

Education, Management and Support for Children with PDA: some key issues

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Outline of Presentation

- Whole School (organisational) Issues
- Adult as Teacher
- Collaborative Approach to Learning
 - Principles
 - Strategies

Thank you to all involved in Fran's assessment...we are already experiencing a better home life with Fran. It seems by simply having a better understanding of her difficulties there is a tangible drop in tension surrounding our interactions

As with any child educational provision is about attempting to match the curriculum, approach and support that is required to the child's individual needs...PDA is a dimensional disorder that impacts differentially on individual children and interacts with other factors and circumstances

Whole School Issues

Range of placements

- Mainstream-with varying levels of support
- Area Special schools
- BESD
- Specialist (ASD)
- Individual packages

Characteristics of school

- Genuine commitment to inclusion of the child
- Strong support from school leadership team
- Positive, creative and flexible outlook
- Commitment to working with family in supportive and open partnership

Key issues for any educational placement

- Enabling access to learning (both in terms of the curriculum and socially)
- Managing the child's anxiety and subsequent behaviour
- Supporting positive relationships with their peers
- Maintaining an effective team of adults who can support the child and their family

AET Good Practice Report 2011

“... I suppose my message to schools is, you're there for the children, they're not there for you. And therefore, actually you do what you can to adapt to the children you've got, and not expect the children to become the children you want them to be.”

The adult as a teacher

- Teaching is a transactional process
- Understand that PDA is an anxiety driven need to be in control and to avoid other people's expectations
- ***'can't help won't'***

The adult as teacher

- The quality of relationships is fundamental to co-operation and to making progress
- Highly individualised style
- Less directive and more intuitive than would be the case with typical autism



The adult as teacher

- Confrontation should be avoided where possible.
- Expectations should be disguised and reduced to a minimum
- Ground rules need to be reduced as far possible but then maintained

Child as a learner

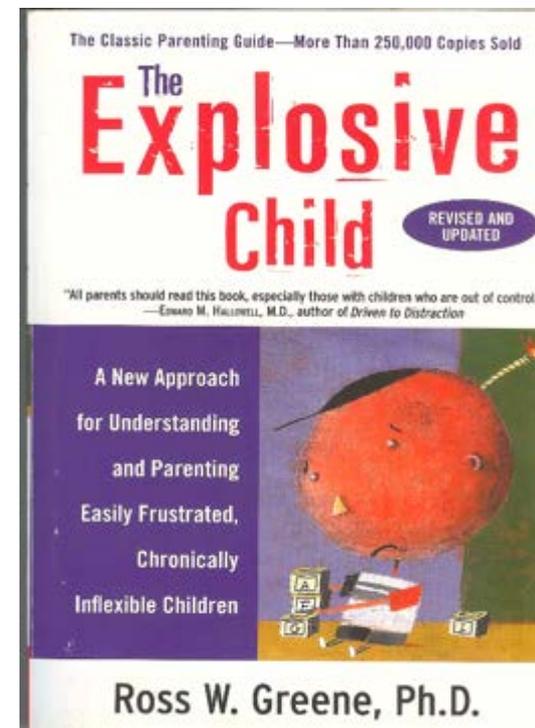


Adult as a teacher



Ross W. Greene

- Children do well if they can. If a child is not doing well the chances are they are lacking some specific skills to help them do well
- Being inflexible your self (without understanding the child's point of view or being able to compromise) doesn't help the child become more flexible



What skills might be lagging in any of these areas?

