

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH A TROUBLED CHILD OR TEENAGER **Fundamental Principles for the emotionally available adult**

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: Effective EAAs replicate what happens in best parenting

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: Empathy heals. In contrast, giving lectures to children or asking endless questions shuts them down

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE. Troubled children are not in the habit of thinking psychologically, reflecting on or communicating about their inner life, so they need help with that. 'Unprocessed/unreflected on feeling' gets 'behaved'.

Use pictures, images, tell them stories to widen vocabulary of mental states.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: The words you choose to convey empathy can bring 'a connect' with the child or a 'disconnect'. You need a rich evocative emotional language (don't expect the child to have one) and to hold in mind the full range of human emotions (not just one or two, e.g. cross/scared).

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: Hear their story (through play or if they want to tell you directly). Don't expect their behaviour, quality of life to change on a deep level until you do. Be curious about the meaning they have given to life events. If they don't tell you, be curious about the meaning they have given to a life event. Never infer meaning (tell them what they are feeling or assume the meaning they have given to an event)

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: Questions that are not followed by empathy will not heal

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: Have a range of different ways of conveying empathy

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: Children/teenagers can be limited in their ability to talk about feelings and stunning in their ability to show you symbolically what they feel. It's vital to offer them ways of communicating feelings other than through everyday language (e.g sandplay, art).

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: When there's lots of action in a session, without sufficient time for reflection, mid- session summaries and/or end of session summaries are highly valuable rather than the child just walking out of the room. They are also a key time for children to feel truly understood by you, that you have really 'got it'. This can be carried out through a big empathy drawing to ensure co-created empathy and understanding