

SEND NEWS

Issue 1 - Summer 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to the first edition of SEND News. I can't believe I've been here half a term already; we have been really busy in the SEND department streamlining our systems and files and planning and preparing for the introduction of new groups and interventions across the school. A huge thank you to all the parents who turned up to the dyslexia event. We will be hosting another event next half term focusing on ADHD.

In this edition of SEND News, we will be learning about anxiety in children and will find out about one of our new strategies to support children's mental health and wellbeing the 'Zones of Regulation'. We will also be talking about our upcoming SEND events and date and how you could get involved in shaping SEND support at Alameda moving forward. If you have any questions or comments on any of the issues raised, please don't hesitate to contact me on the details below.

Esther Horner – SENDCo

SEND Parent Forum

Would you be interested in joining a parent forum and influencing SEND policy and practice at Alameda school? Then please email me and I will add you to our list.



Jargon Buster

Ever wondered what on Earth your SENCo is talking about? This feature will try to decode some of the language of SEND.

SEMHD: Social, Emotional, Mental Health Difficulties.

SLCN: Speech Language and Communication Needs.

Summer Feature - Anxiety in Children

Every issue we will focus on an aspect of SEND for our feature. As we live in stressful times, I thought we would begin with understanding anxiety. Just like adults, children and young people feel worried and anxious at times. But if your child's anxiety is starting to affect their wellbeing, they may need some help.

What makes children anxious? Children can feel anxious about different things at different ages. Many of these worries are a normal part of growing up. From the age of around 6 months to 3 years it's very common for young children to have separation anxiety. They may become clingy and cry when separated from their parents or carers. This is a normal stage in a child's development and should stop at around age 2 to 3.

It's also common for pre-school-age children to develop specific fears or phobias. Common fears in early childhood include animals, insects, storms, heights, water, blood, and the dark. These fears usually go away gradually on their own. There may also be other times in a child's life when they feel anxious. For example, many children feel anxious when going to a new school or before tests and exams. Some children feel shy in social situations and may need support with this.

When is anxiety a problem for children?

Anxiety becomes a problem for children when it starts to get in the way of their everyday life and/or beyond the age where such things should have resolved. If you go into any school at exam time, all the children will be anxious, but some may be so anxious that they don't manage



to get to school that morning. Severe anxiety like this can harm children's mental and emotional wellbeing, affecting their self-esteem and confidence. They may become withdrawn and go to great lengths to avoid things or situations that make them feel anxious.

What are the signs of anxiety in children?

When young children feel anxious, they cannot always understand or express what they are feeling. You may notice that they:

- become irritable, tearful or clingy
- have difficulty sleeping
- wake in the night
- start wetting the bed
- have bad dreams

In older children you may notice that they:

- lack confidence to try new things or seem unable to face simple, everyday challenges
- find it hard to concentrate
- have problems with sleeping or eating
- have angry outbursts
- have a lot of negative thoughts, or keep thinking that bad things are going to happen
- start avoiding everyday activities, such as seeing friends, going out in public or going to school

Why is my child anxious?

Some children are more likely to have worries and anxiety than others. Children often find change difficult and may become anxious following a house move or when starting a new school. Children who have had a distressing or traumatic experience, such as a car accident or house fire, may suffer from anxiety afterwards. Family arguments and conflict can also make children feel insecure and anxious. Teenagers are more likely to suffer with social anxiety than other age groups, avoiding social gatherings or making excuses to get out of them.

How to help an anxious child

If a child is experiencing anxiety, there are things that parents and carers can do to help. First and foremost, it's important to talk to your child about their anxiety or worries. Reassure them and show them you understand how they feel. If your child is old enough, it may help to explain what anxiety is and the physical effects it has on our bodies. It may be helpful to describe anxiety as being like a wave that builds up and then ebbs away again. As well as talking to your child about their worries and anxiety, it's important to help them find solutions. For example, if your child is worried about going to a sleepover, it is natural to want to tell them not to go. However, this could mean your child feels that their anxiety will stop them from doing things. It's better to recognise their anxiety and suggest solutions to help them, so they can go to the sleepover with a plan in place.