- Executive skills (planning, shifting attention, organising)
- Language processing skills (including identifying and articulating their needs, solving problems and communicating those solutions)
- Emotional regulation skills (understanding and expressing emotions, emotional problem solving solutions)
- Flexible thinking skills (thinking in shades of grey)
- Social skills (understanding social contexts and managing relationships)

Three problem solving options

- Plan A imposing the adult's will
- Plan B working out a mutually satisfactory conclusion to the problem
- Plan C dropping a given expectation completely, at least temporarily

Strategies

Collaborative Approaches to Learning – key principles

- Observe and listen
- Work together
- Negotiated solutions
- Flexibility and accommodation
- Minimise anxiety to maximise learning opportunities
- Monitor, reflect review
- Proactive approaches

C.A.L. – key strategies

- Choosing priorities – picking your ‘battles’
- Being indirect – an invitational approach
- Depersonalising requests and behaviour
- Adjusting expectations
- Use novelty and variety
- Use visual clarification to underpin negotiations
- Build positive relationships
- Use drama and role play
- Allow more processing time
- Minimise anxiety
- Promote self awareness and emotional understanding

| |
|--|
| <i>Prioritising behaviour – how important is it that this pupil?</i> |
| <i>...sits on a chair during classroom teaching sessions</i> |
| <i>...keeps shoes on inside school</i> |
| <i>...attends assembly</i> |
| <i>...does not damage property</i> |
| <i>...uses pupil toilets at school</i> |
| <i>...does not hurt other people (adults or children)</i> |
| <i>...completes homework tasks</i> |
| <i>...lines up with class group</i> |
| <i>...does not hurt themselves</i> |
| <i>...answers teacher when register called</i> |
| <i>...changes into PE kit</i> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | |
| <i>...joins in class-based group activities</i> | |
| <i>...records all their work in their own handwriting</i> | |
| <i>feels positive about being in school and develops emotional well-being</i> | |

Priority rating:

1 = high priority in all circumstances

2 = desirable but not essential

3 = low priority at the moment – we need to work around this another way

How important is it that this pupil...?

| | Priority | Strategies/ comments |
|---|----------|--|
| Changes into PE kit | Low | Parents will try to send wearing trainers on PE days/ indoor optional barefoot |
| Sits on a chair in class | Medium | Alternatives are beanbag/stool/standing/ physio ball/office chair |
| Does not hurt self, others or seriously damage property | High | Non negotiable and will always need intervention |

Julia

‘ Every day I must make choices on what “demands” I can cope with. On a bad day that might mean even brushing my teeth is a demand too far. If I’m having a bad day I just do what I can...if I’m having a good day then I am able to push myself...on the whole I am very happy (but) even at the ripe old age of 32 I still don’t think that I have that good a control of the anxiety. There are still some days that’s it’s so bad I literally can’t do anything.’

Indirect 'invitations to collaborate':



- I wish I knew someone who could help me with...
- Oh look at that, now it's time to do....
- Do you want to do A,B or C first?
- Who's left this here?
- You choose, which job should I do in this task/experiment?
- That would be a great idea for another day
- It would really be helpful if you can find a way to...



“What’s PDA? Well the clue is in the name. It means if someone asks me to do something, I’m likely to say no... that’s me all over isn’t it?! But I’m also like a cat. It all depends on how you ask me. If you ask me in the right way, it’s like stroking a cat’s fur the way it grows. I may even purr! But if you ask me the wrong way, it’s like stroking a cat’s fur backwards. I’m likely to hiss!”



Socially complex language can sometimes be effective as a deliberate strategy

“If a direct request is part of a normal conversation, it’s easier for me to co-operate with. If it feels a gentle question mixed in with a friendly chat it is much easier than having an instruction.”

Depersonalising the demand

- United nations rights of the child
- Health and safety manual
- Government policies



Giving indirect praise to children with PDA

- For some children this is not an issue and they may thrive on praise, indeed seem to need a higher degree of praise and positive acknowledgement
- For others, praise can be significantly uncomfortable. For these children and young people it might be helpful to praise them in a conversation with a third party but in their hearing.
- ‘For me, it’s ...the implied demand to be able to do the same thing just as well every time, which for me and others with PDA, is at times unachievable.’
(Julia 32)

Adjusting expectations

- Sometimes the goalposts need moving to help everyone reach a satisfactory conclusion
- The end point does not need to be the same as the starting point



During a PE lesson where the use of apparatus was required Adam started to insist that he couldn't participate because 'my legs don't work'. He was new to the class and staff were starting to recognise that he would frequently try to avoid activities using similar excuses. They had already found themselves getting into protracted and unresolved negotiations with him over other issues. On this occasion they decided not to get drawn into such discussion and joined in with him to make it a game to see which pieces of equipment they could get across using only their arms.

