Therapeutic Family Interventions
Working together to achieve change

Reflective language is a behaviour management approach which explores the possible reasons behind the behaviour whilst providing positive messages to a child. It works on the assumption that a child is trying to communicate through their behaviour because they don't yet have the skills of doing this through their words.

Using reflective language to support children's behaviour and emotional well-being

When children's behaviour is challenging or worrying they are often trying to tell us that they are angry or scared or unhappy about something in their lives. Reflective language give us a tool to support children with these feelings and thus enables them to engage more effectively in their learning.

Reflective language provides a commentary of a child's behaviour and can tentatively suggest the feelings behind it. It can help a child who lacks resilience as it normalises their feelings. It communicates 'You are worth thinking about and trying to understand, I am trying to help you to work out how you feel and support you with understanding and managing your feelings.'

Below are examples of reflections for you to try with children you work with.

I can see...

... you are looking out of the window. Do you need some help?

... you are looking sad and I am wondering why that is.

...by your face that you are struggling with that.

Message: I see you

Sometimes...

... it's really frustrating if you've had your hand up for a long time.

... we can feel really angry when we make a mistake.

...it's difficult to ask for help.

Message: Everyone can feel like this

It can feel...

... a bit difficult when I have to leave class.

... hard when other children get chosen.

...frustrating when you can't tie up your shoe laces.

Message: Naming emotions

I'm wondering...

... if you would like me to explain that again.

... if it would help if you sat nearer to me in class.

...if it's hard to remember to sit still.

Message: I'm trying to understand you