

# **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.



# Purpose

- \* The purpose of presenting this case study is to:
  - \* form hypotheses around what works
  - \* and.....
  - \* how it works
  - \* and.....
  - \* 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