

Case Study

Age: 8 years
Gender: Female
School: H

Presenting Problem

Mum diagnosed with an aggressive form of Breast Cancer.

P is a sensitive little girl who was happy and confident before the diagnosis. There was a marked change in her demeanour and a lack of ability to cope with friendships in school. P did not want to talk to staff in school about Mums diagnosis or subsequent upheaval in the family home due to Mums hospital appointments and fatigue after her treatment of chemotherapy.

Intervention

Non-directive Person Centred Therapy, with the counsellor being led by the child. This involved an hour a week of time to talk about how it felt for P to have her Mum unwell for periods of time over several months. Therapy began in February 2016 and is ongoing until Christmas when the treatment and subsequent surgery will be finished.

During the Sessions Topics Covered

P was able to verbally express the upset to the household in general whilst Mum was unable to do the School runs and attend various after school clubs with P and her brother. There was often confusion for P around who would pick her up from school. Who would cook the dinner and take care of the family? Her anxiety manifested itself in a lack of tolerance for some of her peers.

I introduced art and craft activities which P used as a tool to express her love for her Mum in a non-verbal context. We then did some work around 'I' language as a way for P to express how she was feeling about various aspects of her life in an assertive way; a way that people would listen to. This way of expressing herself really had an impact on P as she felt more confident about letting peers and family members know how she was feeling about various situations.

Using art and craft is a very useful tool to help children really express their fears and anxieties in a gentle and non-verbal context allowing them to be drawn naturally to materials that allow free expression in a creative way, that is not interpreted by the counsellor, but may be discussed if the child initiates the discussion.

Outcome / Impact

The impact on P has been very encouraging. She has developed a better relationship with some of her troublesome peers; she uses 'I' language to help herself to be heard; she is far more confident in the classroom, being able to put her hand up and answer questions. She says she feels happier in general and appears to be getting her needs met in a more confident and assertive way.

P has truly embraced the concept of counselling and has readily engaged in all aspects of our relationship. She is a willing and chatty participant and believes that the intervention has been beneficial.