

Observations on Family B (September 2019)

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As a school family worker I have known the family for 4 years, since 2015. I have observed a radical change over the last 18 months in the overall wellbeing of the family resulting in a significant change in the behaviour, happiness, physical and mental health and academic attainment of the children. Some of this has come through Mum making changes to her parenting: installing a better routine and creating family time together, helping her children manage their anger and also managing her own anger better, more consistent boundaries, using praise and rewards to encourage and motivate.

However none of this could have been achieved without the input Mum has received from a couple of mental health charities, in particular A Slice of Happiness. Mum had mental health difficulties for much of her life and was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She was on medication and under the Community Mental Health Team. Since doing the Slice of Happiness course she is so much more positive about life, able to appreciate beauty in nature, she feels hope for the first time, she is less anxious, she is enjoying her children and is much less stressed about them, she is less isolated and beginning to build relationships in the community. She has come off her medication, is no longer under the mental health team and her bipolar is said to be in remission. Mum had a number of worrying physical health concerns, but these are much better.

Changes in the Children

All of the children are happier, less anxious, having fewer or virtually no outbursts, getting on better, enjoying family time and are more helpful around the house.

Child 2, boy now age 11 (the focus of my support)

Before: There were concerns about his behaviour at school and at home, he was fidgety, impulsive and had difficulty listening to instructions; he got into fights; at home there were frequent angry outbursts and big meltdowns, he could be nasty and would lash out towards his mum and siblings and also trash his room. There were worrying signs of poor mental health – he was anxious, had frequent tummy aches, he was clingy to Mum and could not cope if eg she walked a short distance away, still within sight, to talk to someone; he had a prolonged ritual of waving

goodbye to Mum when he went into school; he had to be in school 10 minutes early or got very upset; he was very needy. Attendance was poor and academically he was 2-3 years behind; Mum and school thought there might be ADHD or specific learning difficulties and asked for an assessment. He had been referred to CAMHS and Step 2 but both declined the case, as they did not feel there was enough evidence of either mental health concerns or of ADHD.

Now: As Mum has become more positive and happier herself and has parented in a more positive manner, there has been a complete change in her son. The tantrums reduced and then disappeared; there are even hardly any arguments; he will follow instructions; he plays nicely with his siblings; he is less anxious and no longer clingy. The obsessive tendencies about time, waving etc have completely disappeared. He is now a pleasant smiley boy in school who is well behaved and gets on with his peers; he is completing homework; his academic levels have shot up, he is now performing at age-related expected levels, he has even got top marks for some of his work and did well in his Year 6 SATs; there are no longer any concerns about ADHD or learning difficulties.

Child 1, girl now age 14 – much less anxious, no longer resents her brother and gets on well with him, physical health much better (no longer fainting, improved vision)

Child 3, boy now age 4 – he had very serious constipation and would withhold, he was under a

consultant. These problems have totally gone. He was a little unsettled at nursery but is now very happy in school.