

Grass Roots Newsletter



Hello February!

Welcome to our February newsletter. As we move through the winter months, we are focusing our hearts and minds on Emotional Wellbeing. Parenting children under five is a journey of incredible highs and challenging lows. When our little ones experience "big feelings," it can feel overwhelming for us, too. This month, we want to celebrate the power of compassionate parenting. We will explore how setting firm, loving boundaries and meeting our children with empathy doesn't just make daily life smoother—it builds a foundation of security and trust that lasts a lifetime.

Boundaries as a Love Language ❤️

This February, we are exploring the heart of the home: the emotional bond between parent and child. We often think of "boundaries" as rules or restrictions, but in the early years, a boundary is actually a form of emotional safety.

The "Why" Behind the Outburst

When a child pushes a boundary—whether it's refusing to get in the car seat or throwing a toy—they aren't "being bad." They are asking: "Are you still in charge? Am I safe? What happens when I feel this big, scary anger?" When we hold the boundary firmly but with total compassion, we answer those questions with a resounding "Yes, you are safe."

Meeting the Need, Not the Behaviour

Beneath every "naughty" behaviour is an unmet need. A child who is hitting might be overstimulated; a child who is "answering back" might be seeking a sense of power or autonomy.

- **Pause and Observe:** Before reacting to the behaviour, try to see the emotion. "I see you are having a really hard time stopping this game."
- **Hold the Line, Hold the Child:** You can say "No" to the behaviour while saying "Yes" to the emotion. For example: "I can't let you hit, but I can see you are very angry. It's okay to be angry. I'm right here with you."

The Compassion Connection

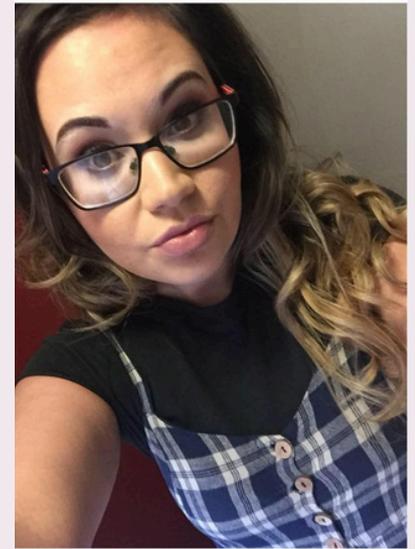
Meeting a child with compassion doesn't mean being "soft" or letting them do whatever they want. It means being their co-regulator. A toddler's brain isn't physically capable of calming itself down yet; they need to "borrow" your calm nervous system to find their way back to peace.

By staying a "calm anchor" during their emotional storm, you are teaching them that emotions aren't something to be feared or suppressed—they are something we navigate together.



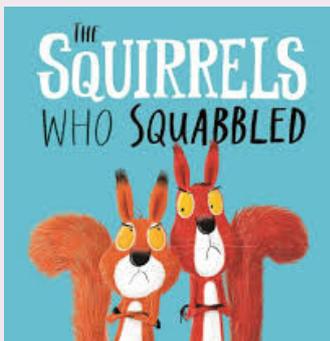
Practitioner Spotlight:

This month, we would like to introduce Jess! Jess's journey with us is a testament to dedication and professional growth. Starting as a Practitioner, she developed a deep, hands-on understanding of our core values and daily operations. Today, as a Duty manager and deputy SENCO, she combines that frontline experience with exceptional leadership. Her organisational skills are the engine room of our business, ensuring that every child's needs are met with kindness and care.



Event Calendar:

- Family SEND support session @ Grass Roots Family Centre February - CANCELLED.
- We break up for February Half Term on Friday Friday 13th February and we return on Monday 23rd February.



Community News:

- Check out Grass Roots Family CIC facebook page for community events <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086769567112>
- 50 things to do before you are 5 has events on their website <https://calderdale.50thingstodo.org/app/os#!/welcome>
- Support Noa's Place, a vision of one of our nursery's parents - www.noasplace.org.uk

Book Review:

The Squirrels Who Squabbled by Rachel Bright

Written by the brilliant UK author Rachel Bright and illustrated by Jim Field, this is a hilarious rhyming story about two squirrels, Cyril and Bruce, who both want the very last pinecone of the season.

