

The DREAM MENTORING Trainer's Manual

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A Dream A Dream Program

Life Skills Development For Youth From Vulnerable Backgrounds



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trainer's manual introduction

Many children are born into poverty, often cared for in shelters, and it can seem as though there can be no way out of this. We know that poverty and neglect can cause long term damage to children's health, development and personality. The only way out of this situation for these children is if somebody believes in them and has the ability to stand by them unconditionally. This offer can be the greatest gift that a child can experience when their previous life has been impoverished and based on abuse and insult. A skilled mentor does not need any special qualifications, but rather a genuine interest to help a child manage and move on in life. The best predictor of a child's future is their past; a child who starts life in poverty or abuse is most likely to stay in poverty or abuse unless somebody stands by them and helps them move on. This is the role that a mentor will have. The overall aim is for the mentor to enable their mentee to gain essential life skills. It is a sad reality that most children who are cared for in shelters or

orphanages end up living on the edges of society when they leave, repeating where they came from. A relationship with a skilled mentor is what can break this damaging cycle of deprivation.

The mentoring course is designed to impact on adolescents but can be successfully used for children of any age. This manual has all the information you will need to lead a group who want to become mentors for disadvantaged children. The course will explore why mentors for disadvantaged children may need extra skills to be successful and provide a safe time to practice those skills. There are seven sections to the mentoring course most of which are split into practice and information sessions. The practice sessions will provide communication skills together with an understanding of problem solving and behaviour change skills. The information sessions will contain information about development, mental health and other issues that are important to know about when working with disadvantaged children. Each session takes about three hours or so to complete. The format is flexible so the course could for instance be completed in about 8 or 9 evenings if that is more convenient. There will be a need for mentors to be matched to mentees. This is particularly important in India due to language and social demands. It is recommended that the genders of mentors and mentees are also matched but this is not essential. If a mentor has similar interests as a mentee then this gives a strong starting place, but again this is not essential.

There is no need for any special equipment or facilities, all you will need will be in your manuals. The Trainer's Manual is a duplicate of the Mentor's Manual with extra pages to provide you with information to help you facilitate the group. The Trainer's Manual will

also have some background information in it as well as the session content including some hints and tips concerning your presentation. You will need to read each section, perhaps a few times before presenting the session.

The text in the Mentor's Manual can act as a guide if you want to use your own words in the presentation or you can read out the content in parts or whole sections if that feels more comfortable. There should be little jargon or technical speak to help everybody understand, as this will probably be new information for most people. There is no limit as to how many new mentors can train in the group and it can work with as few as three or four.

It is your choice as to how many trainers there are for each group of mentors. It can be quite enjoyable and easier to plan the course with one or two others and then present it together. Some of the content in the Trainer's Manual will be repeated or very similar to parts of the Mentor's Manual which will help you recognise the main themes and tune you into the session presentations.

The training is based upon being non-judgemental with each other and with your mentees. There will be few right answers but many different ideas. We are not all the same as we have different beliefs, ideas, aspirations and lives. The way in which we were brought up as children will also affect the way in which we now live our lives. There will be no desire to change any of these but rather to use all of these differences to make a strong group of mentors. These differences will be explored in role play and during practical skills sessions.

Mentors need to expect to commit for about three months to a year. This does not mean that mentors have to stop meeting with their mentees after that time. Previous mentors have continued meeting with their mentees for much longer than their agreed plan, often changing their relationship to be more like friends as time goes on. It is important that there is some sort of limit set around expectations but these expectations can be flexible and increased. This is a way of increasing the feelings of success for both the mentor and the mentee. It has to be recognised that we all have our own lives to live and that our circumstances around work or families may change so any agreement has to accept that there may be changes. The aim is for mentees to develop real life skills, which also means learning to accept real life situations.

As mentioned earlier there is no need for any special facilities or equipment to deliver the course. It is better if the layout of the room is not in a classroom style as the sessions are often interactive. If there are just a few people involved then an office room or a room in an apartment will be fine. It is useful if there is a white/black board or flip chart type paper available. If these things are not available there is enough information in the manuals to continue successfully. Each page of the Mentor's Manual forms a step, so it is important to follow the pages and not skip any.

session 1

introduction and overview

A mentor is a responsible role and it can be life changing for an adolescent to be successfully mentored. You will be expected to form an appropriate relationship with your mentee, being available for the time you have agreed. The time commitment will vary according to what you can realistically offer and the needs of your mentee. The commitment can range from a few weeks up to two years. We would guess that you would need to commit to 3 months minimum. Mentoring is not just about giving advice, but also being a role model. There is a need to attend at least some Reflective Practice sessions to both get ideas if you are stuck but also to give ideas to others. It is almost guaranteed that there will be frustrations on the way and a need to persevere. On the other hand previous mentors who have completed this course are now working successfully with their mentees.

The course takes seven sessions of training and discussion to complete. The overall course may take eight sessions depending on whether one session is arranged for you to meet your mentee. At the end of the scheme you will have the skills you need to be a successful mentor. Perhaps at this stage you may be asking why this is such a good idea? We know that the best predictor of a person's future is to look at their past. So if a child comes from a successful family they are much more likely to be successful in their future. On the other hand if a child comes from a very poor past, they are most likely to be poor when they are adults. This also counts for emotion, education, jobs etc. If we look at disadvantaged children they generally have poor backgrounds and poor experiences and so are most likely to have poor futures unless something is done to help them. Generally when a child is locked into poverty there is only one way out and that is for somebody to help them. Even short interventions can have dramatic effects, e.g. your mentee may stay in school and not run away if you as their mentor can stand by them through a difficult time.

One of the most important things a mentee needs is to have somebody to be with them, believe in them who they can trust. It can often be that a child has a problem that is impossible to solve which can leave the mentor feeling useless. It may be that the most important piece of information we have to learn during these sessions is that this is when the mentor takes off – now is the time to stay with your mentee even if you cannot find a solution. This is when trust becomes reality. If this makes little sense for you at the moment, it should make much more sense by the end of the sessions when you will have new skills and start working with your mentee.

The course starts with an overview of all the sessions, one by one. By the end of this session the new mentors should have a good idea of what to expect from the course and what being a mentor means. This has the effect of allowing the new mentors to commit to the course, strengthening the group, or maybe realising that mentoring is not for them. Commitment is important as the course needs some time and work to complete and helps form the group. Belonging to a group decreases anxiety and increases success.

Write the key points of the start of the Introduction on a black-board or large piece of paper as you present it, the first key points:

- You are expected to form an appropriate relationship with your mentee
- Time commitment varies from a few weeks to a couple of years from about 1 hour a week upwards
- Commitment has to be realistic depending on your circumstances, eg, work or family
- Mentoring is not just an advice service
- It is important to meet up with other mentors to support each other and exchange ideas. Reflective Practice groups (groups of mentors who meet up to share and support each other) can be formed to offer a non critical forum for this
- There will be some frustrations on the way and a need to persevere
- Previous mentors have reported back that mentoring really does work and lives have been changed

Research has consistently shown that the best predictor of a child's future is to look at their past. Generally you would not expect a wealthy bankers child to be employed working on a market stall selling fruit when leaving school. On the other hand it's not very often you see a stall holders child grow up to be a wealthy banker. This is not just for wealth or money it also counts for health, abilities, well being, confidence etc. There can be huge social expectations that can almost make predictions of our futures.

- Children who have poor backgrounds and poor experiences are likely to have poor futures
- If a child is locked into poverty there is generally only one way out of it and that is for somebody to help them
- The mentoring scheme has shown that even small interventions can make dramatic differences, eg, staying at school and not running away

The course will help us to have the skills to find solutions to real life issues with our mentees. Sometimes more importantly it will provide skills to stay by our mentees even when practical solutions just seem impossible to find which can still be a powerful experience of your mentee's life.

Sessions will be split into two parts:

- Information
- Skills practice

INFORMATION

These parts of the sessions will be looking at aspects of child development and how that interacts with mental health. The mentoring course is based upon the recognition that underprivileged children do not develop as well as other children. These developmental problems in turn cause a range of problems that impact on everyday life. These problems can be seen as mental health problems, although this may not be the most useful way forward for us as the course training is designed to recognise these problems and help our mentees to find solutions and ways of dealing with them. Developmental problems can be due to poverty, abuse, neglect or even poor expectations. A mentor needs to be able to recognise these problems and be able to work alongside them with a view to minimising or preventing their impact.

SKILLS PRACTICE

This part of each session will introduce the building blocks of behaviour and behaviour change. Behaviour could be described as anything that we can see or that motivates us to do or not do things. The building blocks of behaviour and behaviour change will include validation, reinforcements and punishment. This will allow us to understand why a behaviour happens or does not happen and then how to change it or remove blocks. It may be useful as a starting place to think of a behaviour as anything you can see a person doing eg, crossing the road (there will be lots more of this later in the course).

SESSION ONE

INFORMATION – OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

As you can see we are obviously already in Session One. This is an overview of the whole course. Later on in this session we will be sharing with each other why we want to be mentors and what may have motivated us to reach this decision.

This first session is to let you know what is involved in the course and what to expect. This information may help confirm that you want to be a mentor and also hear about other people on the course.

Each session will be split into two parts

Information

This may be new information for you or maybe not. It will be information about techniques or psychological information about children and adolescents that you can apply when you are acting as a mentor. If you have skills or experience in this area it will be a chance to consolidate and improve skills, blending them with the ones that you may already have.

Skills Practice

Each session will have a practical part when we can practice and problem solve by putting all our heads together and working out what are the blocks that are stopping disadvantaged children from moving forward and how you can remove or get round those blocks. There will be lots of role playing – so don't hold back! New concepts of behaviour technology will be introduced along-side listening skills during these sessions. Perhaps the most important thing to say at this point is that Reflective Practice will also be introduced and this is a time to problem solve together and share but not to criticise.

The course will be delivered in such a way that you will not need any past experience or skills. Many of the examples will be looking at two mentors; Divya and Raj who have two mentees; Manjula and Ravi.



SESSION ONE

Information - Overview of the Course

This first session will not be able to follow the usual pattern as we have to get started. This is a time to think about mentoring for disadvantaged children and what needs to be done during the training sessions together. There will be an overview of the whole course and the levels of commitment and expectations will be discussed.

Skills Practice - Commitment

Again as this is the first skills practice session the format is a little different. This session is mainly thinking about commitment, we will be sharing with each other why you want to be a mentor and what will be involved. For some of you a mentor has been involved in your life at some point which may be influencing your desire now to be a mentor. In later sessions there will be accounts from previous mentors telling you about the ups and downs of their experiences. There's nothing like hearing about real life, but we know there were ups and downs!

SESSION TWO

Information - Child Development

Session two will be looking at child development. This is particularly important as early experiences often shape the people we are. For most disadvantaged children, their early experiences will not be the ones we would choose for a child.



Often you do not have to be an expert to recognise that a group of children from a shelter can look different compared to a group of children who attend an expensive International School nearby. The shelter children may look smaller and younger than the group of children of the same age attending the International School. The task during this session is to think about child development and then think about how these factors have impacted on the child or young person that you may be working with. If at this point you are worrying - don't - we will all be working together and finding solutions together.

Skills Practice - Validation Levels 1 and 2

During this practical session we will continue to look at ways of understanding behaviour, practicing acceptance and validation.

The session is aimed at increasing your listening skills. Paying attention to the person speaking to you makes them feel more valued. That person will know that you are paying attention if you can reflect and clarify what is being said. That person will of course soon be your mentee. As the sessions continue the emphasis will be moving towards skills that help change behaviour – but this needs a firm foundation of validation.

SESSION THREE

Information - Mental Health

This session will follow on from the previous one about development and will be about mental health. This generally will not be the same as mental illness. Mental health could be thought of as a description of us all. We all have likes and dislikes, fears and things that worry us. Many of these things may influence the way we are or the way we think. Often it is important to recognise where these things have come from and why they may be stopping us from moving on. Many early experiences can have a dramatic impact on later life, especially if these experiences are bad. We will concentrate on avoiding the use of diagnoses and medication as possible solutions.

Skills Practice - Validation Levels 3 to 6

This will be the second session looking at validation. Now that we are practiced at listening, there is need to make sure that we understand what is being said in terms of the past, present and being able to respond with a genuine reaction. This reaction will allow your mentee to know that you have understood what has

SESSION TWO

INFORMATION – CHILD DEVELOPMENT

In some ways this session gives the rationale to the structure of the course. The illustration shows two groups of children, one at an expensive international school and one at a school attached to a shelter. When we look at these two groups of children they are clearly different. The shelter children often look smaller and younger than the International school children. It is known that many of these shelter children started off basically the same, which indicates that their development has been different. Looking at these two groups of children is interesting as you can actually see the effects of development so clearly. It is not important for us that some groups of children appear smaller than others, but we also know that when growth stops or slows down, the whole of development also stops or slows down. It is possible for growth to catch up but other parts of development often continue to trail behind. Together with poor childhood experiences this is why mentors need special skills to work with them successfully.

SKILLS PRACTICE – VALIDATION LEVELS 1 AND 2

Validation is the framework that we will be using to deliver mentoring. Validation allows accurate information to be gathered and allows both you as a mentor and your mentee to understand what is happening without criticizing. Validation also allows a mentor to accept and value their mentee. Due to developmental confusion your mentee may not understand their behaviour, needing help to discover for themselves what is causing or maintaining their behaviour. Levels 1 and 2 validation are about increasing our listening skills. It may be surprising for some of the

new mentors that this is necessary as the first step in the process. Validation will be looked at as though it is a toolbox of skills and this stage is only the first tool we need before starting work.

SESSION THREE

INFORMATION – MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is not the same as mental illness. This is quite important to establish and will be a key statement in the session. Comparing mental health with physical health can be useful as it helps us to understand that we are not talking about mental illness. We may take a walk in the morning before work because it is good for us or not eat all the cookies at break-time. On the other hand if we ate 6 packets of cookies every day at break-time we would probably soon be ill. For our mentees we know that many of them will have poor developmental and social experiences which will impact on their behaviour. A task of mentoring is to minimise the impact of these experiences which often block the ability to manage everyday tasks. Research has clearly established that early experiences can have a dramatic impact on later life. We will concentrate on finding real solutions for problems rather than looking towards diagnosing them.

Skills Practice – Validation Levels 3 to 6 - Validation now move us from listening skills to understanding skills. There is a need to understand what we are being told before looking towards change. Often our mentees may not understand their own behaviour which leads to a situation of 'I can tell you what I did but I can't tell you why I did it'. Validation skills will allow us to break through this.

SESSION FOUR

INFORMATION – RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship that you have with your mentee will be unique and not the same as any other mentor and mentee. We as mentors and as people are all different as are our mentees, giving a rich variety of relationships. Mentees like all children and adolescents are not independent beings, they are all part of systems of some sort, eg, families, shelters, schools, gangs etc. This means that any intervention or help often has to take these relationships into account. Because we are all different we can find as mentors that our views may not be the same as or even in opposition to other people in our mentee's lives. Some of the things that need to be considered when thinking about relationships include:

- Adolescence is a high risk time for any relationships as they often run into conflict
- Other significant people may have very different views to your own
- You are not a teacher, a parent or just a friend, a mentor is much more, but all of our relationships will be different
- There may be some surprise areas coming up so be ready for anything, eg, sexuality
- We will be learning how to say goodbye successfully this can make the difference between success or failure

SKILLS PRACTICE – POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENTS

Behaviour is driven by various things – it does not just happen. Positive and negative reinforcements increase the likelihood of a behaviour occurring. Target behaviours can be increased by learning new skills. Validation provides the information and format we need to apply our new behaviour change skills.

SESSION FIVE

INFORMATION – FORMULATION

Formulation is a way of putting together all the information that you have gathered and making some sense of it. You have a lot of information which can seem quite confusing so it needs to be arranged in a way that can be understood and creates a way forward and an action plan. After formulation we will be able to see how information gathered from validation fits together with reinforcements that creates and maintains behaviours.

The example of Manjula not getting on the bus to go to school will be used many times during the course. The key learning points for Manjula's example follows.

KEY LEARNING POINTS ABOUT MANJULA

Other significant adults may tell us that Manjula has a school problem (eg, carers).

But validation informs us that Manjula has a problem at home (not at school).

Formulation will allow us to work out a way forward and not make things worse!

been said and can continue talking to you with confidence. This means that you will gather all the information that you will need to help your mentee find real, accurate solutions and make good life choices. Later sessions will concentrate on increasing our understanding of behaviour and how it can be changed.

SESSION FOUR

Information - Relationships

Relationships and families are an important area for all work with children and adolescents. During adolescence there are nearly always problems with relationships of one sort or another. This of course becomes much more complicated when families are considered who may have very different views to yours. The relationships that your mentees may have with their families are likely to be complex and often challenging for a mentor. We also need to consider what your relationship is with your mentee, you are not a teacher or a parent and it may be different for each mentor. There are also other important areas that you may not have thought of such as sexuality or how to say goodbye successfully. Saying goodbye is often as important or even more important as saying hello. The concept of agreed plans will be introduced and why these are so important.

Skills Practice - Positive and Negative Reinforcements

Positive and negative reinforcement will be introduced along with their relationship with anxiety. Target behaviours can be increased by teaching new skills, using positive and negative reinforcement. This will become second nature after these practical sessions.

Positive and negative reinforcements only work if we apply them to the correct parts of behaviours – this is why we need to gather the correct information using validation skills.

SESSION FIVE

Information - Formulation

Formulation is the key to making things work. It sounds frightening, but it will not be when your new skills are used. Formulation is about looking carefully at the situation and working out what it is that is causing the problem and what needs to happen for your mentee to find a solution. A simple example of this could be that a child will not get on the bus to go to school. By the end of the sessions this example will have been used many times and will be very familiar to you.

In this example the problem is that Manjula will not get on the bus and go to school. We may naturally assume as adults that Manjula has a school problem. As adults we tend to interpret what we have been told by children, but this is not always accurate. Most of us would work quite hard to encourage Manjula to get on the bus. When the situation is looked at carefully you may discover that Manjula is



worried about her mum who is ill at home and she does not want to leave her mum alone. In this case a good solution may be to get a friend to visit mum at school time so she is not alone. This is of course not a real example, but it shows that the obvious choice (maybe work hard and encourage Manjula to get on the bus) may not be the best solution and could even make things worse.

Skills Practice - Punishment

The previous sessions have been concerned with increasing behaviours using positive and negative reinforcements. This session will introduce punishment which decreases the likelihood of behaviours occurring. This is not punishment in the everyday sense of the word. Our behavioural tool-kit will now include communication skills and ways to increase or decrease behaviours as is needed. Added to these skills will be ways in which we can achieve maximum results and how to maintain them.

SESSION SIX

Information - Advanced Formulation

Our formulation skills will be increased to another level and they will be used in role plays during the session. Role play will give you the opportunity of trying out new skills with the group, it will also be your chance to be a difficult child or adolescent for a short while! Role play is very useful to help build confidence in a very non-threatening way. There will be an opportunity to apply formulations and try solutions in the group before trying them with your mentee. Contracts or agreed plans will also be role played. These are important so that both parties work towards a common goal with a feeling of safety.

Skills Practice - Reinforcements, Observing Limits and Emotions

Just a few more technical terms – this session will be about how to practically increase adaptive behaviours and decreasing maladaptive behaviours. We will also be looking at Reflective Practice. It is important that you are supported by your fellow mentors. This is a way of sharing and improving skills, it is not about knowing the 'correct' answers. There will be times when things get difficult or you get stuck. At these times the support of your peers will be most important, even when nobody is confident about the way forward. There will be the opportunity to explore the role of emotions, both our own and our mentee's. As a part of this process we will be considering our own personal limits so that we can be realistic about what we offer as mentors. Accepting that we all have limits will be a part of your mentee's life skills development.

SESSION SEVEN

Information - Role Plays

This final session will be strengthening session six. We will be role playing problems, applying formulations considering solutions, producing a contract or agreed plan and then reflecting with each other how the solutions went. It may be that other solutions could be considered during Reflective Practice, but this does not mean that your chosen solution is wrong!

Skills Practice - Role Plays

This is a very important session – how do you make sure that you can apply all your skills. New behaviours must stay in place and not fade away losing progress. The role plays will give us the opportunity to apply validation leading on to behaviour change in a practical way that takes into account our own personal limits.

SKILLS PRACTICE – PUNISHMENT

Our behavioural tool kit is by now getting quite big as the number of tools increase. We now know how to understand and increase skills or behaviours using reinforcements. The next step is to look at how to decrease behaviours. Punishment decreases the likelihood of a behaviour happening. By this stage we will be skilled at communication skills and behavioural methods of increasing and decreasing target behaviours.

SESSION SIX

INFORMATION - ADVANCED FORMULATION

By this stage the course becomes more practical as role play increases. Advanced formulation will allow us to apply our new skills to reality. This will give us the framework that we need to hold together the relationship that we have formed using validation together with behavioural change techniques using reinforcements and punishment.

SKILLS PRACTICE – REINFORCEMENTS, OBSERVING LIMITS AND EMOTIONS

The way in which we apply reinforcements will affect the quality of their outcome. This session will help to make sure that our behavioural change techniques are working as well as possible. Reflective Practice sessions are a time when mentors can meet together to provide support and to exchange ideas with each other. It is important that Reflective Practice sessions are organised as at times we will all get stuck and need some support.

These sessions also increase skills as we share each other's work. We need to be aware that we all have our own emotions and these can be triggered when mentoring. Sometimes when we work with children's emotions they can trigger memories and emotions concerning our own pasts. At these times it is good to know that there is a support group that is available and not judgemental or critical.

As a mentor you need to be clear what you can realistically offer. At no point is there an expectation that you will drop your own personal life and dedicate yourself to mentoring! It is a life skill in itself for our mentees to learn that we as mentors have lives and families that also make demands. It can be damaging to over promise and under deliver compared with offering a smaller guarantee.

SESSION SEVEN

INFORMATION – ROLE PLAYS

Role plays can be more important than they sound as they provide the opportunity to apply new skills and new ways of thinking in a safe environment. These sessions will be using real situations that previous mentors have tackled. It is better that we practise with each other than trying for the first time with our mentees.

SESSION ONE SKILLS PRACTICE

SKILLS PRACTICE - COMMITMENT

This part of the session is interactive and is about commitment which should take about 90 minutes to complete for about 10 to 30 people. If there are less people then more time can be spent in discussion with each person. This part of the session will help people to feel part of the group which also helps with commitment. As information is shared it helps the new mentors to have a good idea about the wide spread of offers from people and what it means to be a mentor. You could use an introduction like this:

- 'I would like to ask why you are here and why you would give up your time, sit through these sessions and be a mentor' (you could of course use any wording that you feel comfortable with)
- 'To get started could you fill in the spaces on the page and then we can share with each other your thoughts' (again you may want to use your own words here)

After allowing 10 minutes or so to fill in this page the interactive part of the session can begin. Ask for a volunteer to start the feedback. It is better to start with a volunteer as this allows people who are less confident to become more so as the session continues. If possible write the responses on a blackboard or flip chart sheet so that common themes can be recognised. If need be you may have to prompt or help some people to respond in the session. If this is the case then have a conversation with people who are stuck during their feedback time. Try and allow enough time for everybody to feedback to the group, but this may not be possible if you have a large group. Examples of responses may be:

1. I had a teacher who; my uncle was a person who I could; when my business was bad a friend helped me to see a way forward; my parents were always thereI can't think of anybody (can you think of somebody that helped you when you were young?).
2. I think that everyone deserves a chance; I want to see change in my society; I think it's a really nice thing to do; I know what it's like to be helped and I want to do the same for somebody; It's something I've always wanted to do.
3. One hour every week should be ok; I am in the city for 6 months then I leave for a new job; I can be available most weekends but when I have to work I could call on my phone;
I would like to be available 2, 3 or 4times a week.
4. I speak Hindi fluently, I like sports and running; I would like to help with computing skills; I really want to help a young person, I have worked before with kids, I have a family and think I understand adolescents.
5. I work at weekends but could meet up on a weekday evening; I live on the north side of the city but will soon have a two-wheeler.

JUST A FEW RULES

There are not many 'rules' for the course as it will have an informal feel to it.

If you don't understand anything don't be afraid to ask questions – usually if you do not understand something there will be others in the room that feel the same!

All of the information is provided in steps so it is quite important to try and attend all sessions. There will be a manual section for each session with all the key information.

There will be some opportunities to try out your new skills in between sessions, this is your homework. Please do these so you can report back at the next session.

Most importantly we hope the sessions will be a mixture of good fun and work leading to being a successful mentor.

SKILLS PRACTICE

As this is the first session the Skills Practice time will be slightly different. It is good to get to know each other and to hear about why it is that interests each other to be a mentor.

In the spaces write down your thoughts.

1. Do you feel that you had a mentor when you were growing up or maybe even more recently. This may have been a person who helped you see a way forward or may have been an inspiration for you. What was it that made this person important – what made it good for you?

