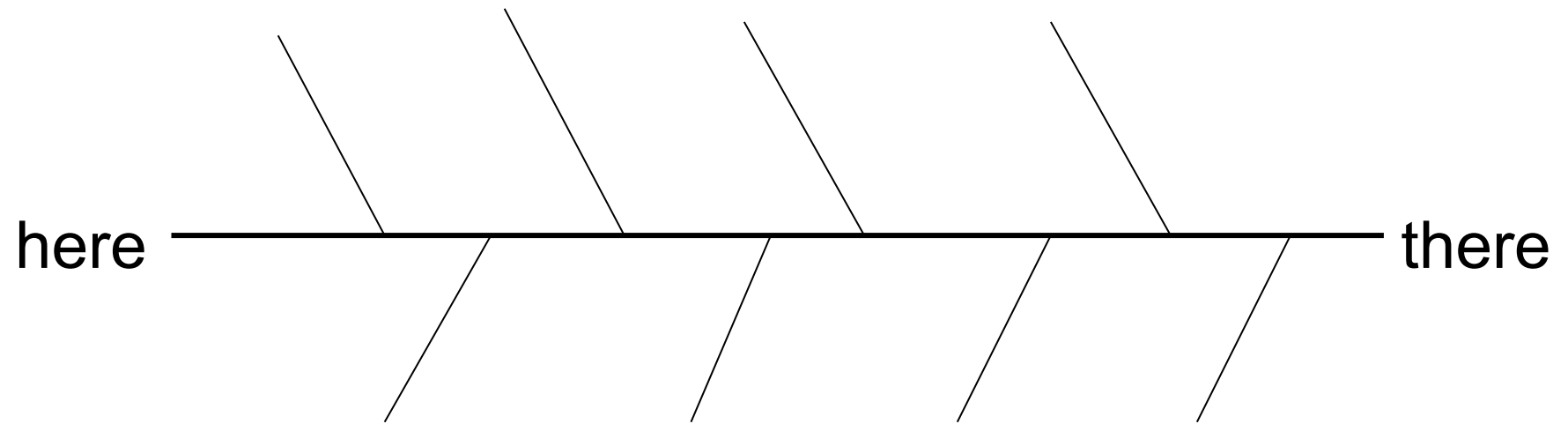
Stone 1987



All About Me



- Ishikawa
 - Animal Game
- Cause and Effect Thinking
 - Internal Working Model
 - Arrows
 - Thinking Cycle
 - Keeping Safe
 - FFFH