Visual clarification

- Visual clarification methods can be effective but require adapting

‘Communication via notes, social media and the written word in general can sometimes feel less threatening for Mollie than verbal communication’

(Jane Sherwin, Mollie’s mum)



Allow more processing time

For the pupil:

Gives opportunity to process information as well as accept cooperation

For the adult:

Gives opportunity for reflection or collaboration if you feel you are being out-manouvered

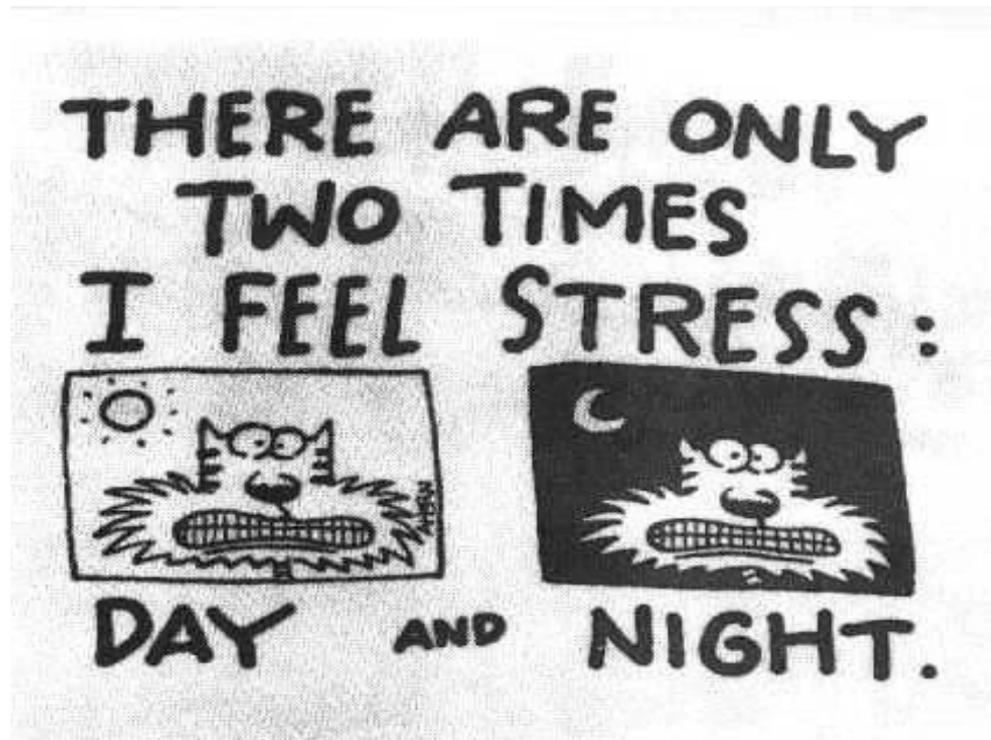
Minimise anxiety

- Avoid raising anxiety...
...may need to think about free time, PE, queuing for lunch, assembly
- Any strategies that reduce anxiety...
...may include exercise, music, art activities, makeup/nails/hair, hobbies (ie activities that are not usually on school timetables)

Building self awareness and emotional understanding

- Proactive strategies that build emotional robustness and regulation
- Knowledge of real world consequences of explosive anti-social behaviour
- Understanding their own condition and how it affects them
- Refining awareness and understanding of emotions (own and other people)

Providing a forum for promoting emotional wellbeing



Personal Tutorials





Personal Tutorials are...

- Dedicated and prioritised time
- Opportunities for the pupil lead the session and move at their own pace
- Exclusive time during which personal issues can be explored
- Time away from assessment-driven teaching, where the process itself provides the framework for success
- A forum to facilitate individual development and personal reflection
- Means of increasing long-term self management skills

Structure and organisation

- Who?
- When?
- Where?
- What?
- How?