2. Why do you want to be a mentor?

3. How much time realistically do you think you can commit?

4. What kind of strengths do you think you can offer?

5. What sort of obstacles do you think you may have and have you got any ideas about how to get round them?

6. How committed are you at the moment to be a mentor on a scale of 0 (now I've heard more about it I think it's not for me) to 10 (I wish I could start today)

session 2

child development

key statements

- 1. If a child fails to thrive for its first few months of life –this damage can still be measured at ten years**
- 2. Within normal limits, every child develops in the same way at the same time**



The main themes of Session 2 are to let the new mentors know that all children develop in the same sort of way and if that goes wrong or is damaged, then children often end up with a similar group of problems. These problems can be long term and even life-long. This is reflected in the two key statements at the beginning which will get people ready for the session and also are easy to remember, acting as a memory aid or prompt. This really is the rationale for the need for the course. Disadvantaged children often have damaged development which means that special skills may be needed to work successfully with them.

You can start the session by reading out the two Key Statements. The first Key Statement is very powerful and may surprise some people. It is designed to start orientating the mentor's minds towards realising that early damage can have long term effects. This statement may also confuse people as failure to thrive has not yet been explained. If the mentors want to ask questions or ask for clarification this should be avoided just at the moment as the Key Statement will be explored during the session. This situation can be dealt with like this, using your own words: 'If you hang on for just a little while – your question should be answered in a few minutes during the session.'

The second Key Statement is to let the mentors know that all children should develop in the same sort of way regardless of where they are born or which family they are born into. This means that a child develops in the same sort of way whether they are born in India, Africa, Europe or anywhere in the world. Again now is not the time for questions which can be dealt with in a similar way to the first Key Statement.

Both of the Key Statements can have a sentence tagged onto them to make them more powerful. Usually this feels more comfortable if you use your own words and could sound like the following:

'Our first key statement is that **if a child fails to thrive during its first three months, this can be measured at ten years.** *This goes to show that this early damage can impact on later life and can be very powerful.'*

'The second Key Statement today is that **within normal limits, every child develops in the same way at the same time,** *so we know that it doesn't matter where a child is born, it should develop in the same way as any other child'*

Now the new mentors should be prepared for the session and primed to look for answers they may be thinking about.

The illustrations are of Divya with her mentee Manjula and Raj with his mentee Ravi. These four characters are in most of the examples in the manual and during the course. This is a good time to introduce them to the mentors.

We start by looking at the notion of normal distributions which are the foundations of growth charts as this part of the session is about growth charts for children. Growth charts are very important as they give an indication of how a child is developing (not just growing). To understand growth charts there is a need to understand the idea of normal distributions. This may sound a little complicated but is in fact quite easy at our level. A normal distribution can be demonstrated on a graph and shows that in almost all measurements of people there are a few highs and lows and lots of averages. Every time this is put onto a graph it looks like the shape of a bell.

The session starts with some examples of this by looking at the height of people in a bus queue, people's blood pressure and the size of their feet. This is building up to thinking about the height of children. With almost all measurements concerning people there will be a few high or large measures, a few low or small measures and lots of average measures. This is shown in the illustration of children on a graph with a few tall and short children with lots of average heights.

We are going to concentrate on height as this is a simple and effective measure. There are other measures that can be used, eg, the size of babies heads, but height is the main measure and sufficient for the course.

If you put a group of children together, half from a shelter and half from an expensive international school, even if they were all the same age they would not look the same. Almost everybody could tell which are the shelter children and which are the international school children. This means that the normal distribution of children's sizes has gone wrong somehow.

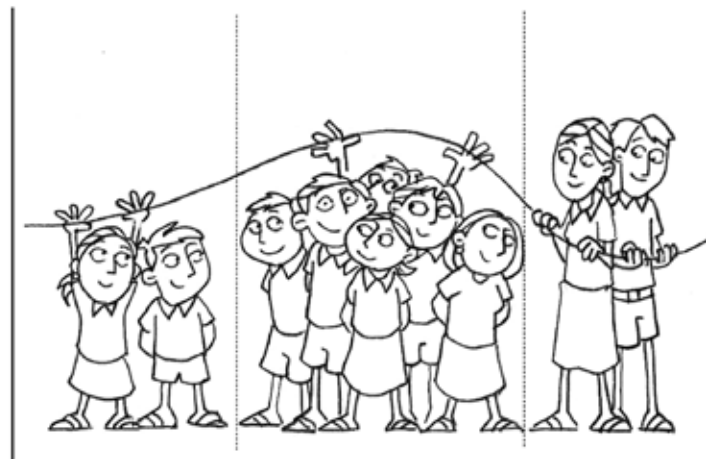
This is the first indication that disadvantaged children are different or special. The international school children would have a normal distribution of height as there would be a few tall ones, a few short ones and lots of average size ones. However, the shelter children very often appear to have lots of small ones, a few average size ones and a few tall ones. This is a key indication that the shelter children's development is not optimum or as good as it could be.

By this stage the new mentors should know:

- **We should expect to see a few tall people, lots of average and a few small people, this is the same for children**
- **Disadvantaged children do not always show this pattern indicating that their development may be different**

If we look at any group of people maybe in a shop, a market or even a long bus queue, there will be a few tall people, a few short people and lots of average height people. This is the same for children. If we go into a class room there will be a few tall children, a few short children and lots of average height children.

A similar thing happens for most measurements of people. We could measure weight, blood pressure, the size of feet, the size of fingers and so on. All of these measurements would show that there are a few people with big feet, a few with small feet and most with average size feet. This is known as a normal distribution or a bell curve. But if you put a group of children from a shelter or orphanage next to a group of children of the same age from an expensive international school, you do not have to be an expert to see that the two groups seem to look different.



Normal distribution graph for children's height

Most of us could tell which group is which even if they were dressed the same. Generally the shelter or orphanage group will appear smaller and often appear to look younger. During this session we will see why this is important and why this may make disadvantaged children special. In turn this will also show us why mentors for disadvantaged children may need some special skills. Before we look at disadvantaged children we need first to look at average child development.

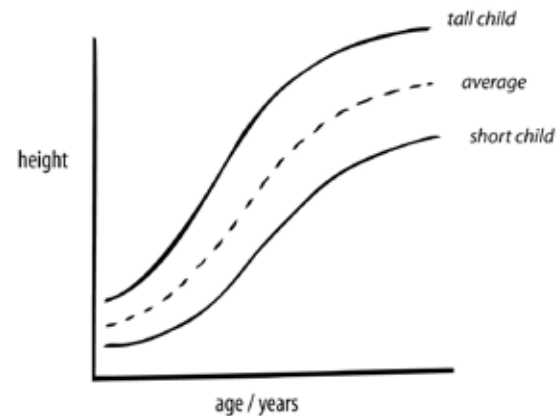


Growth charts are used a lot to check how children are growing especially in children's clinics and hospitals. It is possible to predict how tall a child is going to be when he or she grows up by looking at how long or tall they are when they are very young. Basically unless something happens, nearly all children grow in a set pattern which means this can be plotted on a growth chart at any age. If you look at the chart above, the bottom line shows a short child growing (there will not be many of these) the top line shows a tall child growing up (again there will not be many of these) and the middle line shows most children growing who are average. It is not important whether a child is tall or short but what is important is the pattern of growth. So it is expected that a child's growth would start somewhere on the graph and continue to follow the growth lines until the child is grown up.

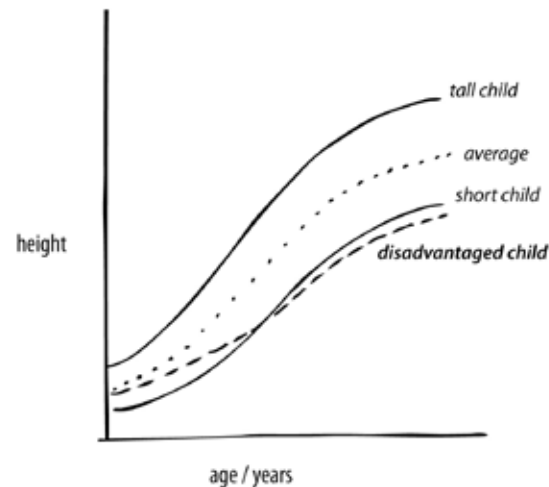
Many disadvantaged children start on a growth line but at some point, slip down the graph and end up being smaller than they should be. This is known as Failure to Thrive. For this reason the groups of children from orphanages or shelters often look smaller than children from other settings like the International School.

What is meant by failure to thrive?

Failure to thrive can be measured when a child stops growing as expected. If there is no medical reason, this is known as non-organic failure to thrive. If the reason is due to an illness or malnutrition it is known as organic failure to thrive. The effects on development are the same.



Children's growth chart



Children's growth chart for a disadvantaged child

Growth charts are just as they sound – they measure the growth of children. Growth charts often include weight and for very young children head size. There are many different types of growth charts but they all have the same basic construction. These graphs are illustrations of growth charts that would cover from 0 to 18 years. One side of the graph (axis) is height and the other age. Growth charts have a high and low line to show where normal limits are expected. Out of 100 children only 5 would be expected to be above the high line and 5 below the bottom line. This means that 90 children would be between the lines – these are the average children or all the children within normal limits for size. The children above the high line are the few very tall children and the children below the bottom line are the few very small children. The really important thing to get over in this part of the session is that it does not matter if you are tall or short but that children follow their expected pattern of growth as shown by the graph. This expected pattern of growth often does not always happen with disadvantaged children. This is illustrated on the second graph. Many disadvantaged children started when born as average for height but ended up as a small child when older.

If this situation were to happen it is known as **failure to thrive**. Failure to thrive means that a child has stopped growing or has not grow as fast as it should have done.

If you have a blackboard or sheet of paper, it is a good idea to draw the two axis (lines for age and height) as you are talking and then add the tall child line followed by the small child line and then add the medium. This will help people understand the structure of the growth chart. When this is clear the disadvantaged child line can be added in a similar way as it is in the mentor's manual.

The line for the disadvantaged child shows that this child has not developed as would be expected and has ended up shorter than would be expected. This is known as **failure to thrive**.

There are two types of failure to thrive, organic and non-organic. In reality these two are often mixed up with some organic and some non-organic. Not having enough to eat (malnutrition) is organic as are the effects of some diseases and illnesses.

Growth charts are very simple to use, they do not need special equipment and are very accurate predictors of development.

The three essential components to child development are:

1. NUTRITION – if you do not have enough to eat you will not grow.

2. GOOD EMOTION – children need to belong to a small number of carers and attach to them. Attachment includes touching, meeting needs, feeling safe when crying etc. This is an essential part of development and if you feed a child and not give it good emotion it will not grow as expected. This can be demonstrated by saying that if you put a baby in a box and feed it, the child will not grow as it also needs good human contact. This can be a problem for young children who live in institutions with low staff numbers to care for them.

3. SENSITIVE PERIODS – it is known that children develop at very fast speeds at certain times, these times are known as sensitive periods. There are many sensitive periods for all parts of development, both physical and psychological. If a child misses their sensitive periods for any part of development they will struggle to catch up later on. Sensitive periods for each part of development only last for a certain time and then development moves on. This means that if a child does not develop when they should, they will have to do this part of development later on when the child is geared up for a different part of development to happen. This is one of the main reasons why a disadvantaged child can have long term problems when their pattern of development goes wrong. In essence their development is out of synch with their bodies and it is difficult to catch up. This is especially important as development involves one skill being built on top of another. Nobody expects a baby to jump out of its cradle and run around the room. The baby will be ready neurologically and physically at certain times in development.

The components of development can be demonstrated by presenting the following steps:

1. NUTRITION 'We all know that a child needs food'

2. NUTRITION + EMOTION 'A child also needs emotion'

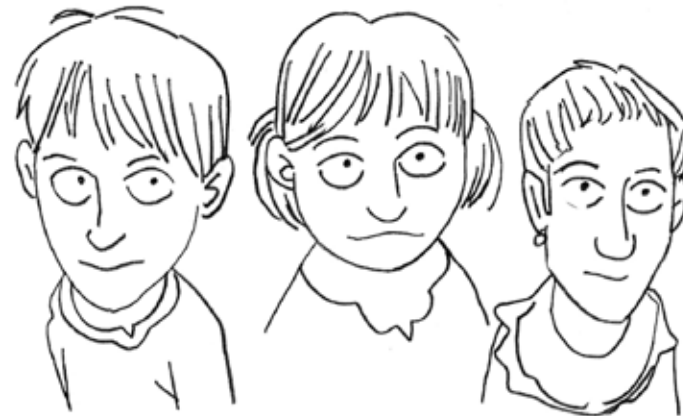
3. NUTRITION + EMOTION + SENSITIVE PERIODS = CHILD DEVELOPMENT 'But development has to happen at the right time & order'

WHEN GROWTH STOPS OR SLOWS - DEVELOPMENT STOPS OR SLOWS 'This is why it is so important to check growth'

A child needs appropriate emotional care as well as nutrition to develop. If a child is given sufficient food but has very poor emotional care, that child will not grow. If that period of time is not too great, the child can be fed and/or cared for and it can return to its appropriate size. Failure to thrive can happen at any time during development but is more easily observed the younger the child is.

The reason that this is so important for us today is that when growth stops there is psychological and developmental damage. This damage can be long term and even life-long in serious cases. The damage tends not to repair as quickly or at the same time as growth. Height and weight are the normal measures in pediatric settings eg, clinics or hospitals. For our purposes we will only look at height and not other measures. Growth charts are easy to observe and are accurate indicators of developmental patterns (a child's growth needs to be plotted over a period of time on an appropriate growth chart and not just recorded once).

By now you will be getting a feeling why it is so important that disadvantaged children may not have grown as tall as other children. The key point is that when disadvantaged children stop growing their development also stops. Often these children not only look shorter but also look younger but with some features of maturity, eg facial hair when in adolescence.



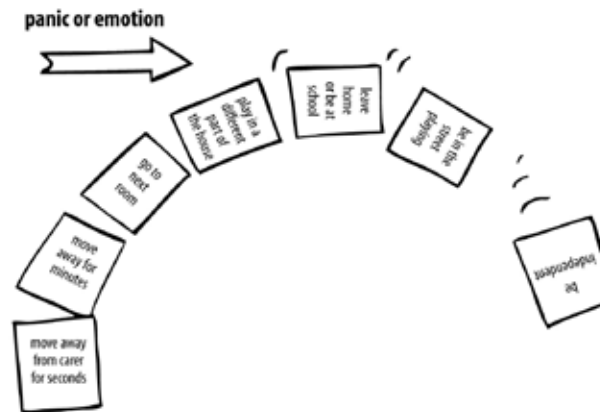
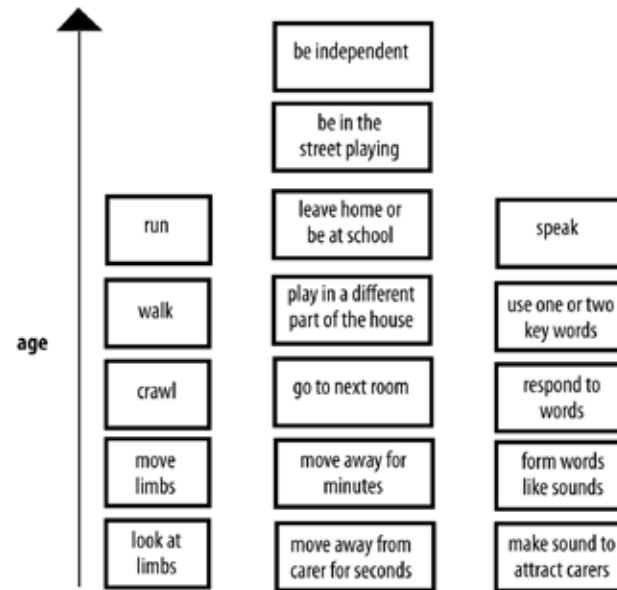
When children develop they do so in the same sequence and at about the same time according to their age. Although the process is not completely understood, it is clear that children are biologically and socially prepared or designed to develop at speed and at specific times in their development. These times are known as 'sensitive periods'. This means that the child cannot complete these developmental tasks at a later time so well. As a baby is born with no skills or behavior, all of these have to be developed a stage at a time in the correct sequence. None of us would expect a six month old baby to jump out of its cradle and run around the room. The baby has to observe its legs; work out where they are; start moving them; start coordinating; crawl, walk and finally run.

This is the same for all tasks including personality, speech, thinking skills, life skills, emotions etc. The way we are comes from our development which for many of the children who are disadvantaged may include many types of poor experiences and abuse. Early experiences may have long term effects due to these developmental issues.

Failure to thrive can produce complex problems as the child may not have achieved developmental tasks (mile stones) when it was biologically ready to do so and is now attempting developmental tasks without the foundations for those tasks being in place. This causes an unstable development often with many problems. This situation is known as confused development or Attachment Disorder.

Attachment Disorder behaviors or problems can come about without any apparent failure to thrive in terms of height. Many Attachment Disorder problems are caused by developmental collapse.

When a disadvantaged child with attachment disorder experiences anxiety or emotions their development collapses to the level at which development was sound – this may be at quite a young age. This can be seen in terms of a building falling down to the level of its strong foundations in an earth quake.



Failure to thrive is easy to see and understand when we look at height. If a child fails to thrive they are short and this makes immediate sense. But whether a child is tall or short is not really important for us but their damaged psychological development is much more important. There is a need to emphasise that failure to thrive can affect all parts of development including speech, confidence, personality, relationships, anxiety and so on.

This can be a time when sensitive periods really confuse things. Children's development is often measured in terms of mile stones. A mile stone is an expected skill or behaviour that a child should manage at a certain age. Mile stones are very simple actions that indicate very complex processes. An example of this is doing up and undoing a button. On the face of it, this may appear to give little information.

Try to get the mentors to tell you what may be involved in button skills, some examples are:

Visual skills to see the button and button hole - fine motor skills (finger moving or dexterity) - using both hands in unison projecting in your mind the path of the button - using fingers and thumbs separately – moving the button & button hole at the same time

Children who fail to thrive nearly always have groups of damaged behaviour which together form what is known as attachment disorder or confused development. Attachment disorder is a formal diagnosis but that is not too important for us as we are going to look at what problems are caused by it and how we can minimise them by finding real solutions to real problems. For this reason confused development is a more useful term. Most disadvantaged children will show at least some of these problems.

The illustration shows that development gets more complex as a child gets older. This simply means that a child can do more things as it gets older. This is for all aspects of growing up, the examples given are running, speaking and being independent, but there are many more. The problem is that if a child has confused or damaged development the whole structure of development can be unstable. This is rather like a building that is poorly built. If there are high winds or storms the building is likely to fall down. This is what can happen with many aspects of development. When it is stressed it can collapse and skills appear to be lost. This most commonly appears as children seeming to be much younger than they actually are when there are difficult, frightening or emotional situations. An example of this may be going to ask an adult for a job or even meeting your mentor for the first time.

KEY LEARNING POINT

By this stage the mentors should know that failure to thrive causes damaged behaviours which will need special skills to overcome

CONFUSED ABILITY

Previously we looked at development that can slow down (but maybe recover to extent later on) but it is likely that some delay remains. If you were to look at a 14 year old child who had severe delay at age 7, skills will remain poor or delayed at 14. This process would probably influence how you view a child's ability (which is often seen as intelligence) and also your expectations. IQ scores are controversial as they are really measures of development, eg what can a child do at a certain age, or what should a child be able to do at a certain age.

CONFUSED MATURITY

This is really developmental collapse in action. If a child or adolescent with confused development is faced with an emotional challenge, this may cause panic due to lack of skills, developmental ability or maturity. This causes the child to go back to where it feels skilled and comfortable, which looks like acting much younger than their age (this is known as regression). This can be a little scary for the mentor who sees their mentee of 15 acting as though they are 7 or 8 years old. The triggers that can cause this are different for each individual, but as the course continues ways of discovering what these triggers are will be looked at. Triggers can include things like sounds, smells, interactions with others, being in the dark etc. The example shows that our typical response to this situation is to think that the mentee is being difficult or not cooperating. It seems that on one day your mentee can do something but on another day your mentee seems not to be able to do the same task and seems quite immature about it.

CONFUSED INFORMATION PROCESSING

Confused Information Processing describes the inability to take in information from your environment and then process it, keeping some, which is memory. Good memory is important for everyday life. If I have a job as a chai boy and a I am told to go to the office upstairs and see who wants chai and who wants coffee, this involves remembering where the stairs are, where the office is, who to ask, how many chais and so on. Everyday tasks often need quite complex memory systems to be successful. Anxiety can have a huge impact on successful memory tasks. We will look at anxiety in more detail in the next session but imagine you are attempting to cross the main road. A bus screeches to a halt, just missing you and almost running you over. At this point your heart will be beating fast, your legs will feel wobbly, you will be sweating and probably feeling sick. Just then you will not be able to remember your shopping list – ummm let me think now, eggs, bread, rice !

CONFUSED EMOTIONS

We have to learn emotions during child development almost in the same way as we learn to talk. If a child's development is damaged or confused, their emotions may also be confused. This is often very difficult for adults to understand. If a child is abused over a number of years by an adult and told that this is good, this is special, this is our special secret –the child learns as a part of development that you are happy when you are abused. In extreme cases children may seek out abuse so that they can feel happy. Children need good consistent experiences during development to stop this type of confusion from taking place.

Examples of problems associated with confused development or attachment disorder:

Confused Ability

If development slows and possibly catches up to some extent, any developmental assessment of the child is dependent on when the test was completed. An example may be ability type tests (eg IQ tests). You as a mentor may be told what a mentee's ability is but that could be inaccurate and the mentee may have a greater ability than that recorded on its records. Research has established that when developmental issues are dealt with, children's IQ scores can sometimes significantly shift upwards. This also may be the case when people consider the ability of an adolescent, not just in a testing situation but how that adolescent's abilities may be described etc.

Confused Maturity

Situations that can affect the stability of development can often appear as immature or difficult behaviors. It is impossible to list all of the situations that can act as triggers, but these sessions are designed to help you recognize them when working with your mentee.

Example:

Monday an adolescent is quite able to catch a bus to an event.

Wednesday the same adolescent seems too immature and maybe too difficult to do it.

Response:

Why are you being difficult? I know you can do it!

Confused development can cause children to move between developmental stages in an uncontrolled way.



Confused Information Processing

Although this may sound complicated it simply means that children who have confused development may have problems taking in information and using or retaining it. This may appear as a memory or reading and writing problems. This means that instructions may have to be short and simple.

Confused Emotions

A child may appear to attach the wrong emotion to an event or appear to demonstrate an inappropriate emotion. When you expect a child to be happy, they may cry, or perhaps start laughing at a very sad time.

Confused Relationships

Children may attach to inappropriate people or demonstrate inappropriate relationships. Such examples of this could be relationships that are too intense or crossing acceptable boundaries.

Relationships with other children of a similar age can be difficult, often preferring to form relationships or friendships with adults or much younger children.



Confused Attachment

At certain ages it can feel as though children love you one day and hate you the next. But even from a very young age, this group of children may not attach to adults for very long, but then very quickly attach to others. This situation can make children vulnerable to abuse.

If you have ever gone into a shelter or similar setting where there are young children you would have probably found that a few children would have come to you and held your hand or touched you. This behaviour is rarely seen when visiting a home of a friend or relative with similar aged children.

Later sessions will look at these behaviors in more detail.

At this point it is important to note that your mentee is very unlikely to have all of these problems, but may have some of them depending on their earlier experiences.



CONFUSED RELATIONSHIPS

As with nearly all of child development, relationships or relationship skills have to be learnt. Relationships are complex and need quite a high level of skills otherwise they will be based on the wrong things in life. If a child's life experiences are poor or inappropriate then their relationship skills will also be poor. If a child has been exploited or abused then the child learns to base relationships on exploitation and abuse as it gets older. Research has shown that most adult abusers were abused when they were children.

CONFUSED ATTACHMENT

For those of you who may have been in a shelter or been in contact with very disadvantaged children, you may have experienced that children often hold on to you or hold your hand. You can end up with three, four or five children holding on to you. For most adults this feels good and the children appear very cute. We can often feel that we are somehow contributing to these children by being close to them. If you have had children yourselves or know of friends or family with children you would probably see a very different process if a stranger came into the room. Most young children in families will play 'peek-a boo' whilst hiding behind mum and physically hanging on to her. This is normal development which keeps the child safe whilst it explores the world around it. The child in the shelter who holds on to a stranger feels loving but in fact is showing damage. It is safe to hold on to you but that child would also hold onto a stranger at the bus stop or a person who gives them a sweet etc. This means that a vulnerable child (with a range of possible problems) may be even more vulnerable as they approach strangers.