Most Worthy,
Competent,
Most Lovable



Least Worthy, Most
Incompetent and Most
Unlovable

Best Carer in the
World, Most Loving,
Most Nurturing and
Safest Carer

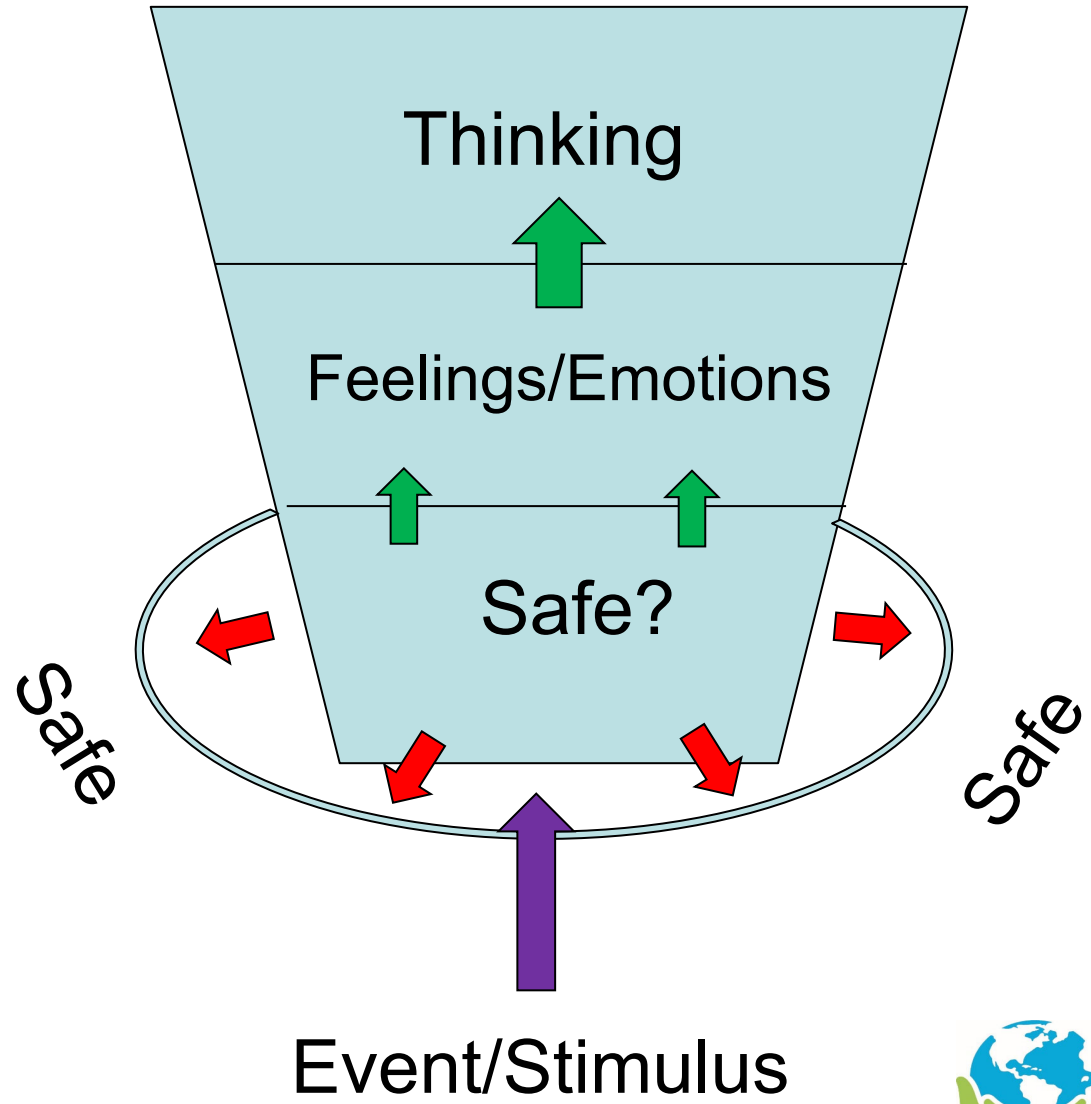


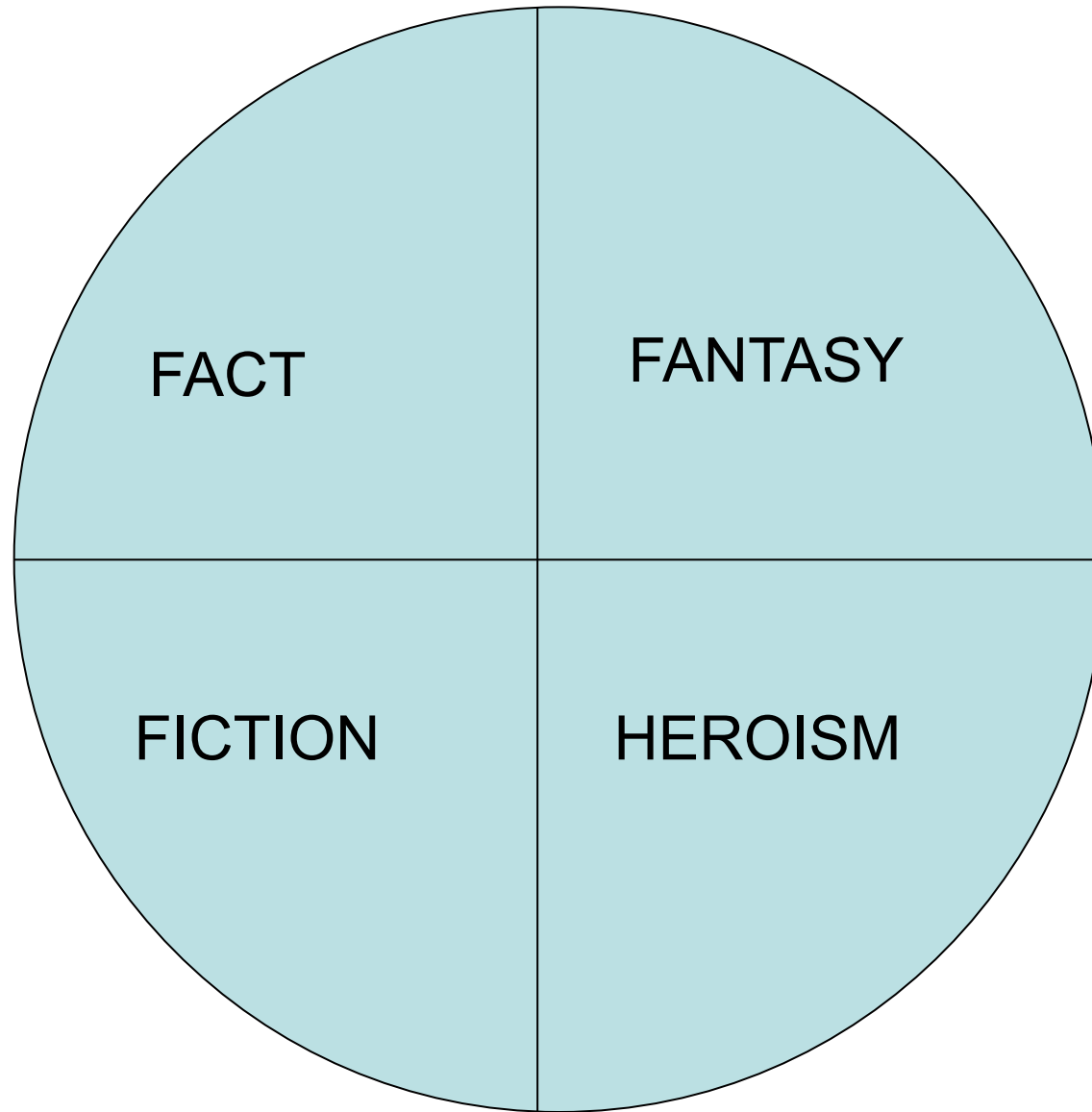
Worst Carer in the
World, Most Unloving,
Most Dangerous and
Scary Carer

