

Noticing the Inner Life of a Child

| What kinds of changes/ behaviours can we look for? | What might those behaviours show us about a child's inner life? | What kinds of beliefs and feelings might they be expressing? | * How do I help them notice this? |
|---|--|--|--|
| Slowing down, less out of seat, not rushing, pausing before responding, less impulsive. | Child is able to think before he reacts. He has some awareness of himself, how his actions relate to his feelings. | "I can recognize my feelings. I am aware that others can give them meaning. I can use language to think about them." | "I noticed how much self-control you had. You took your time and thought about that." |
| Listening to others more and interrupting less, less conflict with others, able to see another's point of view. | Child is able to recognize thoughts and feelings in others. He can more accurately identify their intentions. | "I don't feel I need to defend myself. I can take another person's perspective." | "You worked well with the group. You listened to what others said. You were patient when it looked like the others didn't understand you." |
| Body language and expression is mirroring others around them | Child is able to sense the emotional tone of others and uses that to help self-regulate. | "I feel peaceful when I am with others." | "I noticed you were working just like the others, sitting so still. I wonder if you had a calm feeling being close to the other children?" |
| Showing emotions you may not have seen before, e.g. real joy. | Child is enjoying the connection they feel with others. He is not flooded with shame or rage. | "I am learning to share my feelings with others. This allows me to enjoy making others happy." | "When you were playing that game with me, you seemed to be really happy. I felt that happiness as well." |
| Allowing curiosity to spark interest and learning. | Child trusts a key adult. This feeling of safety allows him to explore with more confidence. | "This adult won't make me feel stupid. I can tolerate not knowing, not having to be in control." | "I noticed you seemed keen to learn about... Thank you for letting me help you." |
| Smiling, looking thoughtful when praised; accepting what is said. | Child is feeling pride. He is enjoying the approval of others. | "I trust you that your approval of me is genuine." | "I noticed you smiled when you showed me your work. Maybe you feel pleased with yourself." |
| Focused, less vigilant and less distracted. | Child is feeling more secure and less anxious. | "This adult can be trusted to be competent to understand my needs. The world feels more predictable and safer." | "When I looked at you today, you were working so hard, you didn't notice I was looking at you." |

*These comments are not intended as a way of praising a young person. They are designed to show curiosity and acceptance of a young persons' inner life. The way the comments are made may be almost as important as the content of what is said. Body language and voice should convey measured curiosity.

First published within 'Wondering Aloud - Building Support for Young People who are in Crisis' www.saia.org.uk/blog May 2016

© 2016 David Woodier, Support Teacher, Inclusion Base, North Lanarkshire. Permission granted to reproduce for personal and educational use only. Copyright notice must remain intact.