This part of the session ends by stating that your mentee is very unlikely to have all of these problems but may have some of them depending on their earlier experiences. This is an interesting area. No two people who have the same experience will later be affected in exactly the same way or extent. This is known as resilience. Resilience depends on genetics, development, personality, experiences and many other things. For this reason two children of a similar age who may have been brought up in the same shelter, with the same experiences would not automatically just be the same adults. Mentees may have a mixture of these problems or perhaps just one or two. This often depends on how successful their development was at different stages of life. It is also important that we should not look and assume there are problems as this is a sure way of seeing them and finding them even if they are not really there.

***By the end of the Information part of this session
the mentors should know***

**Disadvantaged children may not grow as they should have done
(failure to thrive)**

**This can cause a package of problem behaviours which often
need solutions**

This is the start of Skills Practice. By the end of the course mentors should have enough skills to work successfully with their mentees. This can sometimes be a frustrating moment for the new mentors as they need to build up basic skills before moving on. During this session the only skills practice is to listen and reflect back what has been said without adding to it. Well let's face it what could be easier?

The key statement needs to be read out to start the session:

Listening carefully and reflecting back only what has been said may not be quite as easy as it sounds

This really is a skill in itself (but the mentors may not believe this at this stage)

Validation can be thought of as acceptance. This is demonstrated by the illustration of the see-saw. Before we can change behaviour we have to accept the existing behaviour, but this has to be balanced as to just accept and never change would be of no value and would not allow real solutions to be explored. This part of the course is about practicing acceptance which is the foundation of change.

At this point in the course you have to be very clear that finding solutions is banned. This will be a recurring theme as people will probably find this a most difficult rule to obey. Later on the course

will be looking at change but this is not now. As we saw earlier, immediate solutions can sometimes be poor or wrong solutions that can even make things worse.

There are many things that happen in disadvantaged children's lives that stops change from happening. Most of these things are invalidating and so we have to validate to reverse this. On the next page invalidation will be looked at so that we are all clear what it is and in turn why we have to validate. The way that we start to validate is to listen carefully and reflect.

session 2 *skills practice*

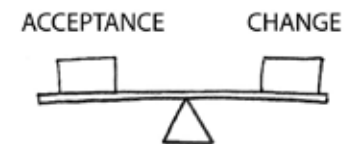
Validation Levels 1 - 2

key statement

Listening carefully and reflecting back only what has been said may not be quite as easy as it sounds

By now you will be keen to get started and help your mentee change, improve, or move on to a more successful life.

Before you can get started there are some tools that you will need in your behaviour change tool-kit. The first tool is a skill that we will practice during sessions called validation. You may remember from the first session that to find quick solutions to your mentee's problems often means that the wrong solution can be found and the mentee will not be able to gain the skill of finding solutions. So just for the time being in these sessions finding solutions is banned until we move on to behaviour change.



Validation can be thought of as acceptance. We need to accept our mentees as they are before helping them to change or move on. We will see as the sessions go on why this is such an important starting place especially for disadvantaged children.



Why learn to validate?

Many disadvantaged children have had poor histories that may have included abuse, fear, hunger and many other negative experiences. This nearly always leads to a number of problems that need to be understood.

- Common experiences during the childhood of a disadvantaged young person can include:
- Parents may have neglected them
- They may have been sexually, physically or emotionally abused
- Many experiences that have made them feel worthless

- Been told by adults that they are worthless
- Being told that they have to improve
- Feeling high levels of fear
- Not having enough to eat, experiencing poverty, begging
- Not being able to keep healthy or maybe get the treatment they need
- If a goal is met, another is set immediately

All of these things will invalidate the young person



Invalidation causes problems such as

- Can't identify own feelings, this can also mean that emotions are not always understood and confused
- Don't notice own feelings
- Feelings can get so big that they become out of control
- Most experiences are felt as negative and something to fear
- Feelings are something that you have to avoid

The invalidation problems often in turn cause consequences such as:

- Chaotic relationships
- Extreme expressions of emotions which are difficult to control
- Not being able to explain inner thoughts and feelings
- Other people jumping to conclusions about the young person's behaviour
- Not being able to trust adults
- Lots of avoidance of many situations

Previously, we saw that early experiences can be very important in development and later life. Common experiences of our mentees are often invalidating and can include things like the following:

- Parents or carers may have neglected - this can cause failure to thrive and developmental confusion as well as expecting in the future to be neglected which devalues our mentees
- Sexually, physically or emotionally abused – abuse can cause huge emotional damage, also it tends to allow abuse to be thought of as expected and normal, it is a sad statistic that most abusers had been abused as children themselves
- Being told and feeling that they are worthless – you get to expect to be worthless in all walks of life, never expecting to be successful at anything
- High levels of fear – causes high levels of avoidance and lack of trust in all circumstances
- Poverty, begging and not enough to eat – can cause failure to thrive, ill health and an expectation of only being able to live in that sort of way

Invalidation can cause many problems some of which influence our feelings. This means that feelings can be mainly negative, impossible to control and so to be avoided. In the longer term this can cause developmental damage and relationship problems. We rely on feelings for managing everyday life and to understand many of our behaviours. In turn this means that there will be consequences such as:

- Relationships can be chaotic and inappropriate seeming to go wrong very often. These relationships can be abusive and damaging
- Extreme expressions of emotion can come about due to poor developmental skills and a lack of experiencing emotions in a normal sort of way, often expecting negative experiences
- Not being able to explain feelings can lead to adults jumping to conclusions and interpreting behaviour. This happened consistently in Manjula's examples when it was assumed that she had a problem at school. Manjula may not have been able to explain or indeed understand her feelings at the bus stop
- Not being able to trust adults is a problem for mentoring, you as a mentor may have to build up trust before mentoring can get started- how do I know that you are not just another abuser like the others?
- Avoidance becomes a way of life and a survival mechanism, mentees can be very skilled at avoiding and escaping which may have kept them safe for many years

The practical part of the course now starts. This is really the very core of the skills part of the course – VALIDATION.

LEVEL ONE VALIDATION

This is the starting place and it's about listening carefully.

Previously we have seen that disadvantaged children are often not listened to seriously. They can be shouted at, told what to do, chased away etc. How often does an adult really sit down and listen to a disadvantaged child and want to hear how they feel about themselves and what is going on around them?

This means that we may have a problem as being listened to carefully can be a new experience for a disadvantaged child, which can be frightening. The last time an adult sat down and talked to me in a 'caring' way they robbed or abused me – they didn't really care at all. It may be that a disadvantaged child will find you difficult to trust at first. Just listening in a skilled way can be the start of a life changing experience.

For the rest of Skills Practice we will not use the term 'disadvantaged child' but replace it with 'mentee', because this is where the work starts.

To get the session started you need to have the mentors in pairs so that they can talk to each other. Start by using a volunteer from the group and demonstrate how NOT to listen, eg, texting

when listening, interrupting, not concentrating etc. Then repeat the role play but this time demonstrate showing signs of listening, eg, eye contact, nodding your head, making small sounds such as 'hm'. This is level 1 validation.

You now need to demonstrate **LEVEL 2 VALIDATION - REFLECTION**, which is to repeat what has been said. This shows the mentee that they have been listened to and encourages them to continue. Again with one of the group get them to make a simple statement about themselves. You can use the example on this page or make up your own.

- Repeat what has been said in your own words
- Do not add to it
- Do not offer solutions

When the mentors try this they will probably add information, make judgements, give advice etc. Before moving on you must make sure that:

- The mentors listen and reflect back without adding anything
- This is the first tool in our behavioural tool-box and we need to be skilled at using it



All of these problems will work against behaviour change and being successful. Validation is the first step to dealing with these problems.

Now we will practice validation in pairs, one of you needs to give the other one some information about yourself or your day or work. Have 3 or 4 goes and then swap round

LEVEL 1 – Listen (don't worry there are more steps to come, this is just a starting place!)

- Listen carefully to what is being said to you
- Show signs that you are listening - maybe nodding, smiling, wobbling your head making small sounds – this is validating
- Do not use your phone, file your nails, look around the room –this is all invalidating



LEVEL 2 – Reflection

- Reflect back
- Say back what has been said in your own words
- Do not add to it and do not offer any solution, interpretation or judgement

If you get stuck look at these examples for a few hints

I left home late and just missed the bus on the way to work yesterday, it's the third time this week.

Problem solving (not reflection) –you need to leave for work earlier; your time management is poor, you find catching the bus difficult.

This example offers your solution and is perhaps judgemental.

Reflection - Oh, you keep missing the bus on work days; you missed the bus 3 times this week.

This is a good example of reflection, it has not added anything but has let the person know that they have been understood and allows them to continue.



For many disadvantaged children to have a conversation like this will be a new experience. These children have many invalidating experiences but rarely are validated and listened to carefully when they speak to other people especially adults.

We can now share with the rest of the group what you noticed about this task eg, how it felt to be listened to and to speak. You can use the space below to write notes about how it felt.



Homework

During this week try validation on 2 or 3 people at home, work or with friends. See whether this makes any difference to your communications. A previous mentor on the course tried this homework at home and reported back next session 'my mum said to me what's wrong with you? You never normally listen to me!'

Get mentor pairs to try this with each other and after 5 minutes or so get them to report back to the group some examples of what has been said to each other. If you hear words such as 'should' or 'could' come up, stop the feedback immediately and check that an interpretation, solution or judgement is not being offered. Usually at this stage about half the group add things to what they heard! This session can be seen as a good fun time – it's not about getting it right or wrong but rather seeing how we as adults (mentors) naturally slip into giving advice and telling children (mentees) what to do. Ask those who were listened to how it felt to be listened during the reflection process.

FAQS

Q –but if I know what the solution is should I say so immediately?

A - this will not help your mentee to gain skills and you may not be offering a good solution – remember the bus!

Q - my mentee is doing something bad, I must tell him off and tell him to stop

A - validation is part of a process to understand why he is doing a bad thing, not just trying to stop him

Q - validation seems to be approving of bad behaviour

A - no, validation is looking at the feelings behind the behaviour, this is our starting place, approval is a judgement

Q – I feel a little stupid just repeating what has been said

A – ask how mentors in the role play felt when they were listened to – this may be a new and powerful experience for a mentee

Homework is very important for the new mentors, giving them the chance to strengthen skills and feel comfortable using validation skills. It can be a different way of communicating for some people at home, with friends or at work. Encourage the mentors to see that homework is important and that we will look at how it went at the next session.

Start the session by reading out the 2 key statements.

After the key statements, the session on mental health starts with distinguishing between mental health and mental illness. This is not straightforward and you may need to give it some thought. The session likens mental health to physical health. Most of us think about trying to keep fit and not doing things that are bad for our health. This might be not eating too many bad (but enjoyable) foods, taking a walk, using the stairs at work instead of the lift etc. However, some of us may develop a disease and need treatment to get better. Generally the fitter we keep the less chance we have of getting ill and needing treatment. Mental health is similar to this. We know that poor early experiences can have a huge impact on later life. These poor experiences also disrupt child development which often causes behavioural problems. It is very likely that many of our mentees will fall into this group.

There are two ways of looking at behavioural problems, firstly the behaviour can be assessed by an expert who may be able to diagnose the problem and then produce a treatment plan. This is generally used for quite severe problems that may be seen as illnesses. This path would be of little use to disadvantaged children as they cannot access these services. Also diagnosing problem behaviours in children can be counter-productive as it excludes others from being a part of the problem or even the cause of it. This is what is meant by diagnosing can make it clear

that it is the child's problem. This is explored later in the session with Arjun's example. The second way of looking at behavioural problems is to look carefully at the problem and find solutions to it. This can lead to new skills taking the place of problems and in turn making them redundant in the longer term. This is the best way forward for our mentees, as it can find real solutions to real problems.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

We all have mental health issues – it does not mean that we are ill, eg the street dogs frighten me and make me feel anxious.

It is more productive to see our mentee's problems as being developmental problems as explored in the previous session.

We need to move away from seeing these problems as being due to mental illness and we need to find solutions.

session 3

mental health

key statements

1. Mental health is not the same as mental illness

2. Mental illness is quite rare in children

It is useful to think of mental health in a similar way to which we look at physical health. Many of us will take some exercise or maybe be a little careful not to eat too many fatty foods or biscuits to try and keep ourselves healthy. Mental health is similar in many ways. We are all influenced by mental health issues. We all have likes or dislikes that encourage us to do things or stop us from doing things. Very rarely these issues may get out control or become overwhelming forming a mental illness that needs treatment.

This fairly straightforward way of looking at things may be a little more complex with disadvantaged children due to a range of things. It is known that early experiences can be a powerful part of later psychological problems. We have looked in the previous

session about the effects of developmental confusion on perceptions and behaviour. However, most of these types of problems should not be considered mental illnesses. These psychological problems may need a lot of help to be minimised or stop altogether. It often feels more comfortable for adults if we can give a child's behaviour a label or diagnosis. A mental illness diagnosis is generally not straightforward and usually involves an expert's opinion. It often feels that this will help us to understand a child's behaviour and also be clear that it is the child's problem. But we must be careful that this does not stop us from finding real solutions to help a child or young person move on. At this point it may be difficult to see how giving a child a diagnosis can stop real solutions being found.



Arjun's Example

A ten year old boy called Arjun lives at home with his mother and father. Unfortunately his mum and dad have been arguing for some time and have now decided to get divorced and live separately. This has very much upset Arjun and he is very worried. In fact he cannot think of anything else all day, he is not sleeping well and cannot concentrate on his school work.

Arjun looks anxious at school and has started fidgeting when at his desk and has virtually stopped working. All he can think about is his family and what is going to happen. Arjun's school is a good international school and of course his teachers have noticed his problems. Arjun's teachers ask for a meeting with his parents as he appears hyperactive (not concentrating, fidgeting, not learning too much) and this is a growing problem in the school, affecting school results. It is decided at this meeting that Arjun should be assessed by a clinician, who in turn suggested that Arjun could do better if he had some medication. At this point it could be seen that Arjun has a problem (illness?) that needs medication. So Arjun takes his

pills and his school work improves some. The problem is that Arjun is now taking full responsibility for the problem, it is not his parents or the schools'. Arjun's parents are too involved with their divorce to have enough emotional space to see that they are a part (if not the cause) of the problem. They may be arguing over who Arjun is going to live with when they separate. The school did not want to change how they deal with children in case it looks as though they are causing the problem and other parents may want to change schools for a better one. If the problem is clearly seen as Arjun's illness then none of these adults are responsible, but now they can be seen as helpers which makes them feel much better. Obviously this is a made up example to demonstrate what can happen. We have to consider that for disadvantaged children they may have problems or behaviours that have come about due to neglect or abuse. It is at times like these that it feels much better for adults to firmly see the child as having a problem and not that the adults may be responsible for the problem.

It is impossible to cover all aspects of mental health in this session but it is usually possible to find a way forward with your mentee. At this point it may be important to recognise that you are a mentor and not a mental health professional, so don't be afraid to get help or advice if it's needed.



Arjun's example is designed to show that if you just look at a child's behaviour in terms of symptoms you may decide that there is something 'wrong' with the child. This means that the child has a problem and when we say that there is 'something wrong with the child' we generally mean that the child has to change to not having something wrong with it. Arjun's example shows that there is in fact nothing wrong with him, but rather his parents have a problem but as they are adults nobody is looking at them. The teachers and experts looked at Arjun and arranged for him to have some pills which made many of his symptoms go away. This confirmed to everybody that Arjun had some sort of illness. Strangely the adults who are causing the problem are now seen as good parents by getting Arjun the right treatment and making him better. The problem is that if the pills were to stop then Arjun's problems would return. There has been no solution to Arjun's problems. It may be that you think that it is unacceptable for Arjun to be taking medication because his parents are arguing.

In later sessions we will be looking at how to look at problems and see what may have caused them and what may be maintaining them which in turn can help us find solutions. For Arjun if his problems were looked at in this sort of way the solution may have been for Arjun's parents to see a counsellor or mediator.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Depending how you look at Arjun, he can have an illness with anxiety and hyperactivity or a problem that needs a solution.

Arjun's problems have their base in his environment, in this case his parents (many of our mentees have been damaged by their environment).

Quick solutions may be either wrong or can make things worse.

Arjun can be seen as having a mental health problem which can have real solutions. This can perhaps be likened to having a health problem of being a little over weight and needing to cut down.

Anxiety is something that we all experience, it is a natural experience. But if there is too much of it or if it is experienced at the wrong time, it can cause a wide range of problems. We learn to control anxiety during our development. If there is developmental confusion there are usually anxiety problems as well.

Anxiety keeps us safe and warns us of danger which makes us react fast and get away from that danger. This is often known as 'fight or flight'. Children naturally have high levels of anxiety as they learn what is safe and what is not. As a child develops and gains skills the need for some anxiety goes down. If development is confused the high levels of anxiety that a young child experiences can continue as new skills are not developed. Almost all child behavioural problems are due to or have a quite a large component of anxiety. This is especially so for our mentees who are disadvantaged children and often have confused developments.

A useful demonstration of this is to think of a young child of say 2 or 3 years of age who is at home with her mother. The child will move maybe 1 metre from mum and then run back to feel safe. This is known as separation anxiety. After a little while she may move 2 metres away from mum before running back and hiding behind her. In a few months she may walk into the next room before running back to mum. The child's anxiety is lowering as she becomes more confident. The question now is, what would happen if the child's mother is unable to give protection, maybe drunk, abusive or simply not there. In this case the child's anxiety would not go down but may

continue to be high and not controlled. If this happens, anxiety skills are not developed. This commonly happens to children in institutional care due to low staff levels.

On this page we see that we would all experience anxiety if a bus almost ran us over, just missing us. Anxiety is designed to make us run and get out of the way of the bus as fast as possible. But this gives us feelings of wobbly legs, sweating hands and forehead, a sickly feeling, maybe breathlessness and a feeling of panic.

Conditioning means that anxiety can move from one situation to another, so it can be experienced in a situation but then attach itself to a different situation often in stages – there will be more about this later in the session and in later examples.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

We all experience anxiety and children experience higher levels of anxiety than adults.

Anxiety should go down and be more controlled during development, confused development can stop this.

Conditioning and Anxiety

The majority of mental health problems in children are due to, or have a large component of anxiety in them. An easy way to describe anxiety is to imagine that you have just crossed a busy road and a bus has just screeched to a halt, missing you by only a few centimetres. At this point you will probably feel wobbly legs, sweaty hands and forehead, a sickly feeling and maybe breathlessness. We have all felt these feelings at some time in our lives at moments like this.

Generally anxiety levels in children are higher than those found in adults. Anxiety keeps children safe as they develop. If young children did not have high levels of anxiety they would wander off and get lost or run over. So anxiety can have some very useful parts to it especially around protection. Anxiety that is not controlled and is too high or experienced at the wrong times can be very damaging. What starts a behaviour may not be what keeps it going and this is particularly so with anxiety. Conditioning is often associated with anxiety to cause a wide range of problems.





How To Be Anxious When You Walk Through A Door

This practical session shows how anxiety can condition and what started a problem for our volunteer is not what maintained it or kept it going. Our volunteer was asked to walk through a door – when that happened the volunteer was hit with a stick. This happened about six times. Next, on the seventh attempt of walking through the door, the person with the stick has gone away. We ask the volunteer to walk through the door again. Our volunteer is very anxious and does not want to walk through the door – the volunteer is really scared and anxious. But the problem (person with the stick) has gone away so it is the thought of walking through the door that is causing the high anxiety levels. We could ask our volunteer to try coming through the next door but still his anxiety levels are high



and he is still scared when he tries. It may be that the volunteer has never even seen the new door let alone tried to walk through it. So this means that the anxiety has conditioned and that has moved on to the new situation where there has never been a man with a stick.

This can happen to children who have been abused or neglected. If you take your mentee to the movies, you could maybe find that your mentee is afraid of the dark. This would make sense if your mentee was abused in the dark over a period of time. She may have conditioned feelings of fear when the lights go out in the cinema as the abuse may have happened when the lights went out previously. To understand this helps you as a mentor to understand what is happening.

How to be anxious when walking through a door is a practical example of how anxiety conditions which is difficult to forget. When anxiety conditions, it moves from one situation to another. This means that what started the anxiety may have happened some time ago and may not even be in the current situation. This becomes quite clear when the 'how to be anxious when walking through the door' example is demonstrated with a volunteer from the group.

An example of this may be that my fear of dogs started 4 years ago when a dog bit me. The key learning point is that the dog that bit me ran off and I have never seen it since. But I am now afraid of every dog I see.

Ask a volunteer to leave the room and stand outside. Invite them to come in and pretend to hit them on their head with a stick (be dramatic if you can!). Repeat this a few times. Now using another door (or an imaginary one) ask if they would like to come in through the door. At this point you can put down your imaginary stick. Ask your volunteer how they feel about this – they will probably feel anxious, but remember there is now no danger and your volunteer has never walked through this new door. This means that your volunteer has conditioned anxiety to a new situation never previously experienced.

A similar process happens with our mentees. It may be that their past experiences have caused anxiety which has now conditioned to the present time. The example describes a mentee who was taken to the movies and panicked when the lights were turned off. This example has to be linked to the doors example that has been demonstrated with a volunteer. If the mentee was abused when younger at bed time when the lights were turned off, there would be high anxiety levels at this time. After a little while as soon as the lights were turned off your mentee would have panicked thinking will I now be abused? A number of years later that feeling of anxiety comes back as soon as lights are turned off. The anxiety has conditioned from the place where the abuse took place to the movies. If you were to try again and take your mentee to the movies tomorrow, your mentee would probably panic (have high anxiety levels) outside the movies before even going in. To understand what is happening is the first step to finding a solution. This is when validation takes off. Validation is designed to work out what is causing the problem and to understand it more. An immediate solution without using validation may be to encourage your mentee to stay in the movies which would cause more anxiety until your mentee runs out of the movies in panic. This can leave you feeling annoyed and frustrated. This example will be looked at again in later sessions as validation and other skills are built up.

This part of the session is designed to pull together key learning points about anxiety and apply them to Manjula's problems.

Key learning points so far in this session

Anxiety is something we all experience - we need to feel the right amount at the right time.

Anxiety warns us of danger - children have higher levels of anxiety than adults especially when young.

Developmental confusion can stop the development of controls, high levels of anxiety can continue.

Anxiety can move from time and place due to conditioning, eg, the movies example.

Our volunteer now has a new fear of all doors even those that are safe!

We can now move back to Manjula who you should remember from earlier sessions and who would not get on the bus. It is important to notice that the reasons for Manjula not getting on the bus changes between examples. This is to help demonstrate that the problem may look the same but the reasons for it being there may change. This is why we must look carefully with our new skills and not offer quick solutions.

Manjula now has high anxiety levels every time she goes to the bus stop. The bus stop triggers her anxiety as soon as she arrives at it and causes her to panic and leaves the bus stop to feel better and so does

not get on the bus and go to school.

Because Manjula has not gone to school she now has a new set of problems which are listed eg, feeling depressed, different, loss of confidence etc. Manjula's problems are now growing.

This part of the session introduces avoidance. There will be lots more about avoidance in later sessions. Avoidance is very important to understand when mentoring. Manjula avoided panic and high anxiety levels by leaving the bus stop and going home to see her mother.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Anxiety can be a major problem when mentoring, often generating avoidance and other problems.

Please just get on the bus; if you don't go to school you will not get a good job; for goodness sake just get on the bus – none of these responses will help and will probably make things worse!

Anxiety - this is something that we all experience, but it is important to feel the right amount at the right time. Anxiety warns us of danger and protects us. At certain times in development it is important that anxiety levels are high, eg young children and separation anxiety, but if this continues due to experiences or developmental confusion, it could then be damaging.

During this session we are looking at how anxiety conditions. Conditioning describes a situation where anxiety may be generated in one situation but then transfers to similar situations. The example that we looked at was walking through a door. Walking through doors had not been a problem for our volunteer until somebody the other side of the door hit them with a stick every time they came through the door. After this happened about six times, the thought of walking through the door made them feel very anxious, even though the person hitting them had gone away. This commonly can lead to a problem where our volunteer can be afraid of going through any door.

In the Introduction Session we looked at a simple example of Manjula who would not get on the bus to go to school.

It was found that Manjula did not want to leave her mother as she was worried about her. This caused high levels of anxiety at the bus stop. Due to conditioning Manjula may now feel high levels of anxiety when she tries to get on any bus. The mother's problems may now be resolved, but Manjula's problems may continue and even get stronger. Manjula never had 'a fear of buses' but now has. In the next 3 months this could lead on to:



- I can't see my friends and I am isolated and feeling depressed
- I can't go to school
- I want to stay at home because I feel safe and I'm frightened to go out now
- I feel different to all my friends
- I feel I can never find a job because I can't go out and feel useless

Avoidance is a major problem when there are high levels of anxiety. Anxiety also commonly causes concentration problems perhaps leading to hyperactive or attentive type problems or fears which in turn can also lead to repetitive type problems eg checking or irrational fears or beliefs.

