

Spring NewsLetter No 12

“Thinking of a child as behaving badly disposes you to think of punishment. Thinking of a child as struggling to handle something difficult encourages you to help them through their distress.” Colebourne Primary School’s Behaviour Policy <https://www.hazwebs.co.uk/colebourne/>

What is Solution Focused Coaching?

A solution focused coaching approach focuses upon:

- what’s going well and well enough;
- helping the youngster identify the skills, qualities and behaviours they already have (often their self-esteem is such that they are far more aware of how they are failing rather than being successful);
- co-creating a solution rather than imposing one.

In next term's NewsLetter Steve Russell provides a detailed account of this approach with children.

Book Review

Morgan, F and Costello, E. Gilbert, I (Ed) (2023)

Square Pegs: Inclusion, compassion and fitting in. A guide for school. Independent Thinking Press, Carmarthen.

Square Pegs is a book written for those of us

who work with young people who find schools a

challenge – schools would probably describe them as ‘challenging’ because they don’t fit in with the expectations of our school and the system created by statutory and non-statutory measures. They are Square Pegs and school is a very round hole. Both authors have personal and professional experience of supporting children and families who are struggling to fit into a one size fits all school system. There are more than 50 contributors who have provided a chapter for this book covering a wide range of issues. The book is divided into five broad sections.

This book sets out how some young people become Square Pegs, how the school system can exacerbate their squareness making school a difficult if not impossible place to be. Authors explore how schools can adapt and adjust their systems to ensure Square Pegs can fit in and make progress in school. It not just about making round hole less round – perhaps it’s about removing the holes altogether.

This book should be on the coffee table in every school staff room! Every teacher will find at least one chapter relevant to their practice and the Square Pegs in their class. While it deals with some difficult topics it is not a misery memoir, it is enlightening and provides hope that reasonable adjustments can be made that will mean there could no longer be any Square Pegs in our school. **Dr Amanda Barrie. abarrie@brookes.ac.uk**

SEBDA

OXFORD
BROOKES
UNIVERSITY

ONLINE POSTGRADUATE STUDY IN SEMH

SEBDA, in partnership with Oxford Brookes University offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties.

This two year, part time online Diploma generates 120 masters level credits towards a full masters degree.

Our team includes specialist teachers, authors, psychologists, behaviour support professionals and SEN advisers – all with expertise in

supporting children and young people with mental health needs. The Diploma will enhance your understanding, skills and expertise of children and young people. SEBDA.org



**Joining SEBDA
Contact
SEBDA.org**

SEBDA International Conference 2023

As we came together at Birmingham University for three days to learn, celebrate, be inspired and nourished by presentations and discussions it soon became obvious that we had attracted contributors and participants from an even wider range of disciplines and interests than we might have hoped - all with a driving enthusiasm to understand and better support our children and young people experiencing significant Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

This included assessment tools and pre-emptive practice to mitigate the likely impact of SEMH among vulnerable groups as well as guidance which could prevent this occurring at all.

Many of the presentations connected with each other as if they had been co-constructed, even though participants might never have met before, and this was another indication of the unity of thought and action amongst SEBDA members and supporters. An example of this was having UNICEF and Refugee Education UK launch their recent study into young displaced children arriving in this country, while we also enjoyed news of an international project, and accompanying toolbox, from Dr Donna Gaywood, Alison Tobin and Dr Josephine Gabi, inspired by the Walk With Amal events.

Other new research, such as that from Professor Carmel Cefai, included prompts to revisit some useful guidance from recent years which might have been lost amid current educational and social pressures. Those of us working in schools are already aware that Barry Carpenter's Recovery Curriculum remains an essential resource, and we heard that SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) was evaluated as being ineffective as a result of 'lack of teacher training' and poor implementation! The valued Incredible Years programme also took credit even though largely lost to the short-sighted and unnecessary cutbacks in Children's Centres. We don't always need to look for a fresh answer - we might just need to engage more completely with resources and advice already available.

Also during the conference, we were invited to rethink some of our language in order to better describe needs and values, ensuring our words remain accurate and positive and avoid deficit modelling, or the risk of self-fulfilling fear. We heard 'A State of Well-being' as a preference to mental health, 'Pedagogies of Welcome' and kindness, 'relationships' (Scotland) and 'behaviour' (England), and 'Adhocracy' coined by Professor Harry Daniels.

Many of us were introduced for the first time to 'Window, Mirror and Sliding Door' books, Narrative Exposure Therapy, STaRS, Psychomotor Intervention Programmes, and many more innovations in thought and practice. There was also, understandably, a focus on the increase in, and harm caused by, all manner of exclusion, headlined by the work of Excluded Lives and Professor Karen Goldberg, with essential detail from Marcia White on The Discourse of Permanent Exclusion (more on this soon). At the heart of SEBDA's work, we know this is where we need to be having a big impact, ensuring that, in the words of Dr Rob Long, "Their future is not over".

Many presentations are now available on the SEBDA website, free to access for all members and conference attendees. **Dominic Gunn - Consultant Trainer for Early Education**