



Case Story

Giving some assurance: How can I help my son fit into school and feel happy?



This is Josh recently waiting to go to school on a no-uniforms day!

by Di Garrison Parent, Warminster, Wiltshire, UK
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Summary

Josh's mother had felt his increasing unhappiness was related to his mixed ethnicity in a largely white school, as well as in an area of the country with little mixed ethnicity. Perhaps out of loyalty to her and wishing to protect the feelings of his family system, Josh appeared to have been quite happy to blame the school, for whom he naturally had less loyalty.

His mother's original ideas might have had some basis in truth, but as the Constellation progressed, the real reasons for Josh's unhappiness were sensed very strongly amongst the representatives and his mother comments on the phenomenological power of the experience. This new realisation helped both the family and school to understand Josh's behaviour

What was the issue I was facing?

I was having issues with my nine year old son, Josh. He was miserable and would fly off the handle for no obvious reason. He talked of not fitting in at school and not being liked, or picked on. He would get upset and cry.

At first I thought the issue was about him not belonging, about not being able to identify with his peers, perhaps due to his colour. He was obviously feeling unsafe and insecure and he seemed cross and obstructive a lot of the time.

There was a little rage bubbling beneath the surface all the time, and at home it would erupt. There was always the fear that it might erupt elsewhere.

What things did I try?

I spoke to my son's Head Teacher – our school was piloting **ecl** at the time – and at her suggestion, we attended a Dissolving Barriers to Learning workshop together. I was happy to try anything that would help him and I'd seen the Place People used in the classroom.

On the day, it was nerve-racking to talk about my issue in front of other people. Some of Judith's initial insights were difficult to hear, but very soon I was drawn into the constellation. It's amazing how physical the response was. I felt wrapped in a warm fog and could hear the words, whilst somehow also being detached from it.

I was struck by the energy of the man representing my son and the energy of the constellation, which seemed to drive the whole process. It was far less verbal than I had imagined, far more intuitive, almost telepathic. And the feelings were so strong and compelling, that still now I feel quite emotional just thinking about it.

What I learnt and the insights I got

What the constellation began to reveal was that the core issue was not one of colour or race or not belonging, but more to do with my asthma – specifically the life-threatening nature of it. I'd

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tried to avoid the subject with Josh and almost hide it, but I saw how Josh needed me to open up about it. I realised the importance of acknowledging it as a real issue (not brush it away) and of being honest with my boys and husband about having a life threatening condition. In such a public place, I discovered it's ok to say it. The world didn't stop spinning on its axis!

It also helped me to see that I 'needed' people more than I'd realised. I got strength from other people present and felt very supported by people I didn't know and may never meet again.

I am clear that a lot of Josh's behaviour was linked to how I dealt with my illness and my feelings of insecurity surrounding race and ethnicity, having not acknowledged them with Josh or for Josh or even by me to myself. It was acknowledged and supported at the workshop.

How do these insights affect what I'm now doing and what difference is this making?

Following the workshop, I had another period of illness. It was a very, very different experience that time. I was able to acknowledge being ill by being ill for longer. I didn't have to jump up and prove I was still alive. My behaviour made all the difference. When Josh asked: 'Are you all right? Do you need anything?' I felt I could say 'Yes I need this..' or 'Come and give me a cuddle'. I no longer hid my nebuliser under the pillow. I'd ask one of the boys to get it for me and then used it downstairs! Josh loved it. He loved being helpful and would always try to do things for me.

Now that I can be more honest about my illness with my children, we talk about other issues as well, like why we do things. This has brought to light other issues that I recognise as coming from me. I also discuss things more with my husband, how we perceive an issue and how it manifests, so we have more of a shared parenting.

Trying to be a good mum, a professional and cope with my condition, I just kept moving. Now I see that it's the stopping still that counts. I feel like a different person than I did this time last year. If I look back there I can see me going through quite a dark tunnel, but now I feel that I'm through it – and I can go wherever I want to go.

Words of Appreciation

I'd particularly like to thank Val Culff, the Head of Crockerton primary school, who has encouraged and supported me on my journey – helping me to find a new way of being with my boys and also with the writing of my story.

I also want to pay tribute to my son Josh, who is loving and kind. I am so grateful we can find ways through difficulties together.