Depression

Rather like anxiety, depression is something that we all experience to some extent at some time. It is again very rare for children to need medication for depression as the problem is usually psychological in nature often involving experiences of loss, feelings of worthlessness, not belonging, being abused, not seeing a way forward etc. Clearly disadvantaged young people will more often fall into these groups. When a person is feeling depressed they will see all things as being bad, they may have sleeping and eating problems or little energy. At this time motivation could be a problem, but later on it may not be, because depressive type feelings can come and go in adolescents.

Simple example: It could be that a young person has no interest in going out and looking at some work experience saying that there is no point and is tired because she has woken up early all week but then did not get out of bed until late. It may be difficult to motivate any thoughts about anything. You may be tempted into thinking that this situation has no way forward. After a few days or weeks the young person may show great interest in the same experience, perhaps causing you as a mentor some confusion!

Attachment Disorder/Confused Development

This covers all the developmental problems that are caused by failure to thrive which we thought about in the last session. Some examples of these problems are:

Attachment problems - It is likely that young people will attach to adults (often strangers) too quickly, but also change attachments

just as quickly. It is common for children in shelters to 'attach' very quickly (eg by holding hands or clothes) to any visitor who arrives. You would not expect to see this with an average child in a family who may appear quite shy if a stranger arrives.

Relationship Problems - relationships are often formed based on past experiences. If a child has had an abusive history, it is likely that abuse could be a feature of later relationships. When this is combined with attachment problems, vulnerability to abuse is high. It may be safe for a child to attach for a short time to a stranger who visits a shelter, but it may well not be safe for that child to attach to a person at the bus stop who also appeared friendly.

Emotional Confusion - past experiences and developmental confusion can produce a situation where a young person seems to experience the wrong emotion at the wrong time e.g. laughs when somebody is hurt.

Poor Information Processing - this can be due to developmental confusion but commonly it is due to high anxiety levels.

Confused Maturity - You may remember that we looked at confused developments which may be very unstable and appear as strange behaviours that are difficult to understand e.g. a 16 year old acting as a 7 year old when confronted with meeting a prospective employer, but was ok 30 minutes before. Clear and often speedy rejection of people who are getting close or are making progress with the child can be a common problem. In this situation the mentee may need to test out the relationship which means that the mentor will have to be reliable even if it seems that the mentee is showing little interest. This is an area that we will be looking at in the Skills Practice sessions.

DEPRESSION

Depression in adolescence is something that can come and go very quickly. Nearly all adolescents have some feelings of depression for short periods of time, maybe for minutes, hours or a day or so. This is different to the longer term depression that adults may experience. Depression in adolescents is often due to hormones changing and the struggle to find who you are and where you fit into the world. Mentees often say that they feel overwhelmed and seem to just give up and do nothing. It is very rare that adolescents would need medication or similar for depression but rather need patience and understanding.

ATTACHMENT DISORDER

Attachment Disorder is a formal term but for our purposes confused development may be a more useful term for us to use. This helps to move the problem away from pathology to a set of problems that need solutions. Confused development happens due to failure to thrive. For our mentees this set of problems is by far the biggest challenge in their lives and in turn for us as mentors. Confused development causes a number of problems which in turn cause high levels of anxiety and can appear as mental health problems. This is the link that demonstrates how confused development leads to mental health issues which can be long term. It also demonstrates that it was our mentees environment, or life experiences, that caused the mental health issues. The session concentrates on the 5 major components of confused development:

1 - Attachment problems: most mentors would have experienced disadvantaged children touching them on the streets or in shelters. Remind the mentors that this does not happen in average families.

2 - Relationship problems: attachment problems makes the disadvantaged child very vulnerable and an easy target for people who may want to abuse them leading to poor relationships later on in life.

3 - Emotional confusion: we need to learn which emotions connect to which events. Developmental confusion prevents this and is exaggerated by abuse. An example of this is if a child is consistently told that abuse is a special time, or it's our special secret, or this is special etc. During development this can cause the perception of happiness to be attached to abuse.

4 - Poor information processing: causes problems with memory and learning new things, eg, forgetting instructions.

5 - Confused maturity: this is rather like a poorly built house, if the walls are weak then the roof may collapse. Development is similar, if the early foundations are weak then behaviour may collapse to an earlier stage.

HYPERACTIVITY

Hyperactivity means that a person (usually a child) is too active or more active than expected in a given situation. There is no clear measure of hyperactivity as the expected level of activity changes according to the situation. During a school lesson the expected level of activity would be low. If the lesson changes and it is now time for cricket practice then the expected level of activity would be high. This means that a single measure of activity would be of no use as every situation has an expectation of how active you should be. This can mean that a variety of people, eg, teachers, carers etc may look at a child's behaviour and decide whether the child is too active in a given situation, eg, the classroom. This situation could mean that a teacher with poor classroom management skills may find that they can manage only low levels of activity compared with a teacher with high classroom management skills. Some of these situations can make medications that suggest they can decrease activity and increase concentration (and maybe results?) very popular. ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) has become very popular as a diagnosis especially in schools and with parents who are results driven. The two main components to ADHD are poor abilities to concentrate (Attention Deficit) and hyperactivity. However hyperactivity tends now to be commonly known as ADHD.

Mentees may appear hyperactive in situations that they find difficult to manage. High levels of anxiety can produce poor concentration levels and constant physical movements.

Developmental confusion can produce a number of situations that appear very similar to hyperactivity:

- ***confused emotions*** – can cause panic in many situations which can result in running away or actively avoiding engagement, eg, sitting down or eye contact, this can look like hyperactivity, especially during avoidance
- ***feeling worthless*** – this has been learnt over many years and can cause considerable panic when somebody shows a genuine interest in you as the skills to deal with this have not been learnt, inability to engage, high anxiety etc., can look like hyperactivity
- ***information processing problems*** – you tell me what to do, I forget the information and now I feel anxious and afraid that I may get hit which could look like hyperactivity, eg, you are not able to sit still and concentrate
- If I have not learnt to read and write and I am put in a classroom, it is very unlikely that I will be able to sit at my desk and get on with my work – this may cause all sorts of fidgeting and unwanted behaviours
- Arjun's example showed us that many factors in our lives can impact on our behaviour. If you look at the behaviour and not the factors you can have a very different story

Using validation and formulation skills the mentor's task is to identify underlying causes and find solutions.

Hyperactivity

For many social and pharmacological reasons hyperactivity is becoming more commonly seen as ADHD. ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The growth of ADHD diagnoses is huge in India and following patterns seen in Europe and the USA. It is unclear whether ADHD is increasing or whether parents and teachers are becoming more aware or even relying more on it to provide a reason for poor behaviour or poor school performance. A diagnosis of ADHD can provide allowances in academic performance (eg increased time allowances in exams), provide medication for symptoms and make it clear that this is the child's problem. Now is a good time to remember the problems that Arjun had earlier in the session when it was established that the problem was his and needed treatment. This mental illness model may look like an attractive way forward but there is an argument that this type of long term use of medication is not safe, it is not providing solutions or an understanding of the child or the child's situation. Taking pills will not help a young person gain the new life skills that are necessary to move on.

Pure hyperactivity is rare, but children or young people who are too active often seem to be unable to concentrate in some situations can be quite common. Often young people who cannot sit down and listen to an adult seem not too hyperactive to play cricket or something they really enjoy! Nearly always there is a solution to help with calming 'hyperactivity'. For disadvantaged young people the solution will often involve the sort of issues that we have talked about today.



There is evidence that diet influences hyperactivity, especially sweets with additives and colourings including fizzy drinks. It is possible for food additives to increase hyperactivity type problems and lower concentration levels. This may cause a situation where your mentee's behaviour can appear poor. This should not be confused with sugar which tends not to cause these types of problems. So a cup of chai with your mentee does not have to be avoided.

At this point the list of mental health problems may seem almost endless, but we will return to this area when we look at formulation. The important thing is to look at the problem with confidence, perhaps discuss it with other mentors in Reflective Practice and share possible solutions. It may not be the task of the mentor to find solutions to problems but rather to stand by your mentee. This often is the solution, but this may take some confidence on the mentor's part. Again more of this will be explored in the skills sessions.

Most of the problems that you may come across with disadvantaged young people will be mainly due to developmental experiences similar to those that we looked at in this session and Session Two. These types of past experiences and present problems can generate high levels of anxiety which in turn can be conditioned to other situations in a way that happened when our volunteer tried to walk through the door and was hit with a stick. Often standing by an adolescent in a difficult situation can be enough to lower the anxiety sufficiently maybe for a work experience interview or to meet somebody etc. This can provide experiences of success rather than failure, which may be a new experience and provides self esteem for future situations. If this is the case then a mentor will be very important and will need confidence rather than clinical skills. You are not a clinician and may not know what to do in a given situation but to hang on in is most important and valuable. Do not feel that you have to know the solution to every problem. Sometimes you may not know the solution or there is no solution and that needs to be shared honestly. If there is no apparent solution, this is not a failure but the start of a new way forward for your mentee.

Now is the time to remember your Skills Practice sessions so far.

Example Problem

Your adolescent mentee is not happy as she lost touch with her family 5 years ago and do not know where they are and this is making her feel depressed. Her shelter staff said that it's not possible to find her family so she must stop thinking about it and move on. – can you (mentor) sort this out please?

Mentor - think about the skills practice so far, don't panic, do not think of providing a solution at this point, you cannot give the family back, you cannot find an instant solution that takes away the pain. Maybe you feel that you know little about depression. What can you do?

First thing to do is LISTEN (it may feel more comfortable to give the obvious solution or change the subject but don't).

Secondly REFLECT make sure your mentee knows that you are understanding what she is saying.

It may be the first time that an adult has spent time with this adolescent really caring about her as a person, accepting her just how she is. To understand and value in this sort of way, can be very powerful when a person is seen as worth caring about, understood and taken seriously even if an immediate solution is not available.

As the sessions continue more skills will be gained to deal with situations like this. Don't forget this is only our starting point.

This session is designed to look at behavioural problems as products of our mentees lives and experiences rather than an illness or that there is something 'wrong' with our mentees. This position was illustrated by Arjun who was not seen as needing medication before his parents decided to split up. This means that Arjun was seen as 'normal' but then he was seen as an adolescent who had 'something wrong with him'. This perception came about because nobody looked at what was happening in Arjun's life. If we could somehow change the situation and make Arjun's mum and dad fall in love again, then Arjun's symptoms would probably go away and he would be seen as 'normal' again, that is there is nothing 'wrong' with him.

For most of our mentees the problems they have are mainly due to their past lives and what has happened to them. It is of course not possible to change the past, but this does not mean that the future has to continue in the same way. One of the dangers of seeing all of our mentees behavioural problems as being something wrong with them is that we may not expect any changes in the future. Even if problems cannot be removed they can usually be minimised to prevent them from stopping everyday life successes.

The example problem is not an easy one. It is quite clear that there is no solution to the problem posed and it may feel overwhelming for a mentor. The key learning points of this exercise are that mentoring can continue and that the impact of a problem can be minimised on a mentee's life even if there is no immediate solution. So far at this point on the course we have only two basic skills (listening and

reflecting) until the Skills Practice part of the session in a few minutes. This example will strengthen our foundations before increasing our skills in the next part of the session. Our two basic skills so far are listening and reflecting, so the mentoring session could sound something like this:

- *I feel so bad as I've lost my family*
- *Oh, you feel bad because you've lost your family?*
- *Yes it makes me feel depressed all the time*
- *You feel depressed all the time?*

Obviously this is just the start of a process and there will be lots more to come as our skills build up and we have more tools in our behavioural tool box. But already this is probably a very different response for your mentee to be taken seriously. This in itself can be a powerful experience for your mentee. If your mentee lives in a shelter or similar place almost every other child has a sad story and history. This sadness becomes the norm and staff would not have the time to spend with each individual thinking and feeling what this is like for them.

Skills Practice provides 4 more levels of validation which will vastly increase the tools in the behaviour change tool box. But before this we have to look at how the mentors got on with homework. The homework task was simply to listen and reflect at home, work or with friends. This may seem a simple task but generally the new mentors will surprise you with complications and failed attempts! It is important that some time is spent sharing homework experiences as this increases confidence and lowers anxiety. Reports of failed homework tasks can often sound like these examples, together with some example responses. This will be a very interactive part of the session.

'I didn't have time' (*oh you didn't have time? – ask the group - can anybody see what I've done? – level 1 & 2 validation*)

'I have to sort out complaints on the phone' – *try a mini role play and get the mentor to complain to you as though you were doing their job. Use validation levels 1 and 2 and then ask how that felt. Usually the mentor would agree that it felt as though they were really heard.*

When the homework feedback has been completed, it is time to move on to level 3 validation **Guess what your mentee might have felt, thought and wanted to do.** It is unlikely that your mentee will have the skills to answer these questions so you may have to guess the answers. These answers hold the key to understanding your mentee's behaviour. Confused development often prevents an understanding of what is happening. Levels 1 and 2 validation provide the opportunity of listening carefully and gathering information. Further levels of validation allow both the mentee and mentor to make sense of the information so that a way forward can be found.

If your guess is correct then your mentee can agree with you and you are providing a voice for your mentee.

If your guess is wrong then you can start again and work out what the correct answer is, this is not a problem.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Always start with validation level 1 before moving on to other levels

You may have to help your mentees understand their own behaviours

Confused development can stop mentees from understanding their own behaviours

session 3 *skills practice*

Validation Levels 3-6

Before getting started we are going to see how you got on with your homework task of trying validation at home or work. Often when a person is validated in an interaction they respond differently, sometimes not in the way in which you may expect! Write in the space below any reactions that you noticed during your homework task:

We now move on to look at four further levels of validation which will give you all the skills that you will need to use validation in any situation. Validation is the first step in a process that will allow behaviour change to help your mentee move on and find solutions to problems and challenges.

LEVEL 3 – Guess What Your Mentee Might Have Felt, Thought And Wanted To Do

This will help both you and your mentee to understand more about your mentee's behaviour. Often with children or young people they are not able to understand their own thoughts or feelings without some help to work them out. This is particularly so if the child or young person has confused development (see sessions 1 and 2). This means that sometimes you will have to make some guesses for your mentee. If the guess is wrong that is not a problem as this in itself helps to work out what the right thought or feeling is. On the other hand, if the guess is right, your mentee can agree with you and this will help you to communicate and validate.

The Wheel Of Experience



There are four areas which cover Level 3 of validation which are shown in the wheel of experience diagram.

Thoughts – I don't want to be here, this is something I want to avoid, I know I can't do this, I'm very good at running, I must go to the market

Feelings – anger, guilt, fear shame, joy, happiness, surprise, excitement – there will be more about feelings in later sessions

Behaviour - running away, joining in, eating, hiding, going to school, fighting

Physiology – anxiety feelings, sweating, feeling sick, fidgeting, fainting



If we return to the bus stop problem (this has been a constant challenge for us!) Manjula is being harassed by a man as she waits for the bus.

Thoughts - I don't like this, I want to leave

Feelings – I feel scared, I feel panic

Behaviour – run away and hide, run home

Physiology – anxiety, feeling sweaty, heart beating fast, feeling sickly, wobbly legs

This circle allows us to understand what is contributing to the problems that we may want to try and overcome. It also shows our mentee that we are starting to understand what it feels like to be in their shoes. Our

validation can now use these pieces of information in our conversation which may sound like this:

You must have thought you wanted to leave as soon as you got to the bus stop

That feels as though it was really scary

Did you run home to feel safe?

You must have felt all panicky and sweaty

Wow, that really makes me feel scared

If these levels of validation are used it will allow both you and your mentee understand more about the situation and provide a common base to work from.

The wheel of experience is a useful way of illustrating the 4 parts that make up level 3 validation. These 4 parts will allow you and your mentee to understand what has happened and why it has happened. Often at this stage your mentee may be able to tell you what happened but not why it happened. Without this information solutions cannot be worked out.

Thoughts – what was your mentee thinking at the time of an event, eg, I don't like this, I want to run away, I don't want to talk.

Feelings – feelings often drive behaviours, eg, I feel ashamed so I may not want to see you; I feel fear so I may hide – many of our mentees have difficulties in recognising feelings so we may have to help them by guessing. At this stage we just need to recognise the feelings.

Behaviours – a useful way of thinking about this is behaviours are the things that we can see, eg, running away, eating, shouting etc.

Physiology – this is what your body is doing – this is often due to anxiety, eg, sweating, being hot, fast heart beat etc.

When we apply level 3 validation to Manjula's 'school' problem, a very different picture emerges. For the first time, Manjula is able to tell her mentor that she is having problems with the man at the bus stop. This has happened because a mentor has used validation to really listen to what Manjula has to say and understand what is happening. Validation has stopped us making (wrong) assumptions about the situation.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Levels 1 & 2 allowed us to gather good quality information from Manjula.

Manjula continued talking to her mentor because she felt listened to.

Level 3 validation has allowed us to understand what has happened and why.

The wheel of experience exercise is looking at what it is like for a mentee to meet their mentor for the first time. We can easily forget what a huge step this could be for some mentees. It is important to remember that there is no right answer and there will be probably as many answers as there are people in the group. For some mentees from shelters or similar, this may be an almost unbelievable step – a successful adult really wanting to know what I feel – unconditionally without strings attached or a catch? On the other hand your mentee may be very excited and have clear plans for mentoring. This exercise introduces the mentors to the potential wide range of mentoring experiences. There will be a need to spend some time sharing ideas about this exercise from the group before moving on.

Levels 4 and 5 help to normalise the experience or behaviour. Normalising means that what happened could be expected when the circumstances are considered. If my mentee has had to steal food to survive for the past 2 years, then it would not be surprising that he has just stolen some food. I can now start to understand why my mentee is stealing. Levels 4 and 5 also:

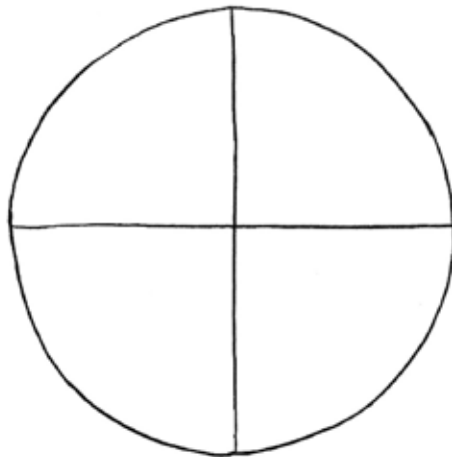
- Lets your mentee know that you understand without criticism or judgement
- This is not the same as agreeing, condoning or supporting a behaviour. You may strongly disagree with your mentees behaviour, in which case your task is to understand sufficiently to find a different response or way forward
- Helps to start understanding problem behaviours as a product of what has and is happening to your mentee
- Suggests that there is not 'something wrong' with your mentee
- Suggests that you may even have acted in that way if you had experienced similar things

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Validation does not mean that you are agreeing with or condoning a situation or behaviour.

Validation is the starting place to change the behaviour.

Even meeting you for the first time could be difficult for your mentee, especially if your mentee was abandoned by his family 5 years ago and now lives in a shelter. You are a successful software engineer working for a multi-national company. Write down what you think your mentee may be thinking at this time. There are no right or expected answers so feel free to write down your ideas in the circle below.



LEVEL 4 – Normalise In Terms Of The Past

To normalise an experience helps to lower anxiety and shows that you, as a listener are understanding what is being said to you. This also starts to help your mentee understand why they feel as they do and maybe why they are doing what they do. An example of level 4 validation may be 'it's not surprising that you lost your temper since you've always done that when someone has hurt you in the past' or 'it's understandable that you ran away when that man shouted at you as that has happened a lot in the past'.

LEVEL 5 – Normalise In Terms Of The Present

This is similar to normalising in the past but it takes the communication to the next level of what is happening here and now as we talk. The understanding that was starting in the previous level is now in the here and now. Normalising lets your mentee know that they are not the only one who is feeling that way and there is a reason for those feelings. This helps to put those feelings or actions into reality which is able to be changed and is not just impossible or failure.

LEVEL 6 – Honest Response

Wow! Gosh! I'm so pleased, no way, no –really? that's great, I'm sorry, that's brilliant, oh – are all honest responses, they are just what they sound like – your honest response to what you just heard. Honest responses do need to be honest and they let your mentee know that you are human and not just an answering machine. Honest responses help your mentee understand how they fit into the interaction and also the world. They also help to normalise the situation and let each other know that you are both people with feelings.

Here are some examples of validation, write next to each one which level of validation you think is being applied

You must be feeling hurt or maybe angry? *Level* _____

It's understandable that you lost your temper since you've always done that when somebody hurts you *Level* _____

I'm not surprised you couldn't do it. You have so much on your mind at the moment *Level* _____

So what you're saying is that you are tired out from making so much effort all the time ... is that right? *Level* _____

Wow that's super *Level* _____

If that happened to me I would be so afraid *Level* _____

You must have wanted to just walk out of the door *Level* _____

I'm sorry uncle was so cruel to you *Level* _____

You've had a bad day you say *Level* _____

I wonder if you were thinking 'I'm just no good'? *Level* _____

I find this difficult too *Level* _____

Now that you are able to use six levels of validation the earlier example of the mentee who lost her family can be taken further. Earlier in the session only two levels of validation could be applied. Working in pairs using role play, apply all six levels of validation to the mentee's problem of having lost her family and feeling sad and perhaps depressed. At the end of this task we can share with each other how this validation felt for both the mentee and the mentor.

A genuine response, is very much as it sounds – we are all different and will respond differently to any situation. The important thing is that your response is genuine and not made up to fit the situation. This response shows your mentee that you are human, understanding the situation and often share the same feelings. It stops your interaction from feeling false and continues to normalise the situation.

Validation levels

You must be feeling	Level 3
It's understandable that	Level 4
I'm not surprised	Level 5
So what you're saying	Level 2
Wow that's super	Level 6
If that happened to me	Level 5
You must have wanted	Level 3
I'm sorry uncle	Level 5 & 6
You've had a bad	Level 2
I wonder if you	Level 3
I find this difficult too	Level 5 & 6

The exercise from the previous session can now be worked again, but this time using all 6 levels of validation. There is still no solution to finding your mentee's family but validation will start the process of your mentee being understood and valued which can be a most powerful experience. It is also an honest response as no false promises are being made but rather a sharing of the pain.

By the end of this session the mentors should be able to use all 6 levels of validation as appropriate in any situation. This new skill can be practised at home, work or with friends before the next session. The mentors need to know that it would not be appropriate to use all levels of validation all the time, eg *'you would like a cup of chai, wow I'm not surprised as you must have found that a cup of chai was very refreshing when you have been thirsty before, I am guessing that you must be feeling thirsty right now – I'll go to the counter and get one!'*

Start the session by reading out the 3 key statements.

This session is about relationships that may have to be considered when mentoring. Relationships are important to consider as your mentee will probably not be completely independent. This means that your mentee will be a part of a system, eg, family, shelter, carers etc. Some of these systems may be damaging or abusive, perhaps exploiting your mentee. It may be that your mentee's system has views about mentoring which may be in conflict with you as a mentor. If a mentor is helping a mentee to find a way out of exploitation, then those people who are exploiting your mentee will want to stop the process. Often there is a need to involve a mentee's family if decisions have to be made, eg, about education. A mentor has to consider who is in the mentee's system and whether they need to be considered during the mentoring process.

The session starts with considering how relationships change as a child develops. For this reason we will briefly look at how relationships change with age from being a baby to being an adolescent. This can be a little more complicated if there is developmental confusion. This is introduced by the statement in the opening text 'disadvantaged children may be different to other children' If your mentee is say 15 years old but at certain times becomes very anxious and experiences developmental collapse (Session 2) then your mentee may appear to act as though he is say 8 years old. In this case the relationship function or needs that your mentee has may also be that of an 8 year old for a short time. This is not to say that this happens with all mentees but it is something that a mentor may have to consider.

After this introduction the session will concentrate more on adolescence as this is more appropriate for most of our mentees.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Relationships and the function of relationships change with age.

Relationships are generally matched to chronological age (the actual age) of the child.

Some mentees appear at times to have a psychological age which is younger than their actual age.

session 4

relationships

key statements

- 1. There may be no right answers**
- 2. But you still have to help your mentee find them**
- 3. You should consider how to say goodbye before even starting your relationship**

Over the last few sessions we have been considering child development and how disadvantaged children may be different to other children and what makes them special. Patterns of development are very important when considering relationships. Relationships change and have different functions depending on the needs of development. This means that relationships change with age when the child and subsequent young person has different needs at different ages. These needs can be biological, neurological, social or psychological.

If development continues as expected for an average child, at about 9 months the child will be attached to one or two carers or parents who provide comfort and protection. This means that the child will recognise key carers who can be trusted and provide safety. These few adults who are usually family members

or a part of the family system will provide all of the child's needs. Later on during the earlier school years the child will be more a part of the world, usually with a few 'best friends' but still returning to parents or carers, for protection and care. During adolescence the young person will be seeking independence from parents and forming much stronger attachments with their peer group. At times this attachment to peers can be so strong that it can cause conflict with other people and relationships, especially family. Many disadvantaged children will not have had appropriate experiences during their development and so may not have learnt the life skills that they should have done. This is often the case for children who live in institutional care, for example, orphanages or shelters.

