Communication and Interventions with Troubled Children

Richard Rose
Children and young people occupy a very unique time in the human cycle that deserves our special attention, and the best of our resources and investments.

UNICEF
Children learn best from repeatedly seeing and hearing actions or ways of thinking that we would like them to emulate or “model”

Our role therefore must be to portray positive models for what we want children to do (such as being generous, fair, honest, caring and responsible) to reinforce positive action and thought.
Barriers to communication

We need to be patient, empathic, imaginative, respectful and tactful in order to help troubled children and young people communicate. In helping children to make sense of their world, we can explore their thinking, their emotional self and their internal view and then help shape their external presentation to achieve all they can be.

Rose 2012
That truth is that monsters are real, and ghosts are real, too. They live inside us, and sometimes they win”

King, S (1977) The Shining
“A major aspect of direct work is listening for the child’s perceptions. Until we do this, we won’t know if we are to expand their information or correct their misperceptions”

Fahlberg 2004
Communicating effectively with children requires a multitude of skills which include listening, reflecting, enquiring, challenging, understanding and responding to what is being communicated by children, young people and those caring for them.
All behaviour is Communication

Understanding the roots of the presented behaviour and reflecting what is being communicated verbally and non-verbally will empower the child to refine and reframe their communication process so as to be more effective in achieving their best interests.

Rose 2012
Communication through behaviour and feelings – Understanding what we see and why we see it
Recovery Process

‘Like taking the tender seedling and replanting it in a place where it has a better chance of growing. This is an enormously difficult task – attention to detail in their everyday life is vital in bringing about this rehabilitation’.

Lanyado, M (2003)
Prolonged exposure to stress and a child's continued use of coping strategies may result in behavior patterns that are difficult to change if the child perceives the strategy as being effective (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Stansbury & Harris, 2000).
Children who grow up in families that spend time talking about emotions are more academically successful, have better friendships, fewer infectious diseases and can handle difficult social situations, (such as getting teased) more effectively than children whose families do not talk about feelings.

Gottman and DeClaire 1997
Emotional Vocabulary

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Emotional Literacy

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Emotional Intelligence
Communication Through Play

Play is our first language, and can be said to be the natural language of children. By using the safety of play with toys, puppets, symbolic and representational play, as well as creative and expressive arts we can gain insights into the child’s inner world.

West 1996
Communication and Complex Needs

Working with children with complex needs, particularly when they are experiencing turmoil and distress, demands a facilitative, enabling and empowering technique, and a high level of skill, sensitivity and self-awareness.’

M. Brandon et al, 1998
• Jenga
• Squiggles
• Walls
• Emotional Work
• Air Balloon
• All About Me
• Memory Boxes
The Power of Play

Play is how children learn about their world. Play is essential for healthy development and so Play needs to be accepted as a serious, purposeful business through which children develop mentally, physically and socially.

Oaklander 1989
Sharing our Stories

Telling family stories - sharing our stories of the past helps bring adults and children closer and creates a wonderful opportunity for intimacy and relationship building.

Stone 1987
• Ishikawa
• Animal Game
• Cause and Effect Thinking
• Internal Working Model
  • Arrows
  • Thinking Cycle
• Keeping Safe
  • FFFH
I think

I do

I feel
Creating Therapeutic Environments
Wishes and Feelings Work

‘Children tell us they value workers who listen, are non-judgemental, are open, honest and who can be trusted. For many children, having their wishes and feelings ascertained, and their needs assessed by a skilful practitioner can be empowering rather than a stressful event.’

A. Bannister, 2001
Listening

We rarely have anyone’s total attention. The children we come across in our work may never have had an adult’s total benign attention – to get this is in itself a healing experience.
Therapeutic communication is about sending out the right messages so that children, who may previously have internalised a sense of worthlessness, come to see themselves as worthy, capable and valuable individuals.

In our interactions with children, our main tool is ourselves.
Mirror
Race Track
You first/Me second
Therapeutic Contact
Messages children need to hear

You are likeable  You are needed
You cannot overwhelm me  You make a difference
Others have been there too  This is a safe place
There is hope  It’s not your fault
You have choices  You are not a bad person