What happens during personal tutorials?





Examples of areas of focus

Complex communicator

- To work through a social story to help with 'fairness'.
- To make a list of words to describe the difference between excellent and OK activities.
- To look at what I can do if I want some food to eat and Mum's not got it in the house.
- To discuss what I can do if I want to have some time on my own at school and develop agreed strategies
- To develop awareness of personal strengths and areas for development
- To discuss and develop social repair strategies using examples from personal experience

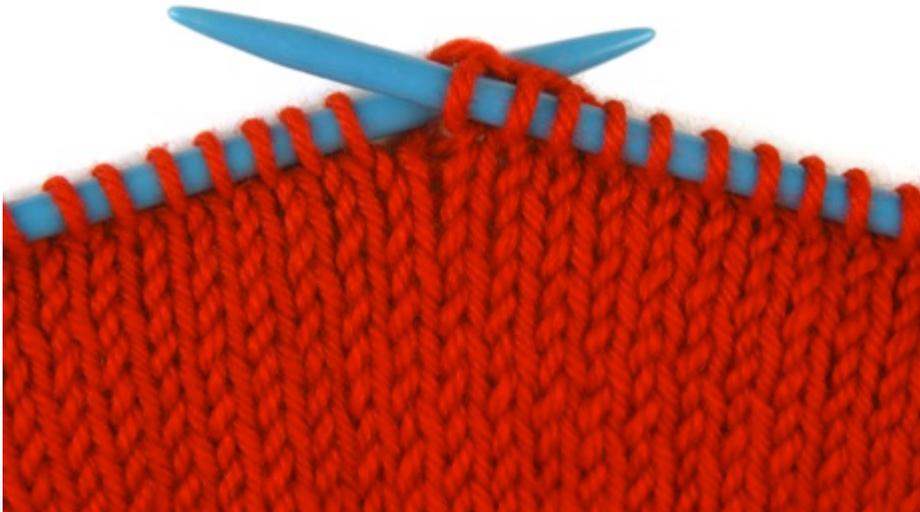
Early communicator

- To choose between two preferred activities using visual support
- To select from a choice of preferred activities (using symbols) an agenda of up to five activities.
- To share photos from home using 'talking photo album'
- To attribute 'like/don't like' to photos of recent experiences
- To interact with tutor during shared tutorial activities such as hand massage.

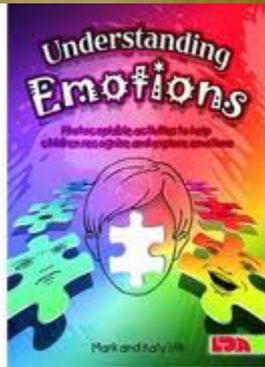
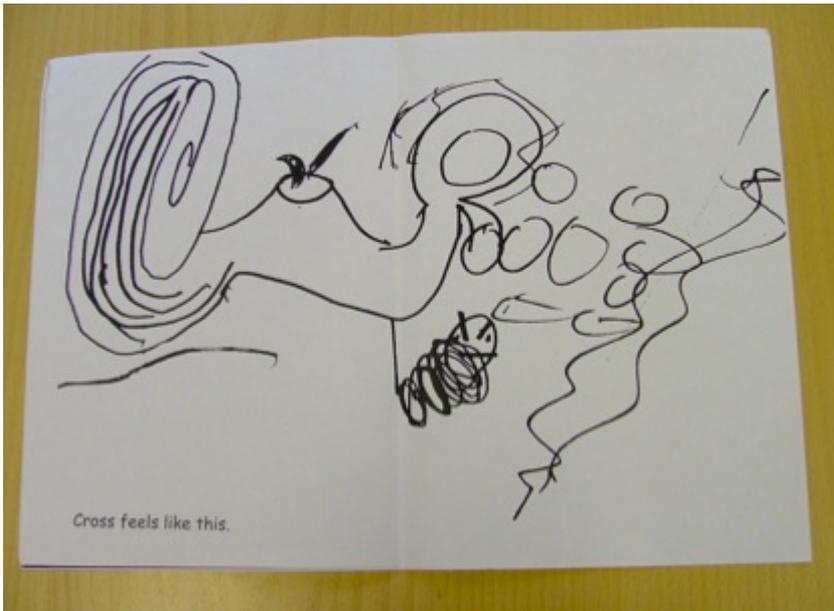
Current issues for one 13 year-old

