

# Exploring Resilience

## Is establishing confidence and self esteem the first step in developing resilience?

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# Where did it begin?

- Teacher in a primary school
- Worked in an area of acute social deprivation
- Concerned by low levels of achievement and expectations
- Initial pilot project for SEAL/VEAZ
- How could we best support our children
- What difficulties were they experiencing ?

# SEAL ... Social Emotional Aspects of Learning

- Government package which needed to be looked at carefully to avoid overload and needs of the individual.
- Brilliant starting point but was adapted for our school (lead person to make suggestions and recommendations) .
- Deals with key skills and has themes related to various school year events and changes.
- New Beginnings ... Going for Goals ... Relationships ... Changes.
- Adapted to needs led events – a child moving away from the school, brother sick in hospital.

# What difficulties were they experiencing?

- Talked to people who knew the children and families – FLO, SENCO, dinner ladies, parents, lollypop lady, children
- Unknown events and traumas discovered - being trapped in a house fire, mental health issues, child primary carer, yo yo parent , new family - old family discarded

# Risk Audit revealed ....

- 48% of the children experienced risks to their well being and readiness to learn,
- Majority of children had multiple risks
- Known risks - Child Protection issues – neglect and abuse, social services involvement - parenting help in place, drink and drugs addiction, violence, police involvement, prison, terminal illness, debt

# What could we do – out of our control ....

- Recognised that the situation and history wouldn't change
- How they were able to deal with their situation and life experiences might
- Needed to support the children with their sense of self worth, self esteem , confidence and be valued as individuals

# How best to bounce-back?

- Definition of resilience - 'bounceback' used for the VEAZ project and the ability to deal with difficulties and remain positive
- Recognised the importance of establishing a positive identity, self confidence and self worth
- Link to Maslow's Hierarchy of Need, Gardner, Bowlby and Goleman

# Desired outcomes

- Confident, optimistic and resilient children
- Children who communicate their needs and expectations
- Recognition of their own entitlement, rights and responsibilities
- Learners who reach their potential and have aspirations

# Other aspects explored

- Ghanaian experience where the poorest children recognise education as a way out of poverty – optimistic and resilient
- Visit to First Nation People – Seven Grandfathers' Teachings – resilient despite the oppression of the Residential Schools.
- Core values. belonging, safety, identity, and self worth – link to Maslow

# Important elements

- Commitment of the lead person – really believe in the changes that can be made.
- Make it real and come alive.
- A whole school approach and ethos
- Involvement of the SMT, all staff and the children
- Non threatening – it's not counselling – light touch – smile and name

# Promote the positive!

## Recognise the good things !

- The lead person needs time to make things happens and to advise, support and notice the good things happening and share this.
- Tell parents about the good things – phone call home, work in the playground publicly
- Make time to talk ... children remember these moments
- Training should be available for all staff (MMS...).
- Children also trained to assist as researchers – pro-social/anti-social behaviours. Status and self esteem
- High profile and importance of social and emotional issues should be maintained through regular friendly input – good things noticed - without pressure and deadlines.

# Celebrate the positive - spend time with children

- Interviews with children ... tape the conversation (welcomed by parents)
- Conversations with children and key points noted.
- Observations of children in group and 1:1.
- Children's drawings and stories ...William .
- Use dance,drama, photographs ( ...SEAL)
- Ask for special awards from staff and children.

# Some events arranged to make the children feel special

- Africa Day – singing, story telling, printing and sharing experiences . 'I didn't know that I was this clever.'  
(A national award winning project).
- Happiness Room – Used at some of the most vulnerable times (SATs)
- Children talking about social emotional issues and Vincent Van Gogh (film for Dutch television ... )
- Narnia – Police hut turned into Narnia. Christmas for all some wouldn't get one .'I want to live here.'
- S Club group – seven special children working together
- Lunch time waitress service – Cream Tea for families
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# At the heart of this ... are the relationships that are formed

- The people make the difference
- The way that we talk to children
- The way that we treat children
- This isn't the soft option .. there still need to be boundaries
- The children need to feel secure and supported ... perhaps it only happens in school.
- The resulting improved level of motivation and ability to deal with setbacks impacts positively upon their learning.

What we do makes a difference...

'The germinating seed must not be exposed to a frost wind – that was the case with me in the beginning.'

Vincent                      November 1883  
Vincent Van Gogh    1853 - 1890

# Passion and practice ... and finally

- The impact of what happens at school and in the classroom has life long influences. The orange elephant.
- Opportunities provided to develop bounce back and resilience are an essential part of our learning experience.
- We can make the difference – what we do and why we do it.
- We need to establish the positive identity, confidence and self worth of every child

'I'll always be there for you James.' Yr 4 boy