Why we love it for February:

- **Managing Impulses:** Both squirrels are driven by "want" and "need," leading to a high-speed chase and a lot of big, grumbly emotions. It's a great way to show children what happens when our "inner monster" takes over.
- **The Power of Connection:** By the end of the story, the squirrels realize that shouting and fighting didn't get them what they wanted—but working together and sharing did.





Curriculum Focus: Nurturing Emotional Intelligence

We have some very exciting news to share! This term, Lucy and Caitlin have successfully completed their professional Emotion Coaching Training. They are now our resident experts and will be busy disseminating this knowledge to our entire team over the coming weeks.

What is Emotion Coaching? It is a research-based technique that helps children understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur, and how to handle them.

- **The Process:** Instead of dismissing a tantrum or simply saying "stop crying," we "coach" the child through the moment. We Label the feeling ("I can see you're feeling really frustrated because the tower fell"), Validate it ("It's okay to feel cross when things don't go right"), and then, once the child is calm, we Problem-Solve together.
- **The Goal:** This approach builds high emotional intelligence and helps children find their internal "calm" much faster. It transforms a difficult moment into a powerful teaching opportunity.

A Community of Support: Staff and Families A huge part of this new focus is ensuring that the adults—both our staff and you as parents—feel just as supported as the children. We recognise that "you cannot pour from an empty cup."

We are also extending this emphasis to our families. We want the nursery to be a place where you can share your parenting "wobbles" without judgment. Whether it's a quick chat at the door or a more in-depth discussion about a specific challenge at home, we are here to walk alongside you. By supporting the emotional wellbeing of the adults, we create a calm, regulated "village" around the children, ensuring they feel safe, heard, and loved in every environment they inhabit.



? Q&A: Everything feels like a battle lately—getting dressed, leaving the park, or even sitting at the table. How can I stay compassionate when I'm in a rush?

A: These struggles are often a sign of healthy development—your child is discovering their own "will" and independence! To maintain compassion while staying on schedule, try The Power of Two Choices. Instead of giving a command, give an option: "Do you want to hop to the car like a bunny or stomp like a dinosaur?" or "Do you want the blue bowl or the green bowl?" This gives the child a sense of agency and control, which often stops a power struggle before it even begins.



Recipe Corner: "Choose-Your-Own" Rainbow Salad

Mealtime friction often happens when children feel they have no say in what goes onto their plate. A "deconstructed" meal is a great way to lower the tension.

- **The Method:** Instead of serving a mixed salad, put small, separate bowls of brightly coloured ingredients in the middle of the table—sweetcorn (yellow), peppers (red), cucumber (green), and grated carrots (orange).
- **The Benefit:** Let your child "decorate" their own plate using a small spoon. By giving them "agency" (the power to choose), you reduce the pressure to eat and turn dinner into a low-stress, sensory bonding time. It's a simple way to encourage them to try new things at their own pace.



💡 Tips and Tricks: The "10-Minute Reset"

When our children are in the middle of a "big feeling" moment, it can be hard to know what to do. Here are three practical, Emotion Coaching-aligned strategies to help you navigate those tricky times:

1. The "10-Minute Reset" (Special Time)

When the afternoon feels like it's spiralling into chaos, try "Special Time." Set a timer for just 10 minutes and let your child lead the play entirely. Follow their lead, put your phone away, and simply "be" with them. By giving them your undivided attention, you are "filling their emotional cup." Often, children act out when they feel disconnected; this short burst of high-quality connection can lead to much better cooperation for the rest of the evening.

2. The "Pause and Breathe" Technique

Children often "mirror" the energy of the adults around them. If we are stressed and shouting, their nervous system will react in kind. When a meltdown starts, try the 10-second pause. Take a deep breath before you speak. This small gap allows you to move from a place of "reaction" to a place of "response."

