

Case Study:

Encourage awareness of emotions to promote positive behaviour

'Assessment and Learning: involving the learner'. LSC funded project.



The context:

Northern Counties College is a regional provider of specialist education for young people aged 18 - 25 with complex disabilities. The College is part of the Percy Hedley Foundation and is committed to **promoting the rights, needs and aspirations of disabled people through the provision of specialist, high quality services**. One of the main aims of the College is to develop a progression route for students when they leave the College and plan to move into a supported work environment or activity. At Northern Counties College we aim to provide a curriculum that is learner centred, reflects the individual needs of the learner and prepares them to take their place in their community, academically, socially and emotionally. Each student's individual needs, priorities and aspirations provides the starting point for the student's learning programme together with a core curriculum of essential skills for everyday life and work.

The challenge:

Northern Counties College provides a curriculum to young adults to encourage and develop their independent living skills and communication for adult life. For this case study the student we are discussing is a 21 year old man with a severe learning disability and behavioural difficulties. The student found it extremely difficult to control his emotions and cannot explain the problems that made him feel sad, upset even happy. The student was unaware of the meaning of various emotions and how it felt to experience them; this affected his learning and development to progress his independence and the skills he may need for the future, as his presence was becoming far less in class due to not being able to control his emotions and behaviour.

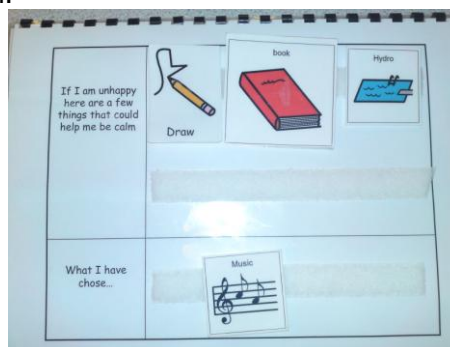
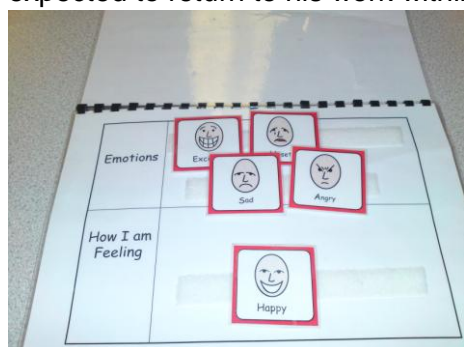
What we did:

We had to take small steps towards supporting the student to understand different emotions and how they feel. We supported the student to also relate certain scenarios to the different emotions e.g. explaining that we feel **happy** when we are on holiday, when we work hard and achieve something we have wanted to work

towards. We feel **sad** when we hear bad news, when other people are sad etc. We used our Communication Programme (Communicate in Print) to create symbol (emotion) cards so the student could identify which symbols and facial expression were happy, sad, excited etc (see example below)

We then introduced these cards, which he quickly memorised, but he needed support to be able to connect the 'happy' symbol to the 'happy' scenario. This was introduced by asking him what he liked and disliked and then he was asked to match his emotion cards to how the things he liked made him feel and how the things he didn't like made him feel. The student began to understand the emotion and how and when to use them.

We then created an Emotions Communication Booklet for him to use and to carry around to each of his sessions (example below), this worked by the student being able to choose an emotion he was feeling when he was becoming agitated in session and he then chose an activity that could overcome this negative behaviour. The activity would then be implemented for a set time of 5 minutes and then he was expected to return to his work within the session.



The outcomes:

The steps taken towards progressing and maintaining the learner's behaviour enabled him to:

- Communicate his needs and make choices.
- Reduce anxieties by using his Emotions Communication Booklet.
- Increase his presence in sessions.
- Promote his independence and skills needed for the future

The impact:

Since introducing the Emotions Communication Booklet the student has been able to express his emotions more clearly so the staff team can help him understand any problems he is experiencing and support him to overcome them. The student has increased his presence in class which is obviously having a positive effect on his learning.



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