Other ways to ease anxiety in children

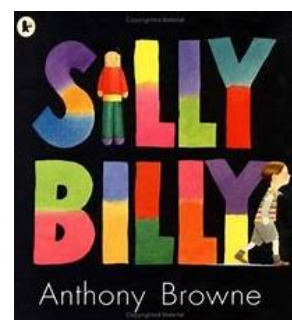
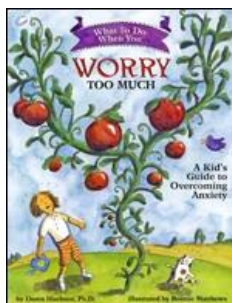
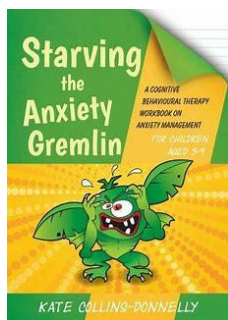
- teach your child to recognise signs of anxiety in themselves
- encourage your child to manage their anxiety and ask for help when they need it
- children of all ages find routines reassuring, so try to stick to regular daily routines where possible
- if your child is anxious because of distressing events, such as a bereavement or separation, look for books or films that will help them to understand their feelings



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- if you know a change, such as a house move, is coming up, prepare your child by talking to them about what is going to happen and why
- try not to become overprotective or anxious yourself as this will lead create an anxiety cycle between you and your child.
- practice simple relaxation techniques with your child, such as taking 3 deep, slow breaths, breathing in for a count of 3 and out for 3. You'll find more guidance for helping children with anxiety on the Young Minds website
- distraction can be helpful for young children. For example, if they are anxious about going to nursery, play games on the way there, such as seeing who can spot the most red cars
- turn an empty tissue box into a "worry" box. Get your child to write about or draw their worries and "post" them into the box. Then you can sort through the box together at the end of the day or week
- speak to your GP, your child's class teacher, or the pastoral team at Alameda.

Book Recommendations:



Emotional Literacy - The Zones of Regulation

Emotional literacy is so important for children -and adults- it involves being able to recognise and name emotions and develop a personal toolkit for dealing with them.

The Zones of Regulation is an internationally renowned emotional literacy intervention which helps children to manage difficult emotions, known as 'self-regulation'. Self-regulation can go by many names such as 'self-control', 'impulse management' and 'self-management'. From time to time, all of us (including adults) find it hard to manage strong feelings such as worry, anger, restlessness, fear or tiredness, and this stops us from getting on with our day effectively. Children who feel these emotions often find it hard to learn and concentrate in school. The Zones of Regulation aims to teach children strategies to help them cope with these feelings so they can get back to feeling calm and ready to learn. Children are taught to:

- Recognise when they are in the different Zones and learn how to change or stay in the Zone they are in.
- Increase their emotional vocabulary so they can explain how they are feeling.
- Recognise when other people are in different Zones, thus developing better empathy.
- Develop an insight into what might make them move into the different Zones.
- Understand that emotions, sensory experiences such as lack of sleep or hunger and their environment might influence which Zone they are in.



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- Develop problem-solving skills and resilience
- Identify a range of calming and alerting strategies that support them (known as their personal 'toolkit').

What are the different Zones?

Blue Zone: low level of arousal; not ready to learn; feels sad, sick, tired, bored, moving slowly.

Green Zone: calm state of alertness; optimal level to learn; feels happy, calm, feeling okay, focused.

Yellow Zone: heightened state of alertness; elevated emotions; has some control; feels frustrated, worried, silly/wiggly, excited, loss of some control.

Red Zone: heightened state of alertness and intense emotions; not an optimal level for learning; out of control; feels mad/angry, terrified, yelling/hitting, elated, out of control.

The ZONES of Regulation®

			
BLUE ZONE Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	GREEN ZONE Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	YELLOW ZONE Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	RED ZONE Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control

We will teach the children that everyone experiences all of the Zones. The Red and Yellow zones are not 'bad' or 'naughty' Zones. All of the Zones are expected at one time or another. We will show them that the Blue Zone, for example, is helpful when you are trying to fall asleep.