- **The Hugging Reset:** If it is safe to do so, offer a "big squeeze." Deep pressure can help ground a child's nervous system and lower their heart rate. If they aren't ready to be touched, simply stay close on the floor and let them know: "I'm right here whenever you're ready for a hug."





Risky Play: Building Emotional Grit

When we hear the term “risky play,” we often think of physical danger, but in early childhood, it is actually about learning to manage uncertainty. Activities like balancing on a low wall, climbing a fallen log, or jumping off a stump are essential for a child’s emotional development. This type of play allows children to experience what we call being “brave-nervous”—that fluttery feeling in the tummy when trying something new.

The Link to Emotional Resilience
By navigating physical challenges, children are practicing how to handle big, uncomfortable emotions in a controlled way. When a child successfully negotiates a climbing frame, they aren’t just building muscle; they are building self-belief. They learn that even if they feel a little bit scared, they can persevere and succeed. This “grit” translates directly to their social lives—a child who trusts their body is often more confident in navigating social boundaries and peer relationships.

Our role is to be a supportive observer. Instead of saying “Be careful!” (which can increase their anxiety), try using open questions like: “I’m right here watching you. How does your body feel on that log? Do you feel balanced?” This helps them trust their own instincts.



Healthy Choices: The Gut-Brain Connection

There is a powerful link between what our children eat and how they manage their emotions. For children aged 0–4, their bodies are incredibly sensitive to energy shifts, which can directly impact their ability to follow boundaries and stay calm.

- **Avoiding the “Sugar Rollercoaster”:** High-sugar snacks or refined cereals cause a rapid spike in blood glucose, followed by a sharp “crash.” During this crash, children often become irritable, restless, and have a much lower frustration tolerance. This is often when we see the biggest emotional meltdowns.
- **Stable Energy, Stable Mood:** To support a more level emotional keel, focus on “slow-release” complex carbohydrates. Foods like oats, wholemeal toast, bananas, and plain yoghurt provide a steady stream of energy to the brain. This helps children maintain focus and gives them the “brain power” needed to regulate their impulses.
- **Hydration Matters:** Even mild dehydration can cause “brain fog” and grumpiness in both toddlers and adults. Ensure water is always accessible; sometimes a “big emotion” is simply a signal that the body needs a drink to reset.





Online Safety: Managing Transition Tantrums

For children aged 0–4, the “digital world” is incredibly stimulating and dopamine-rich. Because their prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain responsible for impulse control) is still developing, the transition from a high-intensity screen to the “quieter” real world can be physically and emotionally jarring. This is why we often see “digital meltdowns” the moment the device is put away.

- **Visual Timers:** Young children have a limited concept of time, so “five more minutes” can feel meaningless. Use a physical sand timer or a visual clock app. When they can see the time disappearing, the end of the activity becomes a predictable event rather than a sudden shock.
- **The Transition Bridge:** Instead of a hard stop, create a “bridge” to the next activity. This involves having a high-interest toy or a small snack ready the moment the screen goes off. Say: “The tablet is going to sleep now, but look! I’ve put your favorite trains out on the rug for us to build a track.” This gives their brain a new focal point to latch onto, softening the emotional blow of the transition and helping them regulate their disappointment.



Sustainability: Mending the Moment

To parent with compassion and hold firm boundaries, we must sustain our own emotional energy. Sustainability in the home isn’t just about recycling plastic; it’s about making your family rhythms sustainable for you. If we are running on empty, we cannot meet our children’s big emotions with the calm they need.

- **Self-Compassion as Fuel:** You won’t get it right every time. There will be days when the boundary slips or you lose your patience, and that is okay. Sustainability means letting go of the “perfect parent” ideal so you have the energy to keep going.
- **The Power of Repair:** One of the most important things we can teach is that relationships are “repairable.” If you snap or shout, model a healthy relationship by going back to your child once you are calm. Say: “I’m sorry I was a bit loud, I was feeling very stressed. It wasn’t your fault. Let’s have a cuddle and start again.” This teaches children that mistakes aren’t the end of the world—they are a chance to grow and mend. This “relational sustainability” is the most vital life skill we can give them.

