

Emotional Literacy

- 'Pink and Fluffy'
- What is the link between Emotional Literacy and Learning
- Who needs it?
- What can we do ?

Why bother ?

- 'It must be recognised that the area of pupil behaviour is highly emotive. It challenges teachers' sense of their own professional competence and both teachers' and parents' self-esteem. ..emotions often get in the way of constructive planning.' Peter Gray and Sue Panter, Support for Learning, Vol 15, No1.

Targets – the problem

- Pupils with EBD are most likely to be called upon to demonstrate significant gains in the very areas in which they have been assessed as having marked difficulty..Were this stance replicated across the SEN board, its equivalence might be to require a non-reader to read War and Peace in a single setting' Paul Howard .1997

Psychological Defence Mechanisms

- **Barriers to protect the personality from fear of threat/anxiety and to keep this conflict from coming to the conscious level.**
- **Projection** – when we have unbearable, painful feelings we externalise them by pushing them out and trying to attribute them to others.

Projection

- **Implications**
- How you are feeling when with a child might give you an indication of what they are feeling. The task is to recognise which feelings are our own and which are projected.
- Feelings need to be contained, named, if appropriate given back in a 'digested' acceptable form.
- If they are projected back in the same way and with the same intensity, they cause terror and 'nameless dread'.

Psychological Defence Mechanisms

- **Displacement**
- Displaces an emotion from one situation to another. For example, a separation anxiety due to a depressed or ill parent can lead to a school phobia.
- **Implications**
- Look for an underlying cause in another situation. For example, a bully may use power at school because of feeling powerless at home.

Psychological Defence Mechanisms

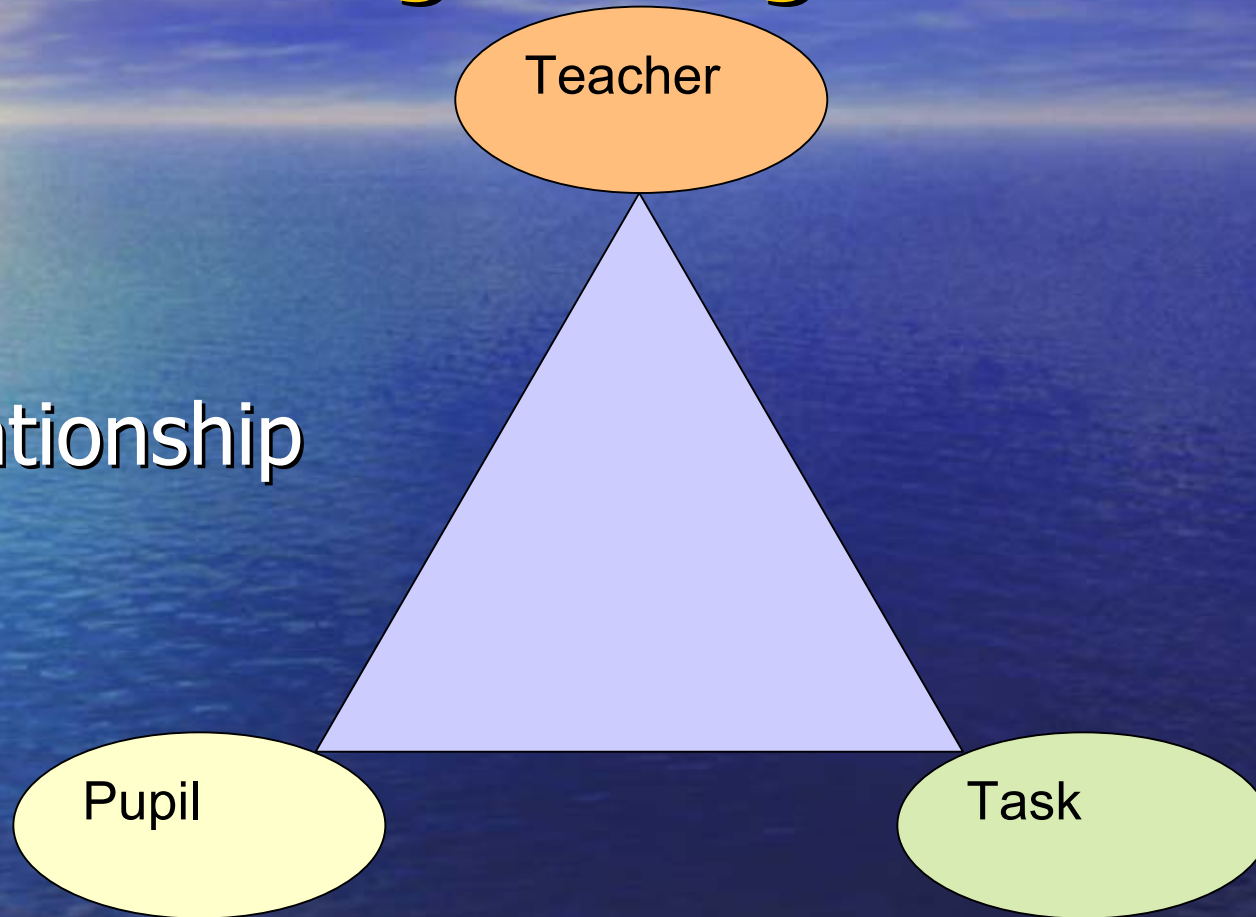
- **Transference**
- Where feelings and attitudes from a relationship with main carers in the past are 'transferred' and re-experienced in a later relationship, for example, a teacher.
- **Implications**
- A child's seeming inexplicable reaction to a member of staff may be triggered by who they are reminded of. Our own reaction to a child may relate to our own experience of a relationship.