We will now think a little more about children becoming young people from about 10 years upwards, the time known as adolescence. During adolescence there are generally rapid physical changes, the most noticeable being growth spurts and puberty. These changes have many similarities to the earlier changes that we looked at during child development. Changes happen in a uniform way even if children have failed to thrive and may appear smaller than other children of a similar age. Growth spurts happen in the same sequence for all children and look something like this:



Trousers that fitted only a few weeks ago at the beginning of the school year are now at half-mast as legs grow



Just after the trousers are sorted out, it's the arm's turn to grow



Finally the trunk grows and the adolescent looks somehow unable to manage this new shape for a while.

You may remember your own adolescence and how so many things got dropped or broken as you got used to your new size and had to re-learn where your arms and legs now ended!

During these changes sexuality develops and friendships or relationships change from predominantly same gender to include more opposite gender relationships. Relationships can appear to be the most important part of an adolescent's life.

The way you dress, act, think, your likes or dislikes often have to conform to the peer group as the break from carers is tested out. Peer relationships can be very intense and appear to be out of proportion to onlookers.

Adolescence can be viewed as a time when the young person is geared up organically and socially for:

Independence (towards living and thinking away from family and carers)

Identity (having a role in life and working towards goals)

Self esteem (working out who you are and how to value yourself)

Intensity (relationships are intense and often cannot be sustained causing high emotion)

There are a number of mental health issues that can make relationships difficult including substance misuse which can include using substances such as sniffing things like glue or paint, taking drugs or alcohol). There can be high levels of short term or temporary depression, mood changes and general turmoil. Often there is a feeling that adults just don't understand anything! Anxiety levels can be high as adolescents panic that they will be seen as different or somehow abnormal.

Most of our mentees will be adolescents which means that they are somewhere between being a child and an adult. This can be a very difficult time as sometimes they have to act as young adults at times and at other times there is not full independence and they are more like children. This of course can be a most complicated time which is exaggerated if there is developmental confusion which causes more swings between adulthood and childhood.

During adolescence there are lots of physical changes. These tend to happen even if there is failure to thrive.

Growth spurts happen in a uniform way for all adolescents, that is legs grow first, followed by arms and then trunk. You may want to demonstrate this in a very memorable way by pulling up your trouser legs and sleeves in turn (or get a volunteer to do this) just like in the illustration. This will probably trigger old memories of when the mentors were at school themselves.

If a child fails to thrive they will still probably have growth spurts but still end up shorter than would be expected. A similar process happens with puberty which may start at an appropriate age but the adolescent may look too young for puberty to start. This can create the situation where an adolescent looks too young to have facial hair and have sexual feelings. These physical or organic changes drive changes in relationships towards adulthood. It is at this time that previous same gender friendships start moving towards opposite gender friendships. Suddenly girls are interested in boys, and boys are interested in girls. These changes should come about after an adolescent has gained the skills needed to manage this situation during development. These skills may not be in place if there has been developmental confusion.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Relationships change with age, from a baby to an adolescent.

Some of our mentees may have confused age appropriate relationships and behaviour.

Adolescence is about gaining independence, identity & self esteem.

As a mentor you have to consider what your relationship is with your mentee. This will be different for each mentor/mentee pair. It is not possible to work out what your relationship is going to be until mentors meet their mentees. Some mentees may have a clear idea of what they want from the relationship, eg, improve English for a future career or learn a skill. Often mentees have little idea of what they want from mentoring but think that it is a good idea. A mentor is not a teacher or a parent and is more than a friend. A foundation of the mentor/mentee relationship is that the mentor is unconditionally there. What is meant by this is that the offer of mentoring does not depend on anything that the mentee has to do or not do. This will probably be a new experience for the mentee as past relationships with adults are usually based on the mentee having to do something or be exploited. Disadvantaged children are often told what to do or get into trouble if they do not.

During the sessions on child development and mental health we looked at sensitive periods. You may remember that these were times when the child was geared up physically, neurologically and psychologically for rapid developmental progress. The problem was that our mentees may have missed that developmental opportunity. This is easier to see in younger children than adolescents. But adolescence is a time of rapid development as well as growth and physical changes. The whole of development has been preparing the adolescent for this time of moving towards independence in steps starting in early childhood. An adolescent will need all of the skills

developed during childhood to manage and take advantage of this huge developmental leap. During adolescence we can actually see some of the changes that happen during these sensitive periods, eg, growth spurts, gender development etc.

If mentees have developmental confusion, it is unlikely that they will manage the developmental tasks of adolescence very well. This will mean that they will have problems with adult/adolescent relationships which of course is now the mentor/mentee relationship. Some of the relationship problems that you may find with your mentee are listed, but remember that a mentee is very unlikely to show all of these! Manjula looks surprised and perhaps shocked that she is developing into a woman and the 4 adolescent boys all want to look exactly the same.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Adolescence is a time of rapid physical and psychological change.

The key task of adolescence is working towards independence.

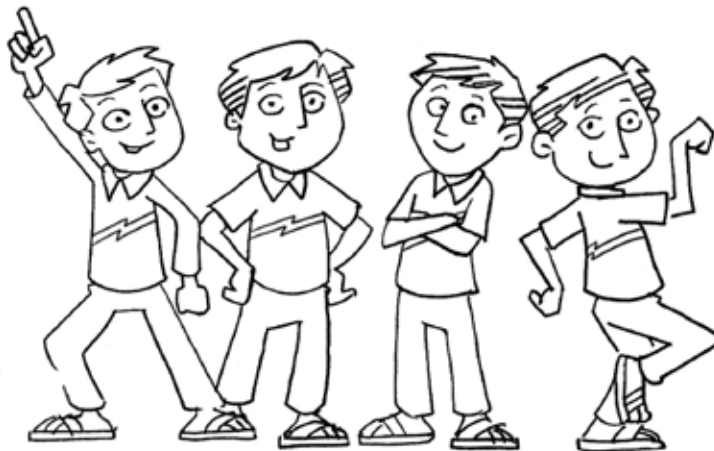
The session links relationship problems with past confused development from previous sessions.

It is during this time that you will be forming a most important relationship with this young person who is no longer a child but not yet an adult. You will have to negotiate a relationship which is not a parent, not a teacher and not just a friend – but unconditionally there. At this point we need to consider how disadvantaged children may be different and special.

Sensitive Periods and Developmental Confusion

In previous sessions we thought about how development may happen very quickly due to biological or neurological drives at certain times. During adolescence there are huge changes happening to hormones etc., around puberty. It may be the case that many disadvantaged children are not ready psychologically or developmentally for these changes.

This is also the case for issues around independence or self esteem. Developmental confusion can cause many complications in many situations especially when forming relationships.



Examples of the type of problems you may find in your relationship with your mentee,

Your mentee may be:

- clingy (perhaps developmental confusion, acting younger)
- rejecting (being too anxious to form attachments - previous losses, peer group pressures)
- too attached (poor past attachment skills, dependent)
- difficult to motivate (poor self esteem, depressed, high anxiety)
- changing abilities (developmental confusion, anxiety)
- falling in love with you (poor attachment skills)
- inconsistent (all of the above!)

The relationship that you form will have to run alongside your mentee's family, carers, friends, the media, employers etc. A successful relationship will have to be non-judgemental, but encouraging different ways of looking at things. Sometimes your thoughts may be in opposition to other people who have relationships with your mentee. Your task is to help your mentee to find a solution that is best for your mentee (this may of course not be the one that you as a mentor really wants).

A simple example may be Manjula's family asking her to leave school and get a job as a street seller, as they need some money. Manjula feels that she should help support her family and feels bad not doing it, her friends are selling soap and pegs near the shopping mall - but you think that Manjula could (and should?) train for a possible career in a call centre.



You could

- advise Manjula she must say no to her family
- tell Manjula that if she doesn't follow advice there's no point in meeting up
- tell Manjula she will never get on in life selling things on the street
- argue with Manjula until she sees sense

Although these responses may feel tempting, they will probably stop the conversation at that point and cause conflict. Manjula needs a little time, space and help to explore possible ways forward. Now is the time to be applying your validation skills.

Example of validation for Manjula:

"Oh, your family want you to leave school

Maybe that's a little scary, such a big step, etc"

As a mentor you may have to accept that your mentee may not follow your view as the only sensible way forward. But also as a mentor you will need to be there regardless in an unconditional way which could be one of the most powerful life experiences that your mentee can experience at this time.

This session is looking at problems around being a mentor and the relationship you may have with your mentee. This is NOT to suggest that all mentor – mentee relationships will be this problematic and indeed you would be most unlucky if you encountered all of these problems. But as has been mentioned in previous sessions disadvantaged young people have not had the pasts that we would choose for them and this may well cause problems for the present.

As we looked at earlier, a mentee is probably not an individual independent being. Even a street child who has no family will be a part of a system of friends, gang members, exploiting adults etc. During adolescence there is a drive to conform looking the same and having the same attitudes as your peer group. There will be pressures exerted by all of these groups and also society via the media and culture. It may well be that you as a mentor can have thoughts that are in opposition to these groups. So at times you may have to accept that your mentee will not go in the direction that you desire, or even what you clearly think is wrong. Now is the time to remember that this is an unconditional relationship even if you feel that you are now waiting to pick up the inevitable pieces when it all goes wrong! In the next Skills Practice session we will be looking at practical ways of validation and understanding unacceptable behaviours such as stealing.

The current example is about Manjula who wants to stop going to school and become a street seller to make some Rupees for her family. Most mentors (as adults) would not agree with this as a way forward for Manjula as it makes no sense for her or her future. This means that we will have immediate thoughts in our heads and will want to say clearly to Manjula that she has to go to school and this is very important. If we were to say these things to Manjula it would immediately put us in conflict with Manjula, her family and friends. This may well stop the conversation altogether. It is quite likely that Manjula does not really want to leave school but feels that she has to help her family. It feels as though Manjula may be very stuck and unable to find a way out without help.

Now is the time to use validation to let Manjula know that you really care about her feelings and the situation. Validation will also allow you to keep the conversation open and gather more information before deciding how best to help Manjula find a solution.

We have to accept that mentees will not always follow our views and often make some big mistakes. This is not a failure of mentoring, but rather showing that the relationship is unconditional and will continue regardless. In Manjula's case she is likely to stop being a street seller quite quickly and need her mentor to help to find a way out of that situation. If there was conflict earlier it would be difficult to help now.

KEY LEARNING POINT

Your relationship with your mentee is unconditional and continues regardless (even when you feel like giving up)

Having an agreed plan is important for both mentors and mentees. Previous mentors have reported that they found ending mentoring difficult. Sometimes their mentees had expectations that were unrealistic. More often the mentors themselves felt that they should have done more or continued mentoring for longer. It was common for mentors to feel that they should have achieved more and that their mentoring was not a success, but when other mentors looked at their work they saw it as a great success. It can be emotionally difficult for a mentor to help a mentee to be independent and then for their mentee to become independent, say thank you, leave and go to college or another town for a job. On the other hand some mentors have had long term contact over a number of years with their mentees who have become friends.

An agreed plan is simply a basic agreement between the mentor and mentee concerning the content and structure of the mentoring process. It is best if it is written but if this is not possible, verbal will do. In the last session we thought about how frightening it may be for some mentees to simply meet their mentor for the first time. If this is the case then a very simple agreed plan will lower anxiety and allow your mentee to feel that this is safe enough to engage in. At this point you are probably thinking that if you met up for 6 months or so, a lot of progress can be made. But a long term agreement is probably the last thing on your mentees mind! In this case an agreed plan needs to be short term maybe 2 or 3 weeks. This will make it safe to explore and to see if you are another one of those exploiting,

abusive adults that have made offers before. It does not matter how many agreed plans you make and if you need to make ten 3 week plans as this will allow 6 months of safe mentoring. Some mentees have a clear idea of what they want from mentoring in which case the agreed plan can be a lot more ambitious and not short term. The agreed plan has to be tailored to the mentee and the mentor.

Often mentors are around for a set period of time but put off saying this to their mentees. With an agreed plan this can be viewed as say a successful 6 months work achieving the goals in the plan rather than a damaging crisis. An agreed plan that made it clear that 6 months mentoring is on offer, can be celebrated at 6 months even if it's time to say goodbye - ensuring success.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

An agreed plan will lower anxiety and make it safe for mentees and mentors to explore.

It prevents inappropriate expectations and provides constant successes, however small.

It makes saying goodbye a part of the agreed process allowing a mentee to move on when appropriate.



Previous Mentor's Problems – How To Say Goodbye!

Previous mentors who completed this course have found that one of the most difficult parts of mentoring is saying goodbye.

When you start to meet with your mentee you need to jointly make an Agreed Plan. This is simply a plan which you have both agreed that will lay out your aims. At first this can be very simple and may just agree that you will meet for 2 or 3 weeks at a given place. It is best if the plan is written on a piece of paper.

For a young person who has been let down all through their life this simple agreed plan may be sufficient. But why is this so important? It makes the mentoring safe to explore without the fear of this being another let down in life – this can dramatically lower anxiety and prevent the need to escape, so that the agreed plan is completed and success is experienced. At the end of the 2 or 3 weeks you may decide to meet for another 3 weeks etc. This will also help you as a mentor if you are not feeling too confident at first.

Not all mentees will need such a simple or short agreed plan and some can be quite precise e.g., I need to leave my shelter in 6 months and I need to work out how to get a job. There are of course endless examples of what an agreed plan can look like. Entering into a relationship with a mentor without boundaries, or with high perceived expectations is very likely to increase that anxiety to a level at which your mentee finds it more comfortable to escape and not see you. This may be the way in which your mentee has had to manage most of their life events previously due to high anxiety levels.

As each agreed plan is completed there is an automatic goodbye, unless you both decide to continue. The possible awkwardness

of saying goodbye is now replaced with the success of completing your plan, which can be celebrated. Saying goodbye is often more of a problem for the mentor, as your mentee may think back and remember that person who gave you inspiration for a crucial 6 months or year of their life.

If you are in doubt, make your agreed plan as simple as possible so that it is very difficult not to succeed – this is the springboard for your mentee to experience success and continuing your mentoring relationship.



Sexuality

As a mentor it is likely that your mentee will want to talk about boyfriends/girlfriends. We will all have different views about relationships and sexuality which is our starting place. A number of previous mentors have reported in reflective practice sessions that all their mentee wanted to talk about was their boyfriend/girlfriend at certain times. To trust a mentor with the most important thing in an adolescent's life is demonstrating enormous trust, however frustrating that may be for the mentor!

At this point it is important that you remember (along with your skills, eg, validation, reflection etc) that your task is to help a mentee gain life skills so that they can find solutions not just for you to attempt to provide one, however tempting it may be. As a mentor you will have to make a decision of what you may find acceptable or comfortable should this area come up.

You may find that your mentee wants to talk about sexuality. This is often seen as a difficult area for mentors. Essentially we have found that this is an area that is about relationships and not sex education. If it turns out that your mentee really needs sex education then you may feel equipped to deal with this but on the other hand don't feel that it's a failure to get advice. In this scenario it may be the mentor's task to help the mentee work out how to gain the information needed – not necessarily to provide it. At times for adolescents there is nothing more important than their boyfriend or girl friend. It may feel that when your mentee's love life fills the whole session no progress can be made, but this is demonstrating



that trust has been formed and your mentee's priorities may not be just the same as yours.

Adolescence is also a time when young people work out how they see themselves and who they are. At this time adolescents often worry about their sexual orientation. This can generate high levels of anxiety which in turn can cause many problems as we have thought about in earlier sessions. Again, it is not a problem not to know the answers and there is not an expectation of providing instant solutions. To have somebody listening and spending time with you, who will not judge is the real way forward.

For many mentees failure to thrive and developmental confusion have been major problems. However, puberty and sexuality are commonly not delayed due to hormone changes etc. This means that a mentee who has considerable developmental confusion will not have the psychological and developmental skills necessary to manage this most important stage of life. This can mean that your mentee may not always follow the socially accepted rules around this area. Some mentors have to be clear what is acceptable in the mentoring relationship and what is not. There can be an interaction of confused development relationships and sexuality which can generate a difficult mentor/mentee relationship. In such circumstances it is best to be clear and honest saying what is acceptable and what is not, this will not be damaging. More often girls will want to talk about boyfriends and boys will want to talk about girlfriends. Some mentors have found this frustrating as they feel they have more important things to talk about in mentoring sessions. Again this is the time to use validation and step into the shoes of your mentee and realise how important these issues are to your mentee.

It is quite unusual for mentees to actually want sex education although this is possible. More commonly mentees want to talk about relationships and what they should do. If sex education is needed then the task of the mentor may be to provide that or work out with their mentee how to gain this information. Mentors will have different views regarding sexuality and these may not be the same as their mentees. This has to be recognised and accepted so as not to prevent the mentoring process which is about helping a mentee to find solutions to their own lives.

It is common to be confused over sexual orientation during adolescence. This can be an anxious situation for some mentors. Generally this confusion will settle over a short period of time as your mentee gets familiar with new feelings of sexuality. Again, validation is the way forward in this area to show that you are unconditionally there even if you do not feel that you have the necessary answers.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Sexuality tends to develop at the expected time even if there is confused development/failure to thrive.

Many mentees are very concerned with boyfriend/girlfriend relationships.

You do not have to provide sex education if you do not feel equipped for the task.

Confusion over sexual orientation is common during adolescence.

Previous Skills Practice sessions have been looking at validation which provides the structure and information for behaviour change to work. Positive and negative reinforcement are the basic tools for changing behaviour. The starting place for behaviour change has to be acceptance, which is also the role of validation. Validation will bring us to the point at which positive and negative reinforcement can be used.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Positive reinforcement is anything linked to a response which will increase the likelihood of the response happening again. It may be helpful to think of a response as a behaviour. So if I do something and it is followed by a positive reinforcement, I am likely to do that behaviour again. A simple example of this is if I walk along the road and find a coin, I am likely to look again next time I walk along that stretch of road. My behaviour has now been shaped. Much of child development is driven by positive reinforcement. The first time that a baby says 'mamma' there is almost a celebration in the family. In reality the baby probably made a sound that sounded like 'mamma' but there was so much enjoyable reinforcement that the baby tried it again, again and again.

We know that something is a reinforcement if the behaviour occurs more frequently when it is applied. If the behaviour does not increase in frequency it is not a reinforcement for that behaviour. It does not matter how nice the response to a behaviour is – if the behaviour does not increase in frequency

it is not a reinforcement. The most common reinforcement is praise which is very simple. Many of our mentees have not experienced a lot of praise in their lives so it can be a quite powerful reinforcement.

You do not have to be aware that something is a reinforcement for it to work. This will be demonstrated in this session - we will be looking at rabbits to start with before applying new skills to mentees (rabbits are easier to start with).

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Positive reinforcement will increase the likelihood of a response (behaviour).

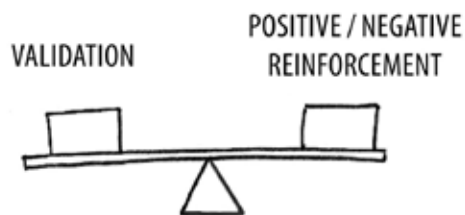
Much of child development is driven by positive reinforcements.

A reinforcement is ONLY a reinforcement if the response (behaviour) increases.

You do not have to be aware of a reinforcement for it to work.

session 4 *skills practice*

Positive and Negative Reinforcement



It is now time to move from acceptance to change.

The main tools to be used are positive and negative reinforcement.

Positive reinforcement

Anything delivered linked to a response which will increase the likelihood of the response happening again.

This may easily be mistaken for a reward, but we only know if something is a positive reinforcement if the behaviour occurs more frequently. Sometimes we may not be aware of a positive reinforcement or it may even appear unpleasant.



Just for a few minutes we can leave people and look at rabbits. The understanding of behaviour was developed using animals and then it moved on to people. This rabbit is in a cage with a lever which delivers food pellets when it is pushed down. The rabbit does not know that the lever gives it food and indeed does not know that we want it to press the lever which is the target behaviour.

If this rabbit moves around in its cage it will sooner or later knock into the lever, which will give a little food pellet. At this point the rabbit does not know that the food arrived due to knocking into the lever. However, the rabbit is now more likely to now run over to the same side of the cage, which in turn makes it more likely to hit the lever. The rabbit will soon be actively pushing the lever and getting food pellets. It is often surprising how quickly animals can learn new tasks like this. This is the foundation of behaviour change.

But we are working with people and not rabbits (which would be easier!). With people, especially children the most common positive reinforcement is praise or approval. This is particularly so with disadvantaged children who may have experienced little praise during their lives.

There are three key skills to think about when using reinforcements to increase behaviour.

The first skill is to recognise whether what you are using as reinforcement is really a reinforcement. The rule is that a reinforcement increases the likelihood of a behaviour happening. This is different to a reward which is usually very nice but may not have an impact on behaviour. Most positive reinforcements are pleasant but sometimes a reinforcement can appear to be unpleasant but still increases the target behaviour.

The second key skill is to look at the situation very carefully and work out what the target behaviour (the behaviour you want to increase) actually is. When Manjula would not get on the bus it was easy to reinforce the wrong behaviour making things worse. There will be more of this in future sessions as your skills build up.

The third key skill is to make sure that the reinforcement is as small as possible, preferably naturally occurring e.g. a smile, a nod, an encouraging look.



We are starting by looking at rabbits rather than people, as people are much more complicated, although the principles are the same. The example is a rabbit in a cage which has a lever in it. If the rabbit pushes down the lever a food pellet will arrive. In this example the response (behaviour) that we want is for the rabbit to push down the lever. This is known as the target behaviour which will be shaped. The rabbit does not know why it is in the cage and does not know that if it presses the lever it will get a food pellet (reinforcement). We cannot give the rabbit instructions as it cannot speak or have language. This means that it is the reinforcement that increases the response (target behaviour). In this example the rabbit randomly hits the lever and then gradually moves on to actively push the lever. This is a new behaviour that did not exist until the reinforcements were applied. The rabbit did not have to know that there was an intention of introducing a new behaviour or changing its behaviour.

We can now move on to people rather than rabbits. The most common positive reinforcement for our mentees is praise and approval. This can be very powerful as our mentees are disadvantaged children who often have not experienced much of this sort of praise and approval. There are 3 key skills to bear in mind when using positive reinforcement.

1. Is your reinforcement really a reinforcement? We know that a reinforcement is in fact only a reinforcement if the target behaviour increases in frequency. If I always say well done for being here on time, but you always arrive late, then this is NOT a positive reinforcement. If however, I say well done for being here on time every time we meet and your time keeping gets much better, this IS a positive reinforcement.

2. The target behaviour has to be selected carefully. (remember Manjula at the bus stop, more of this in later sessions).

3. Reinforcements need to be as small as possible, perhaps a smile or comment. Sometimes reinforcements have to be used many times, things like sweets etc, generally need to be avoided.

The reinforcement needs to be applied as close as possible to the target behaviour in terms of time. The target behaviour may need to be broken down into small steps each of which may need reinforcement one at a time until the final behaviour is reached. This will be demonstrated in Session 6 when we attempt to boil an egg.

This is an example of Ravi who has told Raj, his mentor, that he is part of a gang and has been stealing gold chains. The task for the group is to validate this situation and then recognise possible positive reinforcements. Some new mentors may find this difficult as Ravi is involved in unacceptable behaviours which they may find difficult to validate and recognise positive reinforcements. This is not so, do not forget that validation is about gaining information and understanding your mentee and the position he may be in. This does NOT mean that you are agreeing or condoning the behaviour. For many mentors it is tempting to scold or shout at Ravi to make it quite clear that his behaviour is wrong and he must stop immediately. However, this would also stop the interaction with Ravi about his behaviour and would in no way help to find real solutions to the problem.

The group may need a few minutes to think of how to validate the situation. If the group is really stuck you may need to role play some validation with a volunteer who can be Ravi. The levels of validation can be applied in any order such as:

Level 1 – Showing that you are listening, not looking angry, shouting, scolding.

Level 2 – You say you've been stealing chains (this is quite short and precise).

Level 6 – Gosh, I'm shocked!

Level 3 – You must have felt really scared, your heart must have felt as if it was about to burst. I feel sweaty just thinking about it.

Level 5 – I guess you felt you had to steal as you could see no other way to get money.

Level 4 – And I suppose this seemed ok as you had to do this as a young child when you were hungry.

These are of course made up examples, but they give a feel of what sort of responses may be used in validation. You may find there are as many different responses as there are mentors in the group.