- I need ways to cope when people try to rush me.
- I hate it that some people kill animals just to eat them.
- Unusual or frightening dreams make me woozy.
- Who should I choose for an adult role model?
- I'm growing up and one day I'll have to move school.
- I don't want to leave my childhood because it doesn't suit me to be independent, responsible or quick.
- How can I make my friends be peaceful and agree with each other?
- Which issues are my worries and which belong to adults?

Providing regulating activities



Understanding emotions



Understanding and expressing preferences



Understanding options

- 'The way to A'
- Worry plans
- 5 point scale



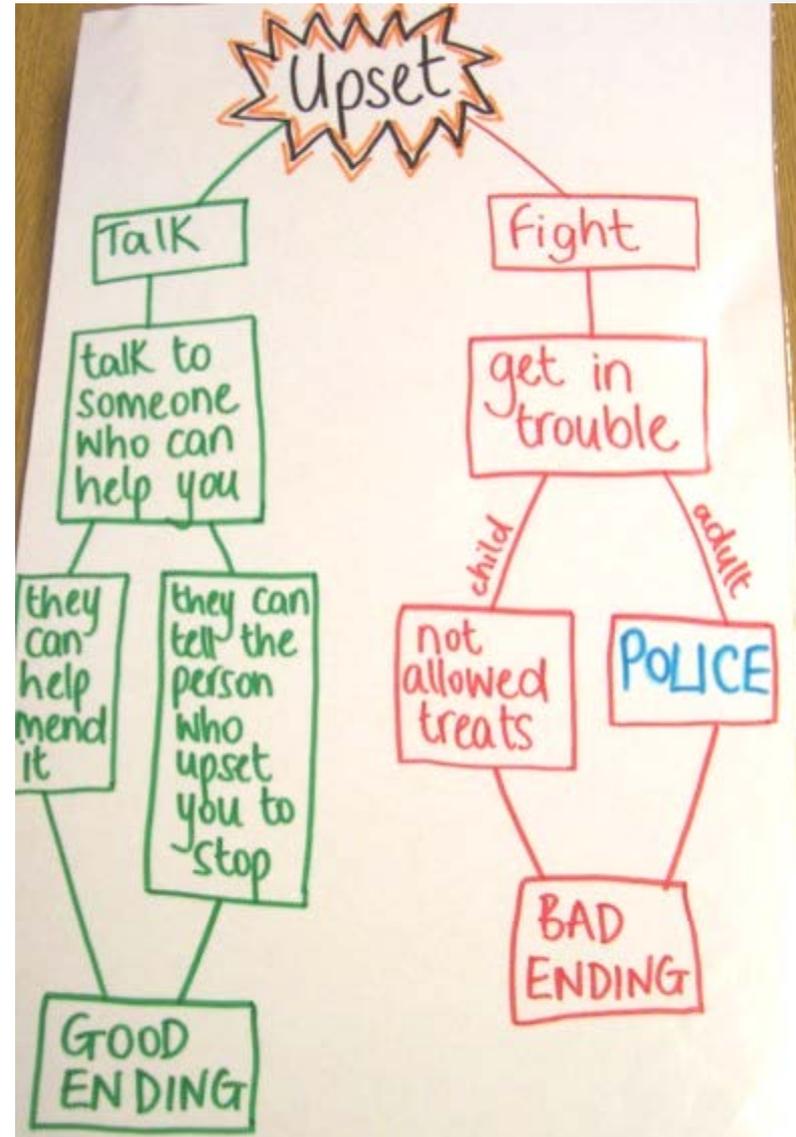
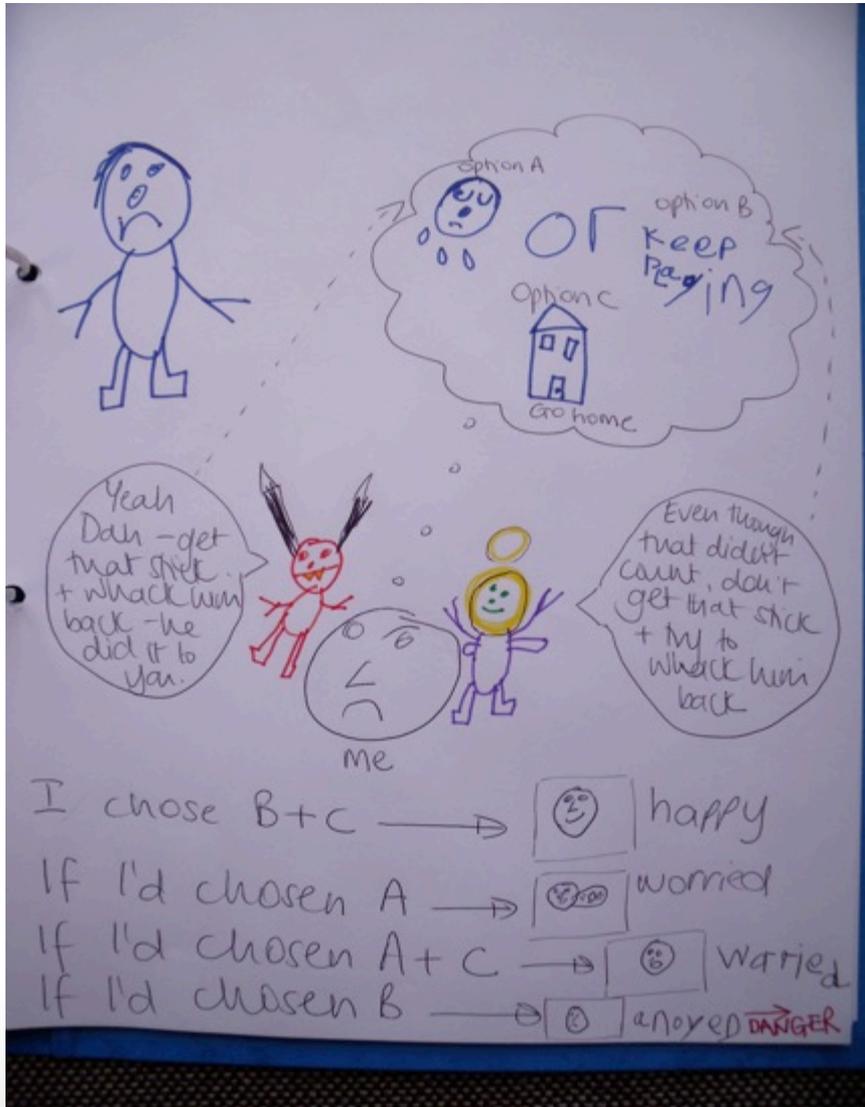
Where should we go today?

