

Preparing to Introduce the Wall to Youngsters

The Behaviour Wall has been found to be an incredibly powerful stimulus for discussing behavioural concerns with children and young people.

To date staff have found very creative ways of using the Wall to engage children and young people in reflecting upon their behaviour including:

- Using the web-based versions of the behaviour wall (Problem-Solving, Symbols and Profiling);
- Printing off the Comprehensive Table (found in the 'Resource' Section of the website) which outlines all of the developmental stages;
- Using the magnetic version of the Wall (available from CfBT);
- Using the affirmations as the way in to discussion, rather than the developmental tasks/bricks.

Some staff have expressed concerns as to whether it is appropriate to share it with youngsters. This anxiety is quite understandable and has a degree of legitimacy given that the Wall is about growing up and as such can lead into quite personal issues. Staff have also expressed again a very legitimate concern that the youngster might end up feeling even worse at the end of the session as they see many 'gaps' in their Wall.

What follows, then, are some ideas to guide you through sharing the material with children/young people.

Key messages of the Cycle of Development Theory:

- **It takes a lifetime to grow-up** – We all go through different phases/stages of growing up – in fact we never stop growing up. Even adults learn new things and grow. You could give some examples such as when we start a new job, move to a new area, including some of the challenges that you perhaps faced
- **None of us are perfect**- we all need to go back and have another go at certain bits of growing up. The great thing here is that what we are actually doing is finding ways of getting more of the positive messages we need to hear (This is a reference to the affirmations).
- **We can have as many goes as we need to get to grips with the developmental jobs** This is where talking about for example the challenge of starting a new school – or indeed a new job for adults – can youngsters make better sense of this. For example, when we start a new job/school, one of the most important jobs we attend to is finding out who will look after us and help us settle in – much like a baby needs to learn to trust their parents/carers (the Being Stage/red bricks)/
- **There are lots of different people who help us to grow-up** – parents/carers and other family members, family friends, playschool staff, adults at school and college, people in our workplaces We don't have to go it alone. This could lead into a discussion as to who the youngster has in their lives currently to support them

Some Guiding Principles:

- You know the young person – you will know how best to steer the discussion and your intuition and professional judgement will be the most important guide
- Hold fast to the key messages detailed below. These are the assumptions that underpin the Cycle of Development.
- Remember – this is not about diagnosing causes in a pseudo-medical/psychological way. The Cycle of Development theory offers those of us without detailed training in psychology some useful insights into what makes children and young people ‘tick’ and why they might be behaving in the ways they do.
- Don’t worry about being able to explain what each and every brick/developmental task means. See what the youngster makes of it; share your own thoughts – and /or if you feel that you’re getting a bit stuck, move on – place it to the side if you like.
- It’s probably advisable to keep the discussion to a more general one rather than encouraging them to reflect upon their own development stage by stage.
- Encourage the young person to make their own links. Staff who have used the Wall directly with youngsters have been quite taken back with how, with often a minimum of input from them, the youngster has had some fascinating insights into themselves
- Linked with this, seeing it and framing it as a shared learning experience can be a powerful way to use the Wall – ‘This is something that I’m beginning to find useful in helping me to understand how I might be able to support youngsters like you better. I thought we could perhaps have a look at it and see what you make of it.’
- Contract the session – in other words, be clear with the youngster as to why you are meeting, what the boundaries of confidentiality will be , what will happen to the information etc etc?
- Use language that you feel comfortable with and that you feel will best help the youngster to access the idea of development and the Wall.
- Staff feedback has highlighted how well youngsters respond to hearing adults’ experiences of growing up – clearly this is something that you need to decide what is appropriate and where you feel comfortable in doing so.