



How Circles for Learning empowered a Year 3 class to recognise, understand and regulate their emotions.

'When baby Ella came into class she snuggled into her Mum turning her head away from the children. The class teacher asked the children what they thought her responses might be telling them? They suggested that she might be feeling cross and didn't want to be in class or that she was feeling shy. One child then suggested that she just wanted to be held by her Mum because she didn't feel very well. Ella's mum nodded and explained Ella was teething and had not had a good night waking several times. She continued to explain because of this Ella was needing her to help her more and was not as brave as she often was.'

Working with the children the class teacher was able to notice and wonder about behaviours and interactions and ask questions which encouraged the children to consider and explore how Baby Ella might feel about being with so many children in a strange place, and what might be helping her to manage. Questions such as 'How would we know if she was struggling to manage?' enabled the children to understand that Ella's Mum provided Ella with a feeling of safety - a 'Secure Base' - which she needed to be open to what was happening around her.'



The class teacher then took this lovely moment and helped the children, over the next few weeks, to explore and reflect on the strategies they used to cope with times when they felt anxious or worried. They shared the book 'Big bag of Worries' which led to the children drawing and talking about their own Worry Monsters and shared the strategies they used to cope from self-talk to breathing focusing on a positive memory and holding someone's hand. Another activity the class teacher used to support this work on strategies, was the design of a Class First Aid Box. Into this the children and adults all put strategies they used to help them when they felt worried or anxious. The box contained a range of things from cuddles to chocolate and computer games! Gradually the work extended to explore what the children felt when they were learning in the classroom, linking this with how they felt when they were given work that looked too difficult for them. Not only were the children able to talk about difficult feelings, but they were also able to share ways of managing them. The children were supported to think and talk about times they had experienced when they got stuck, became frustrated or worried about a piece of work. This of course gave the class teacher huge amounts of information and really positive ways to help children when learning got tough.

"The Circles for Learning programme enabled my class the time and space to discuss and then identify the fact that we all need to feel safe before learning could happen and then to co-create that safe space together"