Most Welcoming,
Safest and
Fulfilling World



Scary and Most
Unwelcoming Place





Creating Therapeutic Environments



Listening

We rarely have anyone's total attention. The children we come across in our work may never have had an adult's total benign attention – to get this is in itself a healing experience.

Rose 2012



Therapeutic Communication

Therapeutic communication is about sending out the right messages so that children, who may previously have internalised a sense of worthlessness, come to see themselves as worthy, capable and valuable individuals.

In our interactions with children, our main tool is ourselves.



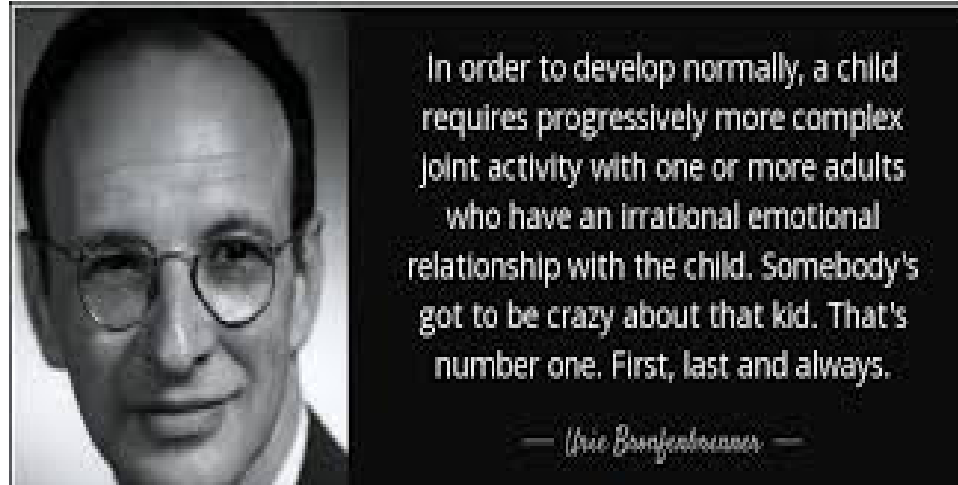
Mirror

Race Track

You first/Me second

Therapeutic Contact





Therapeutic communication is about sending out the right messages so that children, who may previously have internalised a sense of worthlessness, come to see themselves as worthy, capable and valuable individuals.

Rose 2017



Messages children need to hear

You are likeable

You are needed

You cannot overwhelm me

You make a difference

Others have been there too

This is a safe place

There is hope

It's not your fault

You have choices

You are not a bad person





“Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach

One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer.

He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up



As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a girl and that what she was doing was not dancing at all.

He came closer still and called out "Good morning!
May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The girl was reaching down to the shore, picking up
small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.





The girl paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" the somewhat startled wise man demanded.

To this, the girl replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."



Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But, young lady, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

At this, the girl bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, she said “It made a difference for that one.”



(Adapted and based on the work of Loren Eiseley (1969))

Love



THANK YOU

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