

Appendix 9 **Top Tips/Strategies for Children**

▶ **The traffic light system**

This presents children with a means of identifying, analysing and subsequently de-escalating strong feelings. It is a clear visual image of how strong feelings can be managed, as follows:

- The red light indicates the stop and think stage in which the child identifies the problem: What is the problem? How do I feel?
- The amber light represents the wait and plan stage: What should I do? Who can help me? What are the consequences?
- The green light represents the go stage: Try out your plan, go for it, reflect and evaluate.

Children can make use of this traffic light system on a regular basis and evaluate how useful or otherwise it is by referring to their anger log or strong feelings diary. The traffic light strategy can be used as a visual reminder in the form of a book mark and presented in poster form in a range of contexts around the school.

▶ **Change your thinking**

Once children know what their triggers are they can then begin to change how they think about them by creating a new script. It is useful to present opportunities for triggers to be identified and for children to then identify what they think and do as a result of these triggers. In true solution-focused fashion, they can then proceed to think and articulate what they can do differently, how they can think differently, how they can respond differently in the future.

▶ **Developing a script**

Children can also develop their own personal calming down script in order to diffuse a situation when they find themselves becoming angry. This can be written down on a small card and kept somewhere safe.

▶ **Problem-solving framework**

Problem-solving frameworks are also useful in terms of identifying the following: What are the problems? What are the feelings? Stop and think and make a plan. What can they do? How can they think differently? Who can help them? Try it out. When will they know that the problem's been solved? What will be different? This kind of framework is also particularly useful in ensuring that a solution-focused mentality is encouraged and maintained.

▶ **Using 'I' messages**

Children can formulate an 'I' message which can replace negative responses or statements. For example, if someone is attempting to pick a fight with them or if someone is doing something that is beginning to make them angry, they can rehearse an 'I' statement such as 'I would like you to stop that now because you are making me feel angry' or 'I don't like what you are doing, please stop it', etc.

▶ **Using exercise**

Running out your anger or engaging in some form of exercise is particularly helpful as it produces the feel-good chemical endorphin alongside having a further positive payoff in terms of keeping you fit and reasonably well.

▶ **Using the tension scale**

Children can imagine a tension scale from 0–10 (10 being the most upset or angry that they can feel and 0 being the state when physiologically they are back to normal). They can then proceed through a series of steps: (1) I am upset because... (2) I am at point ... on the scale (3) To get down to point... I need to... (4) To get down to point 0 I need to... (5) When I am on 0 I will feel....

▶ **Using a relaxation script**

Children can be provided with a relaxation script which they can practise on a regular basis, tensing and releasing muscles in each part of their body in turn. This can either be read aloud to them or they can commit the script to memory. This can be something they use prior to entering a more stressful situation or subsequent to experiencing a real pressure on their ability to cope and manage their behaviours effectively.

▶ **Use of distraction**

Adults in a situation can often help a child by distracting them to another activity if they can see that they are becoming angry or stressed by a situation or event. Children can also make use of distraction for themselves, recognising the trigger to anger and immediately distracting themselves from the situation by engaging in a more positive activity.

▶ **Use of relocation or time out**

Very often when things get really stressful children may wish to choose to take time out of a situation. Individuals can be issued with time-out cards or some other means of indicating to the member of staff that they need to have some time to themselves in order to calm down.

▶ **Use of anger spoilers**

Children can make use of a range of anger spoilers such as counting to 10 or 100 or using the traffic lights system.