The Ripple Effect or a Tsunami?
Addressing Emotional and Mental Well-being of Children and Parents through Counselling in Primary Schools

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MY AIMS TODAY

- To present case material
- To demonstrate how working with parents and children in primary schools can help families undergoing difficulties.
Framework

The context is counselling in primary schools

The work is framed by:

- policy
- the rights of children
- early intervention
- family support
Basis for this paper

Based on case material from counselling work with children and families in primary schools in the UK and interviews with school counsellors and play therapists.

The UK policy document ‘Promoting Children’s Emotional and Social Well-being in Primary Education’ produced by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (2008) clearly states that parental involvement using whole-school and targeted interventions can be instrumental in addressing the emotional and mental health needs of children experiencing problems and difficulties.
The purpose of presenting this case study is to:

- form hypotheses around what works
- how it works
- provide a basis for further investigation and to share practice
Case Material

* Interviews were carried out with counsellors and play therapists to ask them what seemed to work, how it worked and what the outcomes were from the interventions.

* The case material presented is from individual and group work using a counselling approach, including therapeutic play, a therapeutic parenting group and based on humanistic values.
Case Study

- John (6 years old) and mother, Debbie
Audience

Either by yourself or with the person next to you identify:

- 3 factors that helped John
- 3 underpinning values to the counselling
- 3 potential benefits for the future of this small family
What Worked?

- The relationship
- A consistent person-centred approach by all professionals
- Acceptance
- A belief by counsellors in intrinsic value of John and Debbie
- Experienced and knowledgeable facilitation skills
- Good supervision for the counsellors
- Knowledge of child and family development and dynamics
How did it work?

- Help for the parent alongside help for the child
- By using resources in a focused way to provide the best chance of change for parents and children.
- By recognizing that helping and strengthening the parent can also help the child
Conclusion

The richness of the case study material and the interview material from school counsellors and play therapists represents a preliminary step towards researching child and family work in schools.

The focus of the work remains the child.

However, work with parents can benefit the child with either an effect that can ripple gently or through powerful forces that are equivalent to a tsunami.
Thank You