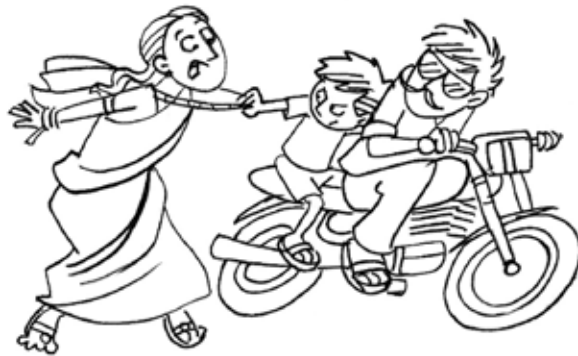
Validation will allow this situation to be explored even if Ravi only says yes, no or just nods his head. The message given to Ravi is that you are starting to understand his position and feelings. You have not judged or told Ravi off so it is safe to continue talking to you. Ravi is not afraid of you and does not need to run away or hide. This is almost guaranteed to be a different response to Ravi's previous experiences.

After thinking about validation we go on to think about the positive reinforcements that are involved in chain stealing. At this point we must remember that chain stealing is a number of behaviours that make up a whole situation. Many of these parts will have positive reinforcements attached to them. So Ravi may have perhaps 10 or 12 positive reinforcements every time that he steals a chain.

Examples of positive reinforcements involved in chain stealing may include:

- Excitement when riding to the market on the two wheeler.
- Treated like a hero when he returns with the chain
- Being a part of the gang.
- Getting money for the gold chain

The examples of positive reinforcement demonstrate that for Ravi there are many levels of positive reinforcement when he steals chains. It can be assumed that Ravi simply steals for the money but



Ravi has met with Raj, his mentor, and is in trouble. He has told Raj that he is in a gang who are stealing gold chains from women near the local market. The way he is doing this is coming up behind the women on the back of a two wheeler and pulling the chain off their necks and then rushing away down the road. The boys then sell the chains to a dealer and split the money between themselves.

Positive reinforcements may be at work in situations that we may not always expect. In the spaces below think about how to validate what Ravi has told Raj. Don't forget this is not the same as condoning or agreeing with the situation. Write one short statement that Raj could use with Ravi for each level of validation.

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Level 5

Level 6

Now think about some of the positive reinforcements for Ravi that apply to chain stealing. Before reinforcements can be recognised the behaviour has to be broken down to its smallest parts. Chain stealing describes an overall behaviour that is made up of many parts or many smaller behaviours. There are many different behaviours involved in chain stealing. Some of these behaviours are being a gang member, riding on the two wheeler, snatching the chain, selling the chain, splitting the money and so on. Fill in the spaces on the next page with any positive reinforcements that you can think of for Ravi.

Positive reinforcements for Ravi

1

2

3

4

Negative Reinforcement

Negative reinforcement also increases the likelihood of a behaviour happening again, but now the behaviour is reinforced by escape or avoidance. This was the situation when our volunteer in session 2 avoided walking through doors after being hit on the head. This should not be confused with reducing behaviour which will be looked at in later sessions. Often situations are avoided due to high levels of anxiety or fear. It can feel better to run away or hide to avoid a situation that is difficult.

Avoidance can also include things like taking substances (including sniffing glue, paint etc) or alcohol to avoid thinking about difficult situations such as being homeless. Avoiding turning up to see your mentor would also be negative reinforcement.

We now return to the rabbit in the cage. The rabbit is in the same cage but this time the rabbit gets an electric shock. The electric shock stops when the rabbit touches or presses the lever. The reinforcement will now increase the likelihood of the rabbit touching the lever.



This is still reinforcement because the target behaviour (lever pressing) increases. The lever pressing increases to avoid a negative situation. Now think about Ravi and the gold chain snatching. In the spaces below write some of the negative reinforcements that may be involved for Ravi.

1

2

3

4

Children like Ravi who are disadvantaged may have had long histories of negative reinforcements such as pain and fear. This means that these negative reinforcements may be well established, familiar and strong.

Homework task this week is to try out using some validation and positive or negative reinforcements at home or work and be ready to report back next week. Try and choose a target behaviour that you want to increase with a friend or colleague. This may be a simple behaviour like smiling – and report back at the next session.

this is not so. It may be that another positive reinforcement is the most important, eg, being a gang member. The group will probably think of many more examples.

NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT

Negative reinforcement also increases the likelihood of a behaviour occurring. It is important to emphasise this at the beginning of this session. A common mistake at this stage is to think that negative reinforcement reduces behaviour – this is a mistake. There will be more about reducing behaviour in the next session when we look at punishment. Negative reinforcement is used more commonly to understand behaviour rather than to change it. Understanding negative reinforcement can help us understand why a behaviour is happening. This is important if we want to change a behaviour, which usually involves positive reinforcement.

Negative reinforcement increases the likelihood of a behaviour occurring which will allow escape or avoidance. This was what was happening in Session 2 when our volunteer did not want to walk through the door. When our volunteer walked through the door they were hit on the head. This leads to fear and anxiety at the thought of walking through the door. Due to negative reinforcement this fear and anxiety was avoided by not walking through the door and indeed quickly moved on to include any door. Negative reinforcement would help us understand why our volunteer has a fear of doors.

It is now time to return to the rabbit in the cage. This time the rabbit is in a bad situation, the cage is electrified and the rabbit avoids this bad situation by pressing the lever which turns the electricity off. We will see the lever pressing behaviour (the target behaviour) goes up as the

rabbit quickly learns to push the lever down. Negative reinforcement increases the lever pressing so as to avoid electric shocks.

The rabbit examples are good to demonstrate how reinforcements work but of course they are made up and are not real life. Real life is more complicated than our rabbit examples. Real life examples may include avoiding fear by hiding, avoiding the fear of failure by not trying, avoiding anxiety feelings by not going to a meeting, not going somewhere in case you get lost etc. Avoidance can also be psychological, eg, taking drugs or alcohol to avoid negative thoughts perhaps of failure, being homeless, being abused, being hungry, etc. There are many examples of thoughts that disadvantaged children may want to avoid. Some everyday substances can be used for negative reinforcement, eg, glue, paint, petrol, cleaning products, solvents as well as more well known drugs that can be inhaled, chewed or smoked.

Examples of negative reinforcements involved in chain stealing for Ravi can include:

loss of role or membership of the gang	avoiding going hungry
loss of feelings of excitement	humiliation, loss of money, etc.
being attacked by gang members	loss of feeling tough

By the end of this session the mentors should:

Be able to use all 6 levels of validation as appropriate in any order.

Understand that validation can be used in any situation.

Understand that both positive and negative reinforcement increase behaviours.

Work out possible positive or negative reinforcements in a situation.

Formulation is a process that helps us understand behaviours and find solutions by providing a framework to hold information and thoughts. Information is gathered during validation which is the start of the formulation process. This information is taken to another level when we think about positive and negative reinforcements both of which increase the likelihood of behaviours occurring. The other role of these reinforcements is to maintain behaviour, keeping it going, often getting stronger and more resistant to change. When this information is drawn as a flow chart on a piece of paper or blackboard the whole of the information can make sense. The formulation can then also be shared with other mentors if you are stuck and not sure what to do.

The session starts with 2 key statements:

Define the Problem – there will be more about this on the next page. The example will be Manjula not getting on the bus. This is a useful example as the mentors are now familiar with the problem and should have some ideas about some of the driving and maintaining factors. As this example is introduced it becomes clear that the reason Manjula will not get on the bus is that she is being harassed by a man. This example is different to previous reasons why Manjula would not get on the bus which demonstrates why it is important to validate and then formulate as problems can look the same from the outside but in fact be very different in terms of their structure and solutions.

Getting it right the first time is not essential so don't worry – as validation and formulation can sometimes involve guessing thoughts and feelings, these guesses will sometimes be wrong especially if your mentee has developmental confusion. If you can eliminate

wrong guesses during this process this will allow the opportunity to explore accurate guesses and then work towards solutions that work. Sometimes formulation has to be seen as an exploration that gradually leads to understanding and solutions, which may not be at the first attempt.

There are six steps that make up the formulation process:

- 1. Investigate the problem**
- 2. Define the problem**
- 3. Consequences of the problem (often what is maintaining it)**
- 4. Think about history**
- 5. Action plan**
- 6. Review**

Sometimes what happens to us before we are born can impact on child development and in turn current behaviours. Common examples of this may be a mother experiencing poor nutrition or taking substances during pregnancy and genetics.

session 5

formulation

key statements

- 1. Define the problem**
- 2. Getting it right first time is not essential so don't worry**

Formulation is a way of looking at a behavioural problem and thinking about what has caused the problem, what is maintaining it and what are the possible solutions. There may be a long history to the problem, maybe even longer than the age of the child eg if the child's mother took substances during pregnancy or if there is a genetic component to the child's problem. Formulation is useful when a problem seems stuck or confusing. You do not have to use formulation for all behaviours, eg, if Ravi does not want sugar in his coffee – this does not need formulating!



Formulation is rather like a detective story as more parts of your mentee's behaviour are un-covered. It can be useful to draw a formulation on a piece of paper or white board rather like a flow chart. The first thing to do is to look at the problem and think carefully about the most accurate way of describing it in terms of behaviour. This process is often known as behaviour analysis and helps to define what it is that is really happening and what may be keeping the behaviour going.

We are going to look at the formulation process in 6 steps, using Manjula who still has her problem as she has stopped going to school, she is not getting on the bus.



1. Investigate The Problem

Not going to school is an overall description which could come from a number of sources and does not inform you as to where to target your help, support or advice – look carefully at the problem – what can you see or work out that is happening – maybe you have seen Manjula at school and she seems quite happy there or perhaps school staff members have told you that she is happy at school. School staff may have also told you that Manjula has friends and is good at school work. This would suggest that the problem is not at school but somewhere else. By now you should be able to use your validation skills to gain information which will help you focus on the real problem.

Talk to Manjula, at this point don't be critical but have a conversation (don't forget lots of validation may be necessary) about getting to school and how difficult it may be. You may now find that the focus of the problem is that a man at the bus stop is harassing her and she has become frightened.

If something like this is discovered then the focus of the problem can be recognised. Many adults like carers may look at the situation and assume that the problem is a school problem. You may also have made this assumption if you had not used validation.

2. Define The Problem (ABC)

After investigation, the problem may appear differently; in this case Manjula is being harassed by a man and is unable to manage that situation. This is very different to the original look of the problem which was said to be school problem or a problem of not wanting to go to school. Perhaps the new definition of the problem is that Manjula cannot manage a difficult relationship with a man - NOT that she doesn't want to go to school - which is what you may have been told. If this difficult situation could be overcome then Manjula may happily go to school. With this new information the next thing to think about is what is the actual behaviour that is creating the problem within Manjula, that is stopping her from getting on the bus. Now is a good time to remember your validation exercises (remember; thoughts, feelings, physiology, behaviour - see *Session 3*). This should lead you to define the problem as she does not get on the bus as she feels anxious and scared. This is now your target behaviour, not school, not bus but high anxiety or fear. This may be different to how the problem was initially presented to you. An easy way of applying behaviour analysis is to think of the following three processes around the target behaviour. The behaviour that we are concerned about is that Manjula is feeling anxious and scared and not getting on the bus:

1. INVESTIGATE THE PROBLEM

It would be quite common for adults to see a situation and interpret it in a way that allows us to make sense of it. In Manjula's case she said she does not want to go to school and so this has been interpreted as Manjula has a school problem which in turn changes a step further to Manjula has a problem at school. It would not be surprising for busy parents, carers or shelter staff to make this assumption. As a mentor you may find pieces of information that do not support the idea that Manjula has a school problem, eg, friends at school, good quality school work etc. This indicates that the problem is maybe not as simple as it was presented. It also indicates that during mentoring you should not follow your immediate instincts and plead with Manjula to go to school (which can be tempting!) as this will only make things worse. If Manjula has stopped going to school then she has probably been told off for not doing what she should be doing. Also at this point we have to remember that Manjula may not understand her feelings and so be unable or not have the skills to simply answer direct questions such as 'why are you not going to school'? Now is the time for validation.

2. DEFINE THE PROBLEM (ABC)

After investigating the problem it has changed from a school problem to a man harassing Manjula at the bus stop. This is a great leap forward but still leaves us with a problem. Our problem is that we still do not fully understand what is happening in behavioural terms and what part of that interaction we need to impact upon. When we investigated and used validation we discovered that Manjula has not got a school problem. We now need to continue with the same process regarding the bus stop. The validation is now moving to another level providing new information for us as mentors and possibly for Manjula to understand her feelings and behaviour at the bus stop. It is interesting that as we started validation and formulating, our guesses were probably wrong as we probably thought that Manjula had a problem at school. Because our guesses were initially wrong this allowed us to move on and get them right. This now makes sense of the second key statement: **Getting it right the first time is not essential so don't worry.** Getting it wrong allowed us to move on, get it right and explore real solutions.

To define a situation in behavioural terms it is useful to split this process into 3 parts; Antecedent, Behaviour and Consequence. Now that we understand what is happening with Manjula we can identify the target behaviour (the behaviour that we want to change). We now know this is not a school problem, it is not a bus problem but is a harassing man problem. If we take this line of thought another step we could say that the behaviour that is causing the overall problem is that Manjula feels scared and anxious so will not get on the bus where the man is. If we apply the ABC to this behaviour it will give us an understanding of what is happening and in turn how to move forward. Validation allowed us to work out what is really happening (there is a scary man at the bus stop). Our ABC system could give us the following types of information:

- **A**ntecedent – question: what happens just before you get scared and run away?

possible answers: the man hit me, stares at me, threatened me, took my money, said he wanted to meet me tonight.

- **B**ehaviour – question: then what happened?

possible answers: I cried and couldn't get on the bus, felt too ashamed to get on the bus, hid in the market, ran home.

- **C**onsequence – question – then how did you feel?

possible answers: I stopped crying and felt better, stopped feeling sick and wobbly (anxiety), felt safe, I calmed down.

3. CONSEQUENCES

Most of the time problems like Manjula's are maintained by negative reinforcement as Manjula has escaped or avoided fear and anxiety. But when we talk to Manjula some more we also find that her mother is very pleased to see her arrive home, maybe because she needs some help. This means that there is also some positive reinforcement at work from Manjula's mother. This is a strong combination of both negative and positive reinforcement. This example is getting a little more complicated as we may now realise that Manjula is also positively reinforcing her mother's behaviour as well so that the situation also getting stronger. This session connects with Session 3 (walking through doors), Manjula's behaviour may be conditioned as the man may have left the bus stop some time ago.

4. HISTORY

One of the major problems with children who have confused developments is that they are vulnerable. This may be due to poor skills, immaturity, disabilities etc. Although we have to deal with the behaviours that are here now it may be important to also understand their history as it may be contributing to the present. In Manjula's example we can actually see that she looks young, we know she has attachment problems and appears as though she has little confidence. She could appear an easy catch for an abuser, making her more vulnerable with fewer skills than an average young woman.

Antecedent – what happened just before the target behaviour; the man said ‘do you want to meet me tonight, if not I will get you in the dark’

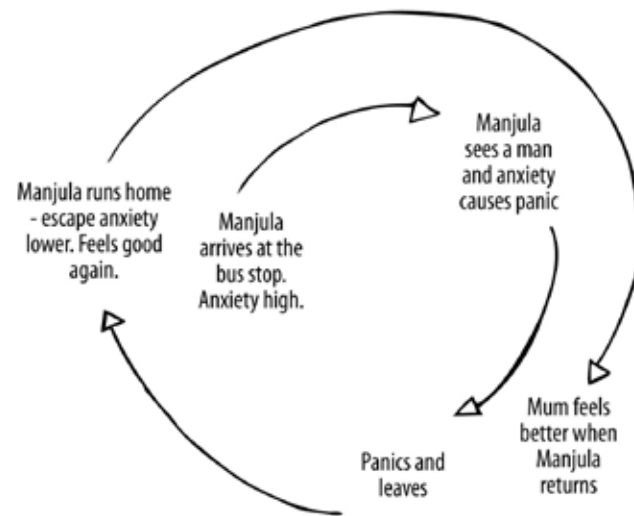
Behaviour – feeling anxious and scared, not getting on the bus where the man is

Consequence – run home and feel better as anxiety goes down (escaping has made Manjula feel safe)

3. Consequences Of The Problem (Often What Is Maintaining It)

You now have a much more accurate understanding of what is going on and you have worked out what the behaviour is that you need to try and help Manjula change. This is the time to be supportive towards Manjula not critical. She is in a situation that she cannot manage, find out how she is dealing with it – remember all your levels of validation. In this case Manjula may be running home or hiding in the market etc. She may be feeling very anxious and fearful at the bus stop, but by running away her anxiety is lowered (escape or negative reinforcement). There will be more about escape and negative reinforcement in the second part of this session. Often this can be a good time to think whether you need to work out what is maintaining a problem, or what is keeping it going now, as this may be different to what may have started it (remember conditioning and anxiety from session 2, walking through the door).

Manjula may have had a problem with the man last year but he no longer uses that bus stop. Her anxiety may have conditioned (just like walking through the door in session 2) and now every time Manjula goes to the bus stop she feels anxiety which feels like panic with a sickly feel and shaky legs with lots of sweating. These symptoms could be viewed as a mental health problem but rather as we saw with Arjun and his ADHD in session 2 there can be another way of looking at this problem which can produce very real solutions.



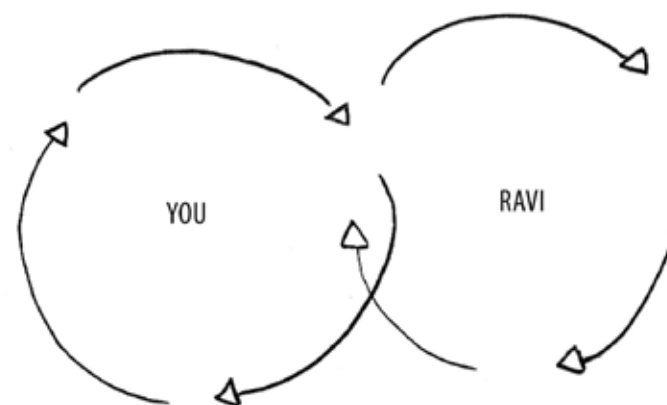
If you need to think more widely about a problem like this, don't forget you may need to draw it on a piece of paper or a white board. It often helps to share some ideas with other mentors perhaps at Reflective Practice sessions.

4. Think About History

This can be important (or may have little to contribute), for Manjula, there is a history. She has a history of failing to thrive, she looks younger than she is and has problems with relationships. You may know that she forms attachments just a little too fast and is thought to be vulnerable for her age (Session 2, Child Development). This may be contributing to the problem as she looks vulnerable and immature which could also be apparent in her interactions. Abusers do not generally target big strong, confident children when there are smaller less confident children available.

This also means that Manjula is more at risk as well being less skilled to deal with such situations.

If you take Ravi to the movies and as the lights go out he runs out and will not come back in. This is quite an annoying situation, the movies are not cheap, it's a special occasion – what's going on? This is the sort of situation that thinking about history could help give a solution. Have a go at filling in the following formulation with a possible understanding of what is happening. It may be interesting to also complete a mini formulation of your feelings – as they may also have to be dealt with! On the following diagram fill in what you might find in a formulation for Ravi and also how you may be feeling. If you can, try and add some reinforcements on the diagram. There are no expected or right answers as we are all different.



As with most of this course there are no right answers. This is an example of how history can be a major part of the problem you are dealing with now. You found out from shelter staff that Ravi had been sexually abused for a number years by a carer after bed time. You can now understand that this may have caused huge levels of fear and panic in some situations. Now when lights go out due to conditioning those awful feelings come back even though the abusive carer has gone. With a knowledge of this history and a simple application of formulation, movie trips may be a way off yet and other activities will be more successful.

The illustration shows two big confident girls and Manjula looking smaller, immature and not confident. It is clear who the harassing man is going to target. Manjula is more vulnerable than the other two young women and has fewer skills to deal with this situation.

The next example concerns Ravi who has been taken to the movies and things have not gone well. Ravi has run out of the movies when the lights went out and it was dark. The task is to fill in the simple formulation on the page. At this stage we have little information so there may be a wide range of ideas that could be included on the diagram. The formulation includes you as a mentor, as your feelings at this point may also be quite important. You have taken Ravi out for a special treat, paid for him to go in, and it is a really good movie. You are now feeling good – mentoring is going well, you have got good seats, and it's a great movie. All of a sudden Ravi has ruined the whole evening and you are left with that feeling of just saying 'what????!!!' Ravi is going to see you upset and frustrated so you have now become a part of the problem as Ravi also has to respond to you. The idea of this example is to show that we as mentors may be a part of the problem and this may have to be considered in the formulation. That is NOT to say that you have done something wrong, but rather to recognise that we are a part of the interaction and this is real life.

Possible answers could include:

I might feel - angry, confused, let down, stupid, concerned, ready to give up, wasting my time, sad, embarrassed etc.

Ravi may feel - anxious, afraid, angry, sad, relieved, happy to get out, a failure, hot, sweaty, panicky etc.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- **Ravi's history generated the current problem and is the key to understanding the 'here and now' as well as considering the solution**
- **We now know that Ravi was abused for a long time each night after the lights were turned off at night. This anxiety and fear has now conditioned to lights going out and rooms becoming dark. This was something that we looked at previously with our volunteer and the doors. Our volunteer became scared to go through any door even though the man with the big stick had gone**
- **Ravi had escaped his nasty feelings of conditioned anxiety by running out of the movies (negative reinforcement)**

5. ACTION PLAN

Formulation is of limited use if we cannot follow it up with an action plan which is the application of solutions. There are some things that we need to bear in mind when thinking about action plans:

- Make the action plan together so that Manjula (or your mentee) gains skills and confidence that they can overcome life problems both now and in the future
- Sometimes it is good to make a number of action plans and then decide together which is the best one/s to try
- Recognise your own limits and do not apply an action plan that is not realistic and you are unlikely to be able to complete
- If an action plan does not work try another one. The way you find out that an action plan is not realistic is to try it out. If it is not successful stop and start again with a new one
- Ask other mentors what they think and whether they have ideas that you may not have thought of

It is interesting at this point to see how many and how varied the potential action plans as suggested by the group are in this session.

6. REVIEW

At the end of the formulation process it is good to stop and review the formulation process. As mentioned in the previous section it may be the case that the action plan that you have used is just not working or needs to change. It is of no value to battle on with a plan that is not working –review now and change. It may have been that your action plan was to help Manjula become more assertive. This may be beyond her ability levels at the moment and is simply not going to work. Now is the time for a new action plan as you now have a realistic idea of Manjula's ability in this area. Perhaps your new action plan could be to change bus stops but at the same time continue building up Manjula's assertiveness skills during your mentoring sessions.

5. Action Plan

Decide what to do. It is generally best to work out this decision together with your mentee as you are hoping that your mentee will gain skills that can be used later on in life and believe that she has the ability to make life decisions. Possible solutions for Manjula's problem may be role playing being assertive and complaining to the man maybe in front of other passengers, or being able to say to the man that the police will be informed, Manjula arranging to have a friend with her at the stop, changing bus stops etc. This process is about finding a way forward gaining skills and not just solving the problem for Manjula. This is a time to observe your own limits. You may think of an action plan that is not realistic, e.g. being at the bus stop with her. But can you do that every school day for a period of time? Most of us have our own lives to live which have to be built into mentoring, which in turn increases the development of realistic life skills and expectations for our mentees.

6. Review

Was your behaviour analysis or your investigation accurate and did your action plan work? If the answer to either of these is no, this is not a problem but time to try together to find another solution. Your first solution may not have worked as Manjula was too anxious to confront the man so your second solution may be to find another bus route to school. This new way forward may not have been found if the first action plan had not been tried, so in a way it was essential. You now know that over the next few months you need to work with Manjula to become more assertive

or to lower her anxiety, there is a need to grow in confidence and become less vulnerable. This may involve thinking about ways to lower and/or control her anxiety which you could try during your sessions.

If a problem is not simple get a piece of paper and start writing down anything that you may think could be a part of the problem, it may be that these things are not contributing and so can be ignored as the process continues. Making a flow chart can be very useful as it gives you a chance to think about potentially a lot of information and share it with other mentors. Often we have to consider the feelings, emotions or behaviours of other people who may be impacting on the situation. In session 1 and 2 we looked at Manjula who was worried about her mother. This means that her mother may need a place on the flow chart as she may have feelings and emotions that could be more important than Manjula's. When Ravi ran out of the movies it was also time to look at our own feelings as they were probably a part of the problem:

Raj - I arrange a special treat

Raj - I am now annoyed

Ravi – Everything I try fails, now Raj is angry

All of these feelings need to be recognised as they will have an impact on the outcome.

Examples Of Things That Could Be Included In A Formulation:

It may be that you can get some or all of this information. Often it is not possible to get this sort of information and it would not be expected that you would need all of the information in these examples.

History – have there always been similar problems, eg, very poor concentration, is there a known syndrome or illness, have there been multiple moves, is there abuse in the past, poor family history etc. This information may come from a variety of sources eg, school, shelter staff, files, talking to your mentee etc.