How will my child learn about the Zones of Regulation?

We will be introducing the Zones through interventions in Learning Support and introducing it in reflections times. We will also be using the Zones language as part of daily school life so all SEND staff will be referring to them. Some children might prefer not to use the 'Zones language' but label the emotions directly - this is fine!

How can you help your child use The Zones of Regulation at home?

- Identify your own feelings using Zones language in front of your child (e.g.: "I'm frustrated. I think I am in the Yellow Zone.")
- Talk about what tool you will use to be in the appropriate Zone (e.g.: "I need to take four deep breaths to help get me back to the Green Zone.")
- At times, wonder which Zone your child is in. Or, discuss which Zone a character in a film / book might be in. (e.g.: "You look sleepy. Are you in the Blue Zone?")

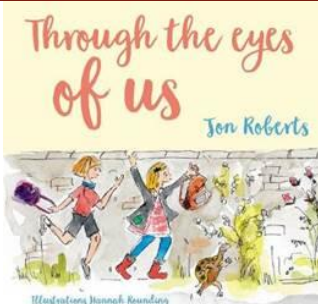
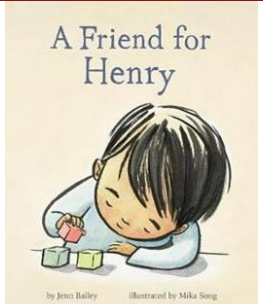
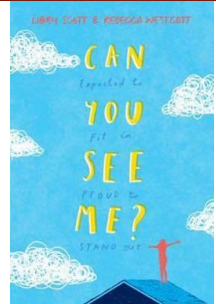


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- Engage your child in discussion around Zones when they are in the Red Zone is unlikely to be effective. You need to be discussing the different Zones and tools they can use when they are more regulated / calm.
- Teach your child which tools they can use. (eg: "It's time for bed. Let's read a book together in the comfy chair to get you in the Blue Zone.")
- Regular Check-ins. "How are you feeling now?" and "How can you get back to Green?"
- It is important to remember to show the children how you use tools to get back to the green zones. You might say "I am going to make myself a cup of tea and do some breathing exercises because I am in the blue zone" and afterwards tell your child how using those tools helped you get back to the green zone.
- Share how their behaviour is affecting your Zone. For example, if they are in the Green Zone, you could comment that their behaviour is also helping you feel happy / go into the Green Zone.
- Put up and reference the Zones visuals and tools in your home.
- Praise and encourage your child when they share which Zone they are in.

Where can I find out more about the Zones of Regulation? See 'Useful Websites' below 😊

Book Recommendations - Autism Fiction Books

			
Through the Eyes of Us by Jon Roberts Age 3- 6 Kya and Martha are like 'two different colours sitting on a beautiful rainbow'. They are both on the autistic spectrum, but this certainly does not mean that they are the same.	A Friend for Henry Author: Jenn Bailey Illustrator: Mika Song Age 5-8 Henry's keen to make friends in his class. However, it's proving a bit of a challenge and he's getting increasingly frustrated with his peers.	Anything But Typical by Nora Raleigh Baskin Age 10+ Jason is 12 and on the autistic spectrum. The book is written from his own perspective, in the form of a series of observations, accounts and comments, as he tries to adjust to fit in with the 'neurotypicals' around him.	Can You See Me? by Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott Age 9-11 Tally knows she's different: she's autistic, meaning she sees and feels everything differently to her friends and family. Now, as she enters this new stage in her life, she is painfully aware of the way she is perceived and feeling an almost unbearable pressure to try to fit in. But what exactly are the rules for being "normal"?



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Useful websites for parents of children with SEND

- for information on what is available in Bedfordshire for children and young people with SEND:

<https://localoffer.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/kb5/centralbedfordshire/directory/home.page>

Advice on young people's mental health:

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Zones of Regulation Information:

www.zonesofregulation.com

www.weareteachers.com/zones-of-regulation-activities

<https://www.theottoolbox.com/?s=zones+of+regulation>