| What are my options? | possibility | fantasy | maybe another day |
|----------------------|-------------|---------|----------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

What is my first possible choice today?

What is my Plan B?

Understanding consequences



Ned

“ PDA is irritating because most of the time I want to do stuff but something gives me the urge not to. If I say ‘I’m not going to do it’ then I CAN’T do it because I’ve said I won’t and I can’t back down.

My new technique now I’m older is to think ‘try not say anything when I’m asked to do something’. If I can stop myself saying I won’t do it then I can leave my options open. That means I can get used to the idea of co-operating and I MIGHT be able to do it”

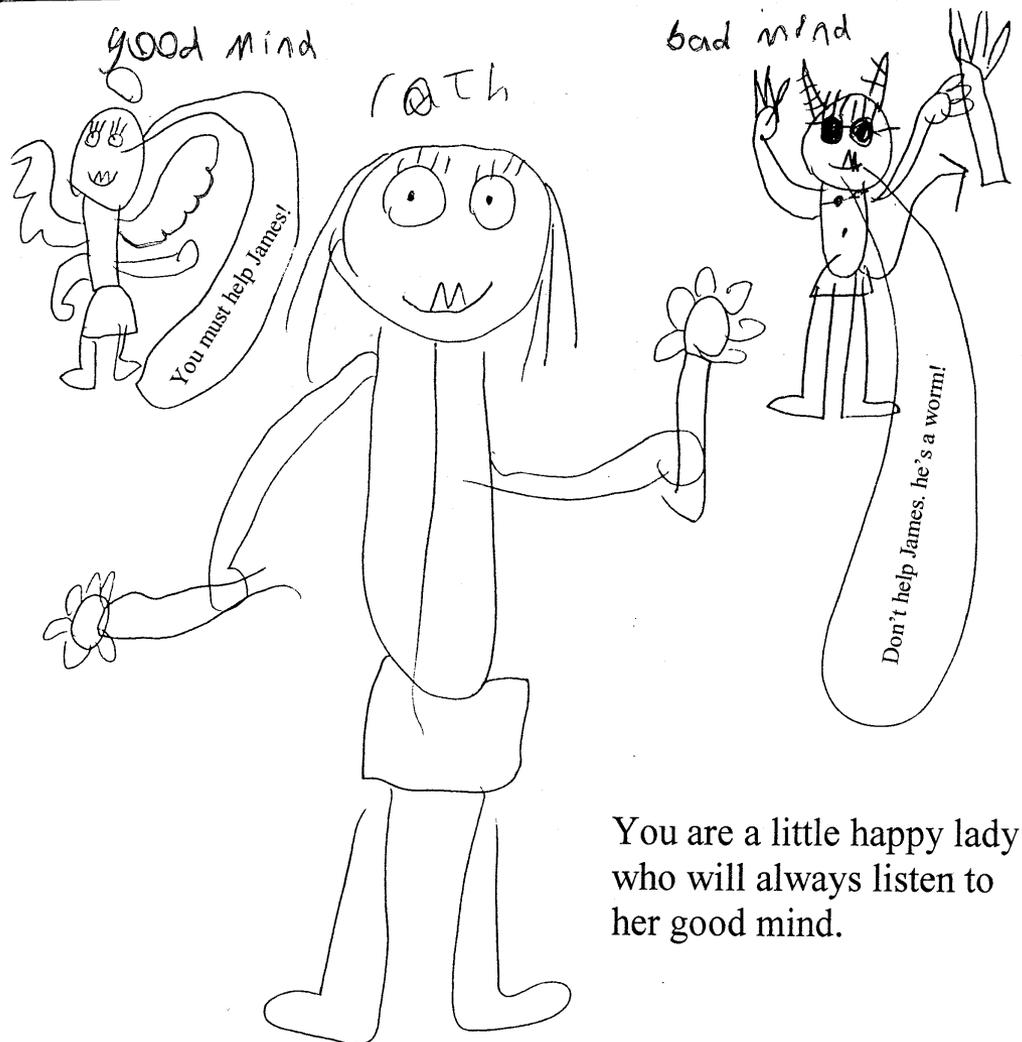


Evaluating effectiveness

‘If you can’t count the right thing,
counting the wrong thing isn’t a
substitute’

Jonathan Wolff, Professor of Philosophy, UCL.
October 2008

Evaluating effectiveness



You are a little happy lady who will always listen to her good mind.

- “I used to think I had to be the one who should change. I don't feel like that now....Now I feel it's OK to just be me.”

“Even if you’re at your most depressed emotion, tutorials always help you feel better. Solving problems in your life is easier when you talk about it. It helps to rebuild your confidence after a difficult time.”



“Tutorials are cool. They make you feel important. Everyone should have one.”



Useful websites

- www.pdasociety.org.uk
- www.autism.org.uk
- Pathological-demand-avoidance.com
- Memyselfandpda.com
- <https://sites.google.com/site/lizonions>
- Understandingpda.com
- www.autismassociates.co.uk