How young the mentee appears – are there signs of failure to thrive, flinching when approached, signs of anxiety in some situations, difficulty in relating to people, generally high anxiety levels, does your mentee seem to have problems in some situations, maybe looks depressed etc.

What other people think – don't worry about asking people who know your mentee for more information. Such information can be useful, when you knew that there was a fear of the dark in the shelter dormitory this told you a lot as to why your trip to the movies went wrong. You may find that other people's views of a problem may not be accurate and so can be a part of the problem (remember the child will not get on the bus – the child must have a school problem). Don't forget Reflective Practice when you can meet up with other mentors and get ideas. This does not mean that you have to follow those ideas, but sometimes two heads are better than one.

Definition – try and be as precise as possible to get started. Using an ABC approach can be useful to look at the situation or behaviour which can change the definition of the problem. This does not mean that you have to stick to this target behaviour or problem, but rather it gives you a starting place to understand the issue which allows you to move on to other things.

Consequences – the consequences of a situation may be what is now keeping it going. What is maintaining the problem may not be the same as what started it (remember the way that anxiety conditioned when our volunteer walked through the door in session 3). This can be difficult to work out at times, but most commonly (but not exclusively) with children it is connected to or avoiding anxiety. Draw on a flow chart the reinforcements of all the people involved that may be at work if necessary.

This is an overview of formulation that brings in everyday experiences that could be considered. This will help the mentors feel confident that the things that need to be considered are probably not complex. There is no need to spend a lot of time on this part of the session, but rather embed the information that has already been given.

HISTORY

Some historical problems are organic in nature which means they are unlikely to go away so we aim to minimise them. On the other hand historical problems may be psychological in nature in which case we may be able to work towards solutions in either the short term or maybe longer.

HOW THE MENTEE APPEARS

Sometimes the most useful start to a mentoring situation is to follow your thoughts when you see your mentee. This does not mean that new skills are not then used, eg, validation and formulation. If your mentee looks much younger than you were expecting then think about developmental confusion issues. Perhaps your mentee flinches when you are close to her, this may indicate that you will need to be sensitive to abuse type issues, eg, she may have conditioned anxiety to being hit in the past.

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK

This information can be very useful, even holding the key to unlock the understanding of the situation or on the other hand the information can be quite misleading. Validation and formulation will be able to help you work out which camp this information falls into. Earlier examples showed that Ravi's problems in the movies could have been prevented with information from others but Manjula's information about school problems was misleading.

DEFINITION

The ABC approach helped us to identify the target behaviour which is the one we want to change.

CONSEQUENCES

This is what is happening NOW for our mentee, not what happened two years ago or during early development. We cannot change what happened in the past, but the past may well help us to understand the situation and perhaps what our longer term goals may be. For Ravi the abuse that he suffered may have been years ago, but the consequences of tonight's behaviour in the movies was to escape or avoid fear and anxiety.

The session starts to wind up with three reminders about formulation:

1. Don't forget the key statements at the start of the session

Define the problem

Getting it right first time is not essential so don't worry

Finding that a formulation is not accurate allows a more accurate formulation to be implemented and be more appropriate for your mentee.

2. Some of the problems that your mentees live with may not have immediate solutions. At such times validation is mentoring, it shows your mentee that you really are interested and can work towards minimising the effect of problems.

3. It is a very good idea to share your experiences and ideas with other mentors. This builds up skills and confidence for everybody. If there are not organised groups for mentors to meet up (Reflective Practice Groups) then arrange to meet with other mentors regularly.

The small child in the supermarket is now introduced (the sweet battle) and will be looked at in more detail in the Skills Practice session. This example introduces the notion of many reinforcements and many people that can be involved in generating or maintaining a behaviour. This helps us to understand why such a small toddler can command such a powerful position in this situation.

By the end of this session the mentors should be able to:

Think of a behaviour or situation in behavioural terms

Form a simple formulation to understand a behaviour or situation and then work towards finding solutions



Don't forget the key statements of this session. If the formulation does not feel right, consider the information that you have gathered or thought about and make another more accurate formulation, if need be think about the previous steps again and gradually get more accurate.

If you are stuck use validation, validation, validation – this is NOT doing nothing. Sometimes there is no solution to life problems, but for somebody to think that I am important enough to really listen and try to understand how that feels after years of being ignored can be a life changing experience.

Don't forget to use your Reflective Practice Session and explore ideas with your fellow mentors and share successes and frustrations. Sometimes to hear that I am not the only mentor who gets stuck can be a welcome thing to hear.

Have you ever seen a small child at a supermarket checkout queue where the supermarket cleverly puts their sweets for sale?

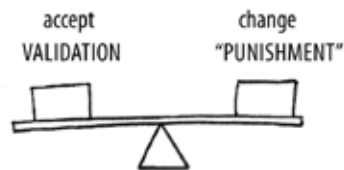
The supermarket knows that after shopping with a young child mum is worn out and at her most vulnerable. In the Skills Practice section we will look at this example more closely and see who are the winners and losers of this 'sweet battle'.

The 'sweet battle' is very interesting as there are a number of interactions and a number of people involved. This means that there may be positive and negative reinforcements almost working in harmony to produce a powerful behaviour. It could be thought that the toddler is a small part player in this situation. But in the Practice Session it can be seen that this small toddler is in fact a most powerful person despite his small size. The power is in the reinforcements regardless of who is able to use them.

session 5 *skills practice*

punishment

In the last session we looked at how to increase chosen behaviours, this has to be matched against the behaviours that we may want to decrease. Our tool box can now get bigger to include positive & negative reinforcement and punishment.



As you understand more of the building blocks of behaviour you will be able to look at a situation and work out what is happening in behavioural terms and in turn work out how to move forward.

Both positive and negative reinforcement will increase the likelihood that a behaviour will occur again.

It is important to note that negative reinforcement also increases behaviour; that is escape or avoidance. This is often confused with punishment.

Punishment is different; punishment is anything linked to a response which decreases the likelihood of the response occurring again. This is not necessarily the same as the everyday use of the word punishment. Punishment may even not appear unpleasant, but it will decrease the likelihood of a response happening.



The rabbit is back in his box with the lever. This time as you can see when the rabbit touches the lever something very unpleasant is going to happen! The likelihood of the lever touching behaviour occurring is getting less.

So in a nutshell, positive and negative reinforcement increases the likelihood of a response occurring and punishment decreases the likelihood of a response occurring.

A situation may contain positive and negative reinforcement as well as punishment, especially if more than one person is involved.

We now move on to look at Punishment which is the third component of behaviour change. Now is a good time to remind ourselves that positive and negative reinforcements both increase the likelihood of a behaviour occurring. Punishment is anything linked to a response that decreases the likelihood of a behaviour occurring. Punishment is not necessarily unpleasant, but sometimes it is.

If I want to give up smoking and have decided to suck a sweet instead of lighting up a cigarette. This means that in behavioural terms sucking a sweet is a punishment.

- The target behaviour is to stop lighting up a cigarette
- Putting a sweet in my mouth lowers the likelihood of lighting up a cigarette
- The sweet in my mouth is a punishment

Moving back to the rabbit example – the rabbit is back in its cage and this time when the rabbit touches the lever a hammer hits the rabbit on its head! Not only is the likelihood of lever pressing going down but the rabbit is now avoiding being in that part of the cage.

Punishment is very powerful when it is linked with positive and/or negative reinforcements maybe involving more than one person. This will be demonstrated on the next page as we look at the toddler in the supermarket queue.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement

> INCREASE the likelihood of a behaviour occurring

Punishment < DECREASES the likelihood of a behaviour occurring

The sweet battle describes a situation where mum has been shopping in the supermarket. She reaches the queue and is tired after shopping with a toddler. In this example mum is not alone, there is the checkout lady and the other people in the queue. All of these people can be involved in reinforcements and punishment making the toddler very powerful. It is interesting that the toddler probably does not know how powerful he is but does know that last time he screamed at the checkout he got a lollypop! In a similar way your mentee may not understand why their behaviour is powerful and in turn why it is so difficult to change. Validation and formulation will be able to work out these issues for both yourself as a mentor and your mentee.

The example goes on to show that after only one minute of screaming, mum gives in and hands over a packet of nice yummy sweets - good result. We can guess that next time the toddler is taken to the supermarket he will scream for sweets at the checkout. For the sweet battle we have to think about positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and punishment and the role of all the players.

Positive reinforcement

I scream and I get a sweet (toddler)

My child looks lovely and smiles at me (mum)

I feel like a good mum when all the other adults look approvingly at me (mum)

Negative reinforcement

Escaping or avoiding the angry attitude of the checkout lady which is embarrassing (mum)

Escaping embarrassment or avoiding the angry looks from the queue (mum)

Escaping or avoiding the screaming noise which is driving me mad (mum)

Punishment

Mum's keen stance of not allowing unhealthy sweets may not be so strong next time they go shopping

The other adults tried to stop the noise by looking angry – they were fed up!

Don't forget if mum does not give a sweet - the toddler's screaming will go up before it goes down - this is called an extinction burst.



To return to the 'sweet battle', this mother of a young child has been shopping at the supermarket. At the checkout the supermarket have a small counter of attractive sweets. Mum is tired and her child really wants some sweets, he is going to scream and scream until he gets some sweets. Mum is determined that he is not having those unhealthy sugary sweets. At this point mum is embarrassed, the check-out lady is angry and the rest of the queue are staring.



After only one minute of screaming mum gives up and hands over a packet of sweets as she has just about had enough. Umm nice yummy sweets – good result!

What do you think is the most likely thing this young child is likely to do when he is taken next week to the supermarket?

Write down in this space what you think has happened in terms of reinforcement and punishment. Don't forget that there may be many interactions involving many people.

1 positive reinforcement

2 negative reinforcement

3 punishment

Write next to these examples whether they are positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement or punishment.

1. Smiling when your mentee turns up on time
2. Your mentee agrees to go stealing with friends so that he doesn't feel bad
3. Giving your puppy a biscuit when he begs
4. Smacking your puppy to stop him from sniffing peoples bottoms
5. Saying 'good girl' when baby uses the potty
6. Your mentee drops out of the programme because she is ashamed of something she has done
7. Smiling and making a fuss when baby says 'dadda'
8. Looking disappointed when your mentee uses bad language
9. Your mentee gets money after stealing a gold chain
10. Nodding when your mentee is talking to you

1. Smiling when your mentee

positive reinforcement

– this is a very simple but effective reinforcement.

2. Your mentee agrees

negative reinforcement

– your mentee is avoiding feeling bad.

3. Giving your puppy

positive reinforcement

– your puppy likes biscuits and will soon learn to get another by begging.

4 Smacking your puppy

punishment

– your puppy's sniffing will go down (there may be some negative reinforcement too).

5. Saying 'good girl'

positive reinforcement

– your baby likes approval and will want some more.

6. Your mentee drops out

negative reinforcement

– your mentee wants to avoid those feelings of shame, avoidance is increasing.

7. Smiling and making a fuss

positive reinforcement

– your baby would like some more smiling and fuss making.

8. Looking disappointed

punishment - and negative reinforcement

– you want it to stop, your mentee wants to avoid your disapproval.

9. Your mentee gets money

positive reinforcement

– your mentee wants money, he may also be avoiding poverty and hunger.

10. Nodding when your mentee

positive reinforcement

– here the reinforcement may be coming about during validation.

By this stage the mentors should be able to:

Use validation to listen and talk to their mentees, this can be thought of as acceptance.

Think about the situation in behavioural terms and then use a simple formulation to work out what is happening.

Use positive & negative reinforcements to increase behaviours, punishment to decrease behaviours as acceptance moves towards change.

THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS HOW THEY LOOK

This is the key statement and needs to be read out at the start of the session. It may be a good time to remind everybody about Manjula who has already come up a number of times on the course. Manjula's examples always looked the same each time, but when we worked through each one, they were in fact different. During this session we will think about Ravi who has decided to leave (or maybe not start) his job. Formulation should be able to make some sense of this situation for Raj and ourselves.

This session is about advanced formulation which will help us apply our new skills to real life using the principles that we looked at with the rabbits. Real life situations tend to be more complicated, often involving more than one person and more than one reinforcement. In this example Raj has arranged for Ravi to get a job as a chai boy at his office in a software company. The job does not work out well and Ravi ends up running out of the building saying quite forcefully that he did not want to be a chai boy. This is of course a difficult situation for both Ravi and Raj, as Raj had taken a chance bringing Ravi into his work place. Raj will be probably be embarrassed in front of his work colleagues.

It is good to try and think of the many parts that make up the whole of the situation as we look at the Raj and Ravi example. Try and think about some of the wider issues or things that the individual parts may suggest, here are some examples:

- Ravi's family did not want him to take the job – they would be happy if he did not
- Ravi decided to take the job – did he really want the job or was he trying to keep Raj happy?
- The kitchen is up 4 flights of stairs, the building must be quite large, maybe glass fronted, air conditioned, security, lifts etc.
- Ravi has to remember the layout of the building (he may never have been in a building like this before)
- Ravi has to remember the order of 5 chai, 6 coffees 2 without sugar, is capable of doing this?
- Nobody has checked whether Ravi knows how to make chai and coffee – he may have no real cooking facilities at home
- Half way up the stairs Ravi turns around and runs down the stairs and out of the office – can this be avoidance, if so of what?

Breaking this example up into small parts will help your thinking around what was happening to Ravi before you work it through.

session 6

advanced formulation

key statement

Things are not always how they look

During the last session we looked at formulation, during this session we will go on to look at some more examples of formulation to make sure you feel more confident in this area.

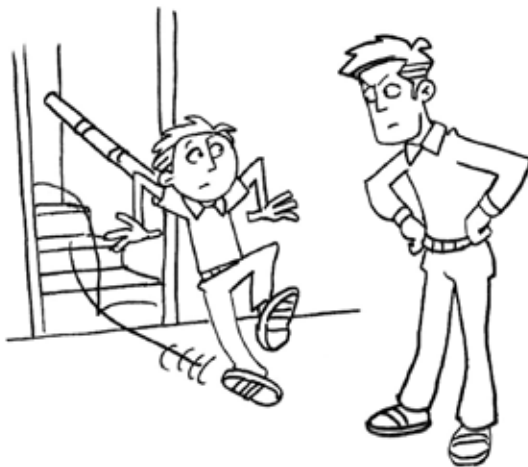
Here is a situation that may need formulating as Raj is finding it difficult to understand. Raj is a successful software engineer who works for the Acme Software Company. Raj has arranged for Ravi to get a job at the software offices. This was not easy as Ravi's family had other ideas. The family wanted Ravi to go to the market in the mornings to collect boxes and cardboard. This could then be sold for a few rupees to buy food. Ravi's job at the software company is to be the chai boy, getting drinks for the engineers. Things are going well Ravi decided to take the job, he was at work at 8am and is ready to go.

It's 8.20am and the first drinks order is taken. Ravi has to go up 4 lots of stairs and go into the kitchen to make the drinks. The order is 5 chai all with sugar, 6 coffees, 2 without sugar. Ravi takes the order from the software guys who are all really busy working on their computers. Ravi starts going up the stairs but stops half way up and runs out of the building. Raj does not know whether to be annoyed or just confused. Outside the building Raj asks Ravi what the problem is. Ravi was quite angry and said that he had to get up early – he had no breakfast – the stairs were steep and he doesn't want to be a chai boy anyway!!!!

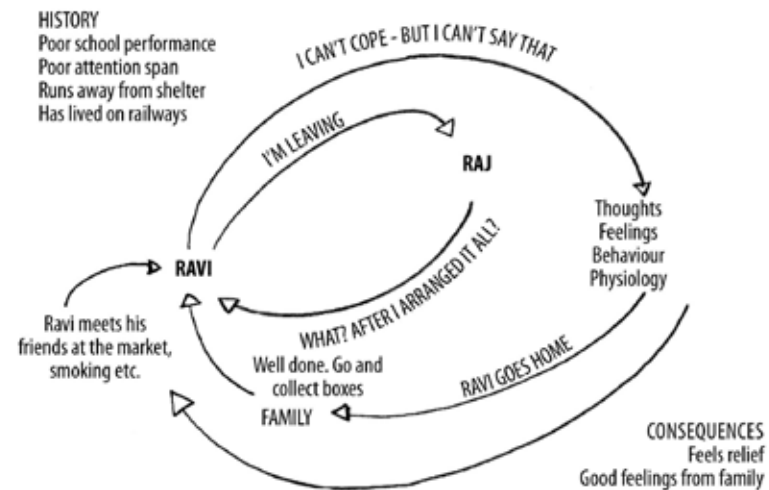
This is a real example that a previous mentor brought to Reflective Practice as he felt stuck and rather confused.

Raj's formulation gives us the opportunity to try and work out why Ravi's new job went wrong so quickly. This has also had an impact on Raj who took a chance on Ravi as he had to convince his boss that taking Ravi on was a really good idea. Raj needs to start validating to calm the situation and to gather information to formulate, make sense of the situation and form an action plan.

When Raj had calmed down and used lots of validation, some new information came to light concerning the earlier events. The following diagram is Raj's formulation which shows that Ravi panicked and just could not cope. Raj also realised that Ravi has a history of poor school performance. It was interesting for Raj to consider that Ravi has a history of running away and so this is a great skill that he has (but not really one that we want!). When you look at Raj's formulation, try and think of possible reinforcements that may be in use.



Ravi starts work - but not for long



As you can see from the formulation the situation is quite complex with many potential parts to it. Raj now needs to think of an action plan. As the situation is quite complex Raj has to decide where to start and which part of the formulation to impact on first. Work in pairs and in the space below write down an Action Plan that Raj may try. Don't forget there are no right or correct answers and we may find that there are as many answers as there are participants.

Raj's Action Plan

When things go wrong we need to use validation to find out what has really happened. The previous examples concerning Manjula have shown us that things may not be as they appear at first. Ravi has said that he is tired and does not want to be a chai boy.

At this point Raj may have to consider that his own feelings may now be a part of the problem. Raj is probably feeling pretty angry as well.

Some new information has come to light, which is that Ravi has had a poor school performance in the past and has missed much of his school career. This could help us to understand why Ravi suddenly changes his mind about the job and panics. Raj may see that Ravi is extremely anxious which gives an idea about what has happened (remember formulation – how your mentee appears). Consider questions such as:

- Has anybody checked that Ravi is in fact able to count and retain numbers?
- Is Ravi able to write down the numbers – can Ravi read and write?
- Does Ravi have the skills and confidence to ask one of the engineers for a piece of paper and a pen?

Ravi also has a history of running away and having to live on the railways. This indicates that Ravi has a highly skilled running behaviour. This is not really the skill we would want Ravi to have

but later in the Action Plan this may be of some value. The sample formulation has shown that there are a number of reinforcements at work. Ravi's history may help us understand why some of these reinforcements work so well for him.

- I can't cope but I can't say so leads to thoughts, feelings, behaviour and physiology (*think about level 3 validation, Session 3*)
- I'm leaving! –negative reinforcement (*Session 4*)
- Ravi runs home –negative reinforcement (*Session 4*)
- What? After I arranged it all? –negative reinforcement to escape or avoid Raj's anger (*Session 4*) and Ravi's feelings of shame and guilt (*Sessions 4 & 6*)
- Well done, go and collect boxes – positive reinforcement (*Session 4*)
- Meet friends at the market for smoking – positive reinforcement (*Session 4*)

There may be many different ideas for Ravi's Action Plan, this is ok as there is no single way forward. As we are all different we will have different ways of finding solutions. Some examples may be:

Improve Ravi's number skills, give him a pencil and pen, talk to family, role play assertiveness, join a running club for instant success!

Like Ravi's example this is a real situation that a previous mentor had to deal with. Manjula is going to elope with her boy-friend. The task is for the mentors to formulate this situation and write it in the space in their manuals. Again like Ravi's example there may be as many formulations and action plans as there are mentors in the group. This is ok as there is not too much information and so some will have to be made up and we are all different having different views. Some things that could be included in the formulation:

- Is Manjula feeling coerced into eloping?
- Has Manjula got a confused development and attaches too easily?
- Is Manjula avoiding feeling ashamed and embarrassed if she does not go as she has told her friends?
- Is Manjula feeling that she is not able to manage on the college course?
- Is this a way of avoiding her parents disapproval of her boy-friend?

Validation will allow the mentors to gain the information to answer these types of questions. Validation will also allow Manjula to trust you as a mentor to maybe find another way forward. The action plan will follow on from validation and an understanding of the reinforcements that may be involved in the elopement. Some examples that could be included in the Action Plan:

- Postpone the elopement for a week or so, this would be much more acceptable than asking her not to go. An agreed postponement may be a great relief for Manjula, this will give time to work further on this issue without losing face
- Establish whether there is a problem with the college course
- Role play telling friends that she is not going
- Role play Manjula talking to her family about her boy-friend as she may be running away to avoid this
- Are there other reasons why Manjula may want to leave her family – should these be included in the action plan?

By this stage in the course the mentors should have the basic skills to manage almost any mentoring situation, the rest of the session is about improving skills and then in Session 7 we will be trying out all of our new skills with each other.

Manjula Tells Divya A Secret

Manjula has some very exciting news. Manjula has a boy-friend who is a little older than her. Together Manjula and her boy-friend have hatched a plan. They are madly in love and have decided at midnight next Tuesday that they are going to elope, get on her boy-friend's bike and go to the coast to start a new life. This is a bit of a surprise for Divya as only last week Manjula was telling her that the plan is to start at college to train as a secretary. Divya also knows that Manjula's parents do not like her boy-friend too much and would not support the elopement.

In small groups think about a possible formulation and action plan for Manjula's potential adventure. On your formulation add reinforcements and decide on the Action Plan. As there is little information in this example feel free to make some up if you need to.



Formulation

Action Plan

session 6 *skills practice*

reinforcements, observing limits and emotions

Just to recap briefly from the last two sessions; positive and negative reinforcements work towards increasing behaviours and punishment works towards decreasing behaviours. Reinforcements have to be realistic and usually able to be used many times.

Hints And Tips When Using Reinforcements

For these examples the term reinforcement is used but the same is true for punishment:

- * Reinforcements should be close to behaviours in terms of time. It is generally little use reinforcing a behaviour the next day when you have time. As a general rule the closer the reinforcement to the behaviour the more powerful or effective it is.
- * Check that a reinforcement is in fact a reinforcement (not just looking like one).
- * Make reinforcements as natural as possible for the situation.
- * Keep reinforcements as small as possible. If Raj gives Ravi a biscuit every time he gives eye contact, this system would probably break down after 10 biscuits! This is of course a silly example but it does demonstrate the problem.



- * Gradually make reinforcements smaller as you go along. They will be just as effective, so maybe a big smile at first and then getting smaller as time goes on.
- * Moving on from making reinforcements smaller – intermittent reinforcement makes behaviours stronger and more resilient. This means that reinforcement may be given every 2 or three times after reinforcements have got smaller. When behaviours are established they can often maintain themselves. For Ravi his increase in eye contact when talking to Raj makes the conversation more rewarding for him and will not need reinforcing constantly as time goes on. It may feel surprising that intermittent reinforcement helps maintain progress.
- * Break down behaviours to small parts before applying a reinforcement (more of this later when we learn how to boil an egg).

Session 6 Skills Practice opens with a re-cap of reinforcements and punishment, followed by hints and tips.

- Both positive and negative reinforcements, and punishment should take place as close as possible in time to the target behaviour.
- Check that your reinforcement is in fact a reinforcement. In Sessions 4 & 5 we saw that a reinforcement is only a reinforcement if it increases the likelihood of a behaviour occurring. In the same way a punishment is only a punishment if it decreases the likelihood of a behaviour from occurring. If Divya smiles at Manjula when she has eye contact with her but the frequency of eye contact stays the same or goes down then the smiling is not a reinforcement. The smiling may be nice but it is not a reinforcement. If I smack my puppy every time he bites me, but his biting is increasing then smacking is not a punishment.
- If reinforcements are as natural as possible then they are much easier to provide in the situation. Smiling is a good example as it can happen a lot in a conversation, but you could not give your mentee a sweet every time there was eye contact.
- Reinforcements need to be as small as possible as they may have to continue for a long time and there may be many of them. The reinforcement needs to be matched to the

behaviour. If I want to increase eye contact then this may happen every 20 seconds or so. On the other hand if I want to increase turning up on time for mentoring then this will happen only once every session.

- Reinforcements do not have to stay the same all the time. When a behaviour is established the reinforcements can get smaller to maintain it. In the end the reinforcements may get so small they disappear and the behaviour continues without them.
- As reinforcements get smaller they can eventually not happen every time there is the desired behaviour. The goal is for your mentee to be able to have the desired behaviour without you being there reinforcing it, this is how new skills are made.
- The desired (or target) behaviour may have to be split up into smaller steps that work towards the final goal. Sometimes the desired behaviour is too big a step and there needs to be smaller steps. If you are Ravi's mentor and you want him to be able to go to the movies with you, this could start by being in the dark in a safe place initially. There is more about this later in the session when we learn just how difficult it can be to boil an egg.