Bion - Containment

- How can we contain the overwhelming and powerful feelings and withstand the onslaught?
- How can we show pupils that they are 'held in mind'?

The Learning Triangle

- Relationship



Why is learning dangerous for some children?

- Learning requires us to feel positive about ourselves
- Learning requires taking risks
- Learning requires trust in relationships
- Learning requires 'taking in' and some children feel they are not worthy or too full up with other stuff

What is a good learner?

- feels safe, willing to take risks
- has good self-esteem
- can seek help when needed without expecting criticism or ridicule
- able to concentrate, be in the 'flow'
- able to manage frustration, anxiety, disappointment
- capacity to bear not knowing
- optimistic and positive attitude to a problem
- can wait for attention

What is Emotional Literacy?

- 'The ability to recognise, handle and appropriately express emotions.'

Elizabeth Morris, School of Emotional Literacy, UK.

Daniel Goleman

- Self-awareness
- Managing emotions
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Handling relationships

The Link with Learning

- It is impossible to learn when we are overwhelmed by feelings
- Positive emotions influence concentration, memory, problem-solving and learning skills
- Positive relationships with teachers affect our ability to learn
- We need to have experience of how a target feels in order to achieve it

Donald Winnicott

- 'Naming makes shared, and therefore, socially acceptable, what was previously private fantasy, gives greater self-awareness and therefore control, allows fantasy to be checked with reality, increases the capacity to remember and reduces guilt. It is not, therefore, a failure to interpret. Winnicott, 1971.

So what now?

- Make it clear that emotional health is as important as physical health.
- Pay attention to your own emotional state and have strategies for getting into a positive state for teaching and learning. Share these strategies with learners
- Learn to listen to the feelings underlying communications with you.

Language

- Be prepared to name the feelings, particularly the overwhelming emotions. 'I wonder if you are now feeling disappointed and let down'.
- Encourage pupils to develop a vocabulary of feelings. This can be done through subjects such as History, English, Geography and Art.

Include the 'bad' feelings

- Develop activities which allow recognition and acceptance of negative feelings e.g competitive games such as hangman, battleships, teach children how to win and lose safely.
- Make sure children know it is not the **feelings** which are bad. We all have **bad** feelings, we need to acknowledge and decide how to act on them.
- Use creative activities and metaphor to help pupils explore feelings in a safe, 'contained' way e.g stories, drawings, modelling, games, videos, soaps

For the staff

- Ensure all staff know the importance of emotions in learning, discuss it with them, help them manage their own stages.
- Encourage the setting up of staff support groups to discuss cases.
- Admitting to not knowing something or feeling overwhelmed is not a weakness.
- Focus on a skill e.g empathy and make explicit links in all curriculum areas.
- Link to learning styles

And finally.....

- Remember that Bion talks about 'good-enough mothering'. There is also 'good-enough' teaching. You do not need to be perfect. You need to be prepared to think about the good and the bad.

Let me know !

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