

# **BOYS AND GIRLS: GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START**

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# SESSION 4: DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE AND SELF-BELIEF

Objectives of the session:

- Understand the importance of talking about and naming feelings and emotions
- Understand how positive reinforcement generates confidence and self-esteem
- Recognise opportunities for mathematical development in home and local environments

# SESSION TIMETABLE

- Smarty game
- Do we talk differently to boys and girls?
- Question and answer card
- Make emotion cards
- Verbal instructions
- Summary of session

# TALKING ABOUT EMOTIONS

- Play the smarty game

# DO WE TALK DIFFERENTLY TO BOYS AND GIRLS?

- In most western societies, adults speak differently to boys from birth.
- Language used is often gender specific - male children often described as 'big, a bouncer, a bruiser' whilst female children are often described as 'beautiful, precious and gorgeous.' (Tallent 2008)
- Compared to girls, boys are exposed to more 'rough and tumble' play by males with different accompanying language ('fatherese') (Opal Dunn 2003)
- Children develop their gender identity (whether they are a girl or a boy) by the age of 3. As boys get older many of them think that in school, teachers prefer girls and the evidence they cite is that teachers don't shout at girls.

# EMOTIONS

- Some researchers maintain that boys may not develop a full capacity for emotional depth. Parents - and in particular fathers and other males within the family- play a significant role in supporting boys' emotional development. A father who tells a young boy not to cry or urges him to 'man up', may well inhibit that child's ability to deal with greater losses later in his life.
- Dr Harriet Lerner suggests that 'Boys are still taught to toughen up, to deny vulnerability, and not to ask for emotional comfort from other males.' As a result some boys are less able than girls to cope with the emotional upheavals that accompany adolescence. Recent statistics show that teenage boys are five times more likely to commit suicide. Adult males who lacked emotional development as a boy struggle to develop healthy relationships.
- According to psychologists at Cambridge University, boys prefer to watch mechanical motion over human motion. When one year old children were given a choice of films to watch , the girls look longer at the cover or poster of a film that features a human face, whereas boys were more interested in films featuring cars. (Baron-Cohen- The Essential Difference 2003)

# HOW TO SUPPORT EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

All children - including boys in particular - need staff and parents who give them:

- Frequent encouragement to complete a task successfully
- Ways to resolve conflict
- Names for emotions
- Emotional and physical comfort
- Justified praise and specific praise e.g. 'Aren't you clever, I love the way you have drawn the face and included all the detail.' This stimulates and develops their self-esteem.
- Go through Q and A card 2
- Make Emotion cards to take home - younger children limit emotions to cross, happy, sad and use the cards as a stimulus to begin a conversation about how the child feels. Use the corresponding words for how the child feels. Older children could have anxious, frustrated, surprised and scared cards. Talking about emotions gives the children the language to help them to express their emotions verbally.

# VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Some children feel confused and frustrated because they cannot communicate effectively with staff and other children. This can be manifested in the child's behaviour.

Wherever possible, use visual clues (pictures, objects and gestures) to support understanding:

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Emphasise the key words
- Repeat the instruction or explanation
- Emphasise facial expression
- Break verbal instructions into chunks e.g. say Pick up the cars. Put them in the box rather than just saying tidy your toys.

# VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS (CONT.)

- Demonstrate wherever possible
- Check understanding - does your child know what to do?
- Do not put pressure on the child to respond verbally
- Remember:
  - Try to use suggestions rather than commands
  - Try to use positive rather than negative comments
  - Try to encourage and praise rather than discourage and criticise

*if* a child lives with criticism  
it learns to condemn.  
if a child lives with hostility  
it learns to fight.  
if a child lives with ridicule  
it learns to be shy.  
if a child lives with shame  
it learns to be guilty.  
if a child lives with tolerance  
it learns to be patient.  
if a child lives with encouragement  
it learns confidence.  
if a child lives with praise  
it learns to appreciate.  
if a child lives with fairness  
it learns justice.  
if a child lives with security  
it learns to have faith.  
if a child lives with approval  
it learns to like itself.  
if a child lives with acceptance and friendship  
it learns to find love in the world.

# SUMMARY

- Consider how you talk to boys and girls
- How to support effective communication
- Importance of naming and talking about emotions
- Positive touch is vitally important in developing children's self-esteem and sense of emotional well-being - story book massage, hugs and more hugs!