OBSERVING LIMITS

The mentors need to be clear in their own minds what they can realistically offer. Mentoring has to fit around the rest of our lives. We all have commitments whether they are at work or home. A part of mentoring is to help your mentee have real life and realistic experiences. It is of course very important for us to be able to keep to our agreements for mentoring. It is better to offer confidently less than attempt more and not be able to fulfil the commitment. If less is offered initially this can always be increased. On the page there is a space for the mentors to fill in what they can realistically offer. Examples of the type of things that could be considered may include:

- How much time can you give and how often? eg, once a week for 2 hours
- How long can the offer be open? eg, I may move to another city in 6 months, there is no time limit
- Do you have special skills or interests? eg, sports, reading, collecting stamps etc., which languages can you speak?
- Do you need a mentee in a certain area? eg, not on the other side of the city, how mobile are you, can your mentee be mobile?
- Are there certain things that you feel you cannot manage? eg, a mentee who shows sexual behaviours, religious constraints, etc

If you are clear about these thoughts this will help to make sure that you are successfully matched with your mentee.

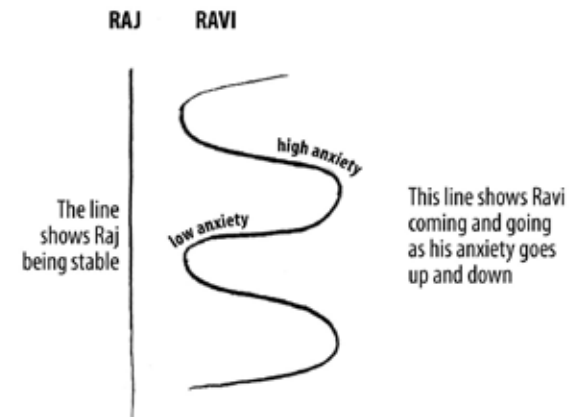
One of the most valuable things that a mentor can do is to simply be there. This may seem obvious, but we need to think a little more about this area. When a mentor makes an offer to start mentoring this may be tested out by their mentee. Your mentee may not even be aware of this testing out as it can be generated by anxiety and negative reinforcements. In the example we can see that when Ravi feels high levels of anxiety he avoids or escapes from these feelings by not turning up for sessions or turning up late and maybe keen to leave early. Mentees like Ravi have had many offers in the past but they have not been genuine leading to exploitation and abuse. This means that Ravi may have to test out mentoring sessions to find that they are safe and lower his anxiety levels. Ravi does not have to be aware of this process or understand it. As Ravi experiences more mentoring sessions his anxiety levels will go down so the need to escape or avoid (negative reinforcement) also goes down. At the same time positive reinforcement goes up as Ravi enjoys and engages more in the sessions. This process can only take place if Raj understands what is happening and turns up to mentoring regardless. You may remember in Session 3, we thought about how difficult it can be for a mentee to initially meet up and spend time with a mentor as they will probably come from very different parts of society.

Observing Limits

For almost all disadvantaged children having a mentor will be a new experience. In fact for most disadvantaged children it will be a new experience for an adult to talk and genuinely take an interest in them without being aggressive or abusive etc. Often adults have made offers or seemed to take an interest but have not been genuine and have not done what they said they would.

This new experience for a mentee may be quite scary and anxious, which is something we may not realise. This means that it is especially important for you as a mentor to do what you have agreed to do. So at this point we have to make sure that you do not over promise and under deliver! We cannot all offer the same things in terms of time, skills or commitment. Before agreeing a plan with your mentee you will need to think carefully about your own personal limits. In the space below write down what you think you can realistically offer in terms of time, skills, places to meet, how mobile you can be, your own strengths, interests and anything else you think you could offer without over promising. What you offer to your mentee can always be increased later on if you find that things change.







As a mentor you need to understand that for all of the reasons that we have considered during the sessions that a mentee may find it difficult to commit and be consistent. This can be a challenge for you as your mentee may come and go. This situation can be illustrated by the following diagram.



As Ravi experiences more sessions with positive reinforcement and consistency from Raj he is able to meet up without high anxiety levels and feeling the need to escape.

Recognising Feelings And Emotions

Feelings and emotions usually happen for a reason. This area was looked at in earlier sessions when we looked at validation and the wheel of experience. In the following section the functions of feelings are looked at.

	Feelings	What It's For	What It Makes You Want To Do
	ANGER	Achieving goals/ getting needs met / protecting rights	Attack
	GUILT	Repairing relationships, righting wrongs	Say sorry, get punished
	FEAR	Protection from harm	Run away
	SHAME	Preserve social relationships / rules	Hide
	JOY	Built-in positive reinforcement, reward for achieving goals / getting needs met	Laugh / jump about/ do it again
	DISGUST	Preserve health/ protect from disease	Avoid / Be sick

In previous sessions we have looked at feelings and emotions which often drive behaviours in combination with reinforcements and punishments. Feelings and emotions happen for a reason and have a function. This part of the session is designed to get the mentors familiar with recognising feelings and emotions and what they make their mentees want to do. A good mentor will be aware of feelings and emotions which will help them understand what is happening and also work out what is likely to happen. Sometimes as adults we respond to emotions without realising why they are there. We looked at an example of this earlier in the session when Ravi ran out of Raj's office building looking and sounding angry. For most of us, if we were mentors in that situation we would probably feel angry too. When we look at the examples of feelings and emotions, we can see that Ravi's anger may have a number of functions – achieving goals/getting needs met/protecting rights. We have to think carefully about Ravi's thoughts, feelings, behaviour and physiology (the Wheel of Experience, Session 3). Just at the moment Ravi is probably experiencing anxiety and panic which he wants to escape from (negative reinforcement) which may make his goal to escape as quickly as possible. This may make him want to verbally attack Raj and get out of the situation as quickly as possible. If Raj could recognise that anger has these functions, this may help him to rescue the situation rather than just feeling like exploding with anger himself. Feelings and emotions can usually be seen by people's expressions and also their behaviours.

Sometimes our mentees may have feelings and emotions but not recognise or understand them. This means that the feelings and emotions may make your mentee want to do things, but not understand why he wants to do them. This can happen if there is developmental confusion or failure to thrive which can create the situation of your mentee knowing what he wants to do but does not know why he wants to do it.

Other examples that could be considered:

GUILT – sometimes feelings of guilt are not straightforward as they may be connected with past events, eg, abused children can feel guilty.

FEAR – could be attached to not being able to get protection which can cause the need to run away.

SHAME – rather like guilt, a child may feel this due to what has happened to them rather than something they had done themselves.

JOY – due to damage and conditioning, normal behaviours may not be available so may be associated with abnormal behaviours.

DISGUST – there may be many experiences that generate disgust, these can be conditioned to many other situations.

As you can see from the previous examples, the function of feelings and emotions are not always as straightforward as you may expect. This does not mean that all functions are complicated as most of them will be just as expected. But some mentees cannot recognise or manage their feelings or emotions. These examples give some extra ideas that could be considered in discussion:

SADNESS

Getting back what's lost could include things like family, integrity, self worth etc. Some of these things cannot just be replaced and so they need to be understood or managed. At times the goal may have to be acceptance rather than change.

INTEREST

If your mentee has difficulties learning new information (information processing) this may look like lack of interest. It is easy to mistake difficulties in learning for lack of interest and for us to stop trying to interest our mentee.

EXCITEMENT


If performance does not improve maybe due to poor skills or damage, then excitement can be attached (conditioned) to poor performance. This is a problem as things do not improve whilst poor performance is being reinforced.

LOVE

It is difficult to know what love is if it has not been experienced. This can lead to isolation as love can be described as relationship glue, but if it has not been experienced, could be very confusing. Also there can be difficult relationships now and in the future.

SURPRISE

Normally surprise is a nice feeling, but this is not always the case. Some surprises can be linked to abuse and this can be conditioned so that nice surprises can be linked to abuse or bad experiences.

	Feelings	What It's For	What It Makes You Want To Do
	SADNESS	Getting back what's lost	Cry, look for what is lost
	EXCITEMENT	Improve performance	Perform
	SURPRISE	Refocus attention	Find out what's new
	INTEREST	Acquire important information	Learn things
	LOVE	Relationship glue	Be with loved one

Recognising the function of these feelings or emotions will be very useful when you are with your mentee. This is also the case when formulating a problem or situation as these functions often help us understand why behaviours are happening.

Teaching New Skills Or How To Boil An Egg

Earlier in this session we said that behaviours must be broken down into small parts or steps before applying a reinforcement. To demonstrate this we are together going to work out how to teach our mentee to boil an egg. To start this process off we need to break down the whole task into smaller parts. This is how it went when Divya tried to do this with Manjula

** So where do we start – pick up the egg?*

** Oh no that's not right – what's an egg?*

** Where are the eggs stored?*

** Ummm let's start again – go to the cupboard over there and open the door , what does an egg look like before it's cooked....*

In the space below write down where you think this should start with the small parts of behaviour needed to boil that egg and then moving on.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Well done, whoever thought boiling an egg was so complicated.

HOW TO BOIL AN EGG

In earlier sessions it has been mentioned that new skills sometimes have to be broken down into smaller steps to eventually reach a goal. This example of how to boil an egg demonstrates this process. As with other examples on the course this is not a real example and can be quite amusing as you work through it with the group.

If we think about Manjula, she has had so many problems at the bus stop and we thought of many possible action plans. The action plan may be to increase Manjula's assertiveness skills so that she can confront the man at the bus stop. The goal is to go to the bus stop and say clearly to the man that if he harasses her, she will scream and get a police officer. Obviously to do this Manjula could not start at the bus stop in front of the man, but in a safe place using role play. This may have to involve taking a step backwards to get started:

- Start in your mentoring session being assertive about something simple, eg, talking about something that you do not like
- Move on to role playing being assertive with a person who is safer than the man, eg, a friend
- Now role play being assertive with the man but still in a safe place

A part of the action plan also needs to address being physically at the bus stop. We saw in the door example (Session 3) that our volunteer had high levels of anxiety when approaching the door (or any door) even though it was safe as the anxiety had conditioned to all doors. Now Manjula has the same problem as she feels high levels of anxiety when she approaches the bus stop even if the man is not there. We need to break this part of the problem up into steps or smaller parts maybe over a few mentoring sessions:

- During mentoring, think about going to the bus stop, keep doing this until thinking about going to the bus stop becomes less anxious
- Walk half way to the bus stop together giving Manjula lots of reassurance and use validation and then turn around and return
- Walk almost to the bus stop and then return. Next walk all the way to the bus stop and maybe touch it
- Walk all the way to the bus stop and role play being assertive with the man at the bus stop

The egg example is a light hearted way to remember thinking about breaking up goals into smaller parts to achieve. You may want to use Manjula's example to attach the egg boiling to reality.

There are three main aims to the role play session:

1 Primarily it is to consolidate all of the skills acquired during the course and feel confident applying them to real life situations. All of the examples have been drawn from previous mentor's reports of their experiences. Now is the time to try out new skills in a safe environment and build up confidence.

2 Demonstrate the importance of meeting up with other mentors preferably in organised Reflective Practice groups. For every example there will be many different views and ideas of how to move forward. It does not mean that the mentor role playing has to change the role play but rather consider and recognise that there are other ways of dealing with situations. As we have said before on the course we are all different and in turn will have different ways of dealing with situations or as the old saying goes, 'there are lots of different ways of skinning a cat'.

3 These role plays will also help to prepare us for our own emotions and feelings. Sometimes when we work with children who have challenging lives and histories, this can connect with our own emotions and memories. This is in no way a criticism as we know it can be quite common. Mentors should be able to feel that they can rely on their fellow mentors for support and understanding should this happen.

This session is often quite amusing as we try out our new skills and see just how different we can be from each other.

session 7

role plays

This final session will be mainly using role plays to practice and increase skills. As we are going to use small groups for the role plays these will be similar to mini Reflective Practice groups. Reflective Practice is a time for you to join with other mentors and think about your practice as a mentor. A Reflective Practice group should be a time to share but not to criticise. As you may remember from sessions about formulation, getting it right first time is not always possible. Sometimes getting it wrong is just a part of a process working towards getting it right. The more we stop, think about practice and share with each other, the better our practice becomes.



It may be that you are stuck and looking for ideas as to how to proceed with a problem. On the other hand you may be in a position to give ideas and support. Working with disadvantaged children can often be emotional for us. It is important to recognise this and be ready to support each other during Reflective Practice groups. The issues being dealt with can be upsetting or difficult especially if you are finding it difficult to find a way forward. As adults it can be surprising how working with children or young people can awaken memories and feelings from our own pasts. During these times the support found from people who are facing similar feelings becomes very important.

Role Plays

During these role plays you will be in a small group. One of you needs to be the mentee (Ravi or Manjula) and one of you the mentor (Divya or Raj). If your role play is the wrong gender feel free to change it or just role play the opposite gender. There is not a lot of information in the examples so again feel free to make up any information needed to make the example work. The other people in the group are the observers. When the task is completed the observers become a Reflective Practice group. During this time the observers can say what they noticed during the role play and how it felt. Ravi or Manjula can share how it felt to meet with Raj or Divya. Raj or Divya can share with the Reflective Practice group what they noticed about the session. The observers may have some ideas for Raj or Divya but don't forget – no criticising. Have a go at these role plays and don't worry if you get stuck or if it feels that it's going wrong. If you think you may want to spend a little time role playing a difficult teenager – volunteer quickly.

ROLE PLAY 1

Ravi gets excited.

Ravi is about to meet his new mentor, a software engineer who works for a multi-national company. This has really excited Ravi as he wants to pass his exams and be a lawyer – or maybe now he knows about Raj – a software engineer. Ravi is so excited he is convinced with a mentor he is going to be fantastically successful within a few weeks. Wow this feels good, good and good!!!! As you may have guessed there is a bit of a problem. Ravi's teacher has told Raj that Ravi has not been in school very long and cannot read and write, his maths work is also poor.

Raj's task is to meet Ravi (who is very excited and ready for immediate success) and make an agreed plan that is realistic. Raj may need all his validation and reinforcement skills to manage what could be a tricky situation. When this task is completed Raj needs to take this session to Reflective Practice. The Reflective Practice members are the observers.



The mentors need to be in small groups for this exercise. There needs to be a mentee and a mentor in each group, gender is not important. The role plays will concern either Manjula or Ravi and Divya or Raj. If need be the role players will have to swap genders or swap the content to match their gender. These role plays need some creativity as there is only a skeleton of information given. Our role players have permission to add or embellish as they wish. As well as the role players there should be one or a few observers. The observer's task is of course to observe, making sure that they note how the mentoring feels for both the mentor and mentee. The observer's task is also to think whether there are any other ways forward or giving ideas if the role players are stuck. It is not a problem if the role play has to stop and start again if it gets stuck or confused. Don't forget this is NOT a time for the observers to criticise but to be supportive making sure the strong points are also noted. This process is rather like role playing a Reflective Practice group. There are six role plays, any of which can run simultaneously. Allow about 20 minutes for a role play and then feedback to the whole group. It is unlikely that all groups will manage more than 2 or 3 role plays in the time allotted as some of the time will be used for feedback.

RAVI GETS EXCITED

Ravi is getting very excited now that he has a mentor. Ravi feels that he is about to experience instant success and become a lawyer or software engineer. However, it is clear that Ravi's expectations are totally unrealistic, he has not been in school too long and cannot

read, write or do math. Raj needs to form an agreed plan that will feel realistic and successful for both Ravi and himself. The role play group may have lots of ideas themselves but if you feel stuck here are some ideas to bear in mind:

- Ravi cannot read or write so this may influence how Raj communicates and forms an agreed plan
- Agreed plan has to be steps towards a final goal (don't forget reinforcements)
- The agreed plan would have a much higher success rate if it covers a short time span of maybe two weeks or so
- There is a need to be honest and work hard on validation, even if Ravi insists that he can be a lawyer soon it serves no value to give in and agree to feel better
- Ravi may need a mentor to help him come to terms with his short term goals which are not going to happen
- It is interesting to consider what Ravi's abilities are – could he have been considered or perceived as bright if he had always been to school. Is 'bright' an appropriate term for use here?
- The observers (the Reflective Practice group) need to find out how the experience felt for both Ravi and Raj

DIVYA FINDS LOVE (BUT DOES SHE WANT IT?)

Manjula is a girl who has had an impoverished life and nobody previously has had much time or attention for her. The impact of Divya becoming her mentor has been overwhelming. Manjula can think of nothing else during her waking hours. Here are some ideas if you need them, but none are compulsory:

- The agreed plan needs clear time management expectations built in, eg, we will meet every Saturday afternoon and you can ring me midweek
- Divya needs to have an honest talk without telling off and without losing Manjula (validation, validation and validation)
- Divya will have to consider what it means for an adolescent to be in love, even if it is inappropriate. The Reflective Practice group may be able to help
- This sort of situation may be no problem at all for some mentors but on the other hand it may be really quite difficult for others. This could be an interesting discussion at the Reflective Practice group
- Don't forget that Manjula and Divya still need an agreed plan for their mentoring. It is easy to concentrate only on the time management problem and forget about the rest of mentoring.
- There is a need for lots of positive reinforcement in this situation

RAVI AND RAJ

Ravi describes feeling low and depressed. This can be an anxious time for mentors and indeed Raj is feeling anxious. Ravi describes a situation where his life as he knew it had been turned up-side-down when the police arrived at the construction site where he was illegally working with his family. After being rescued by the police Ravi was cared for in a shelter. Ravi does not feel as though he has been rescued, he feels imprisoned. Ravi feels unable to control his life and environment and also feels bereaved as he feels he has lost his family forever. This has produced a situation where Ravi feels overwhelmed and unable to feel that there is a way forward. When adolescents are in this sort of situation they often just give up trying to manage and grind to a halt. This feels like despair and depression. This is the sort of role play where it may be a good idea to have a go and then talk to the observers and try again.

ROLE PLAY 2

Life now has a meaning for Manjula – she has a mentor called Divya. Divya is nice, Divya is attractive, Divya really cares about me, in fact Divya is the most beautiful person in the world. Manjula has decided that she would like to meet Divya every day after work and ring her at breakfast and lunch time. Manjula thinks about Divya most of the day and her friend says that she has a crush on Divya. Manjula is not sure what a crush is but she is going to ask Divya if she can move into her apartment with her and they could live together.

Divya now meets with Manjula but she has no idea how Manjula feels. When this meeting is finished the observers can discuss how it was for everyone. This could be very similar to a Reflective Practice group.



ROLE PLAY 3

Ravi feels low. He describes this as feeling depressed, not wanting to get up in the mornings, losing energy and feeling that everything he does is a failure. Ravi lives in a shelter where he is unhappy. Before Ravi lived in the shelter he worked on a construction site with his family but the police turned up and he was under age to work.



Ravi's family stayed on the construction site which is 20 kilometres away. Ravi has turned up to meet Raj – but really what is the point? This is obviously a difficult session for Raj, he may need some help from the observers during Reflective Practice.

ROLE PLAY 4

It's Wednesday evening which is meeting night. Divya and Manjula have had some really good sessions. Divya feels that Manjula has moved from a timid girl to a much more confident young woman with a good looking future. Divya has enjoyed the sessions and feels excited that progress has been so good. In fact, Divya is surprised what a positive effect these sessions have had on herself. Just as Divya is about to leave the office she gets a phone call from Manjula. Manjula cannot be at the session as she has some news. Manjula has had to move away to another town to help in her uncle's shop and will be there for at least a year.



Manjula wanted to let Divya know so that she would not worry and to say goodbye. This feels to Divya that all her work has been wasted and it is a bad move for Manjula. This upsets Divya more than she expects and she feels like crying. When the role play is completed, Divya is going to need her friends at the Reflective Practice group. It may be that the Reflective Practice group can see this rather more positively than Divya.

ROLE PLAY 5

Ravi has had some good sessions with Raj, he has been able to improve his English and is thinking about what to do when he leaves school in about 18 months. Ravi's family live in a slum, it has no running water and not too much food to eat. Ravi's father is a rubbish collector and his mother is a maid. Ravi has two brothers who live at home. It's been a good session but towards the end of the session Ravi tells Raj that his parents want to ask him for money. Ravi says that they need 4000 rupees to pay bills.



Raj has to think quite quickly and does not want to lose the progress that they have made or jeopardise future sessions. The observers who will be the Reflective Practice group need to bear in mind that there may be various different views concerning this session. Raj also needs to bear in mind that the decision of how to move forward is his even if he does not agree with the group. On the other hand the Reflective Practice group may have some good ideas to think about.

MANJULA SAYS GOODBYE

Mentoring sessions have been a great success and Divya has seen Manjula grow into a confident young woman with a good future. The message from Manjula is a great shock to Divya and has made Divya realise that she is quite close to Manjula. Divya now feels that mentoring was a waste of time and may feel rather angry as well as sad with the situation thinking to herself 'what was the point of all that work'? Ideas for discussion:

- What would Manjula have done before mentoring and her relationship with Divya? Was the phone call a sign that Manjula had really developed and was able and wanted to make the call? Was the phone call a sign of mentoring success. Previously she may have just disappeared – there could be quite a discussion here
- Was Divya too close to Manjula, or is it the task of the mentor to be able to hold the emotions at times like this?
- Would an agreed plan have been useful even in a long term relationship? Don't forget an agreed plan can be re-made every few weeks or months so that goals are constantly met. In this case it may have helped both Manjula and Divya

RAVI NEEDS SOME MONEY

This is a common issue in mentoring and a difficult one to manage. It is generally not a good idea for a mentor to be giving money to mentees or their families. But of course there can be no hard and fast rules. Giving money can change the mentee/mentor relationship and create obligations that are difficult to manage. Some of the mentee's families can see that a mentor is a person who is available for money supply and have little interest in mentoring. This can create problems for Ravi who may feel that asking for money (for his family) will jeopardise sessions that he enjoys and is progressing well in.

- Should Ravi say that it is not his role to give money?
- If Raj makes it clear that it is not his role to give money will this free Ravi up to engage in sessions?
- Should Raj give money but make it clear that it is just this once?
- Depending on what money is for is it Raj's role to help Ravi find a source, eg for a college course?
- Using validation think about what it is like to be sent out to get money, maybe Ravi has been expected to beg on the streets previously

MANJULA HAS SOME NEWS

It is sometimes difficult to believe what some of our mentees have to carry with them in their everyday lives. This role play is describing a situation that a previous mentor brought to Reflective Practice. Divya had felt that mentoring was not really a success as Manjula only seemed to use the sessions as a trip out to the coffee stall and had little to talk about apart from friends and pop stars. But this role play demonstrates that Manjula had built up confidence and trust in Divya which came out at this time of need.

It is interesting that this dramatic information came out after chatting for half an hour or so over coffee. Divya was shocked to hear this information, especially as these events had only just happened.

One of the tasks for the role play is to consider why Manjula seemed to get so little attention even though the events were so dramatic. Again here are some ideas for the group should you need them:

- The level of distress among Manjula's peers is very high. This means that Manjula's news is average for this group as they often carry heavy burdens of loss and abuse
- When children live in institutions there are often low levels of staff looking after high numbers of children. This means that 'good' children are those who do not make a fuss and this is rewarded. It could be seen that there are high levels of positive reinforcement for not showing emotions and demanding attention

- Due to developmental confusion Manjula may not have the skills to recognise and manage her emotions and feelings
- Is it a good idea for Divya to show how shocked she is?
- Is Manjula in shock after a traumatic event?
- Would you want Manjula to express some of her emotions during the session?
- Does Divya have a role concerning Manjula's young brother?
- Think about validation and how that could contribute to the session

Manjula's example is very much one that may generate lots of different views and opinions. Often during the course it has been said that there are often no right or wrong answers as we are all different. This role play will probably generate various views as to how to deal with the situation.

ROLE PLAY 6

Manjula meets with Divya, they have been meeting for about 5 months every week or so. Manjula lives in a shelter run by Sisters, but has a family who live in a slum. Divya feels that the mentoring has not been that successful. Manjula talks about her friends and pop stars mainly. Manjula enjoys going out for a coffee and chatting with Divya. Today's session started as usual and they have been chatting for about half an hour. At this point Manjula says in a fairly matter of fact way that her father was murdered last week and that her mother has been accused of doing it. Manjula went on to say that she went home yesterday and snatched her small brother as she felt he may be in danger and took him back to the shelter.

Manjula told the Sisters and her friends about what had happened and they seemed to take little notice. At this point Divya is feeling shocked that such a thing could happen and be reported in such a matter of fact way. In a way this is not a role play as it was a situation that one of the



previous mentors brought to Reflective Practice. The observers may have quite a task here as the Reflective Practice group. Think about why Manjula seemed to get so little attention at the shelter, what support may Divya need, and perhaps an action plan.

All of these role plays are based on real accounts from previous mentors. None of them were easy or simple. Hopefully they will help to build up your confidence to be a successful mentor.

Congratulations on completing the Dream Mentoring Course and good luck for your future mentoring.

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