

TRANSCRIPT: Promoting positive behaviour

Peter Imray

Watching Sammy as he comes into the room, he's clearly very, very distraught. It would be relatively easy to resolve that difficulty by doing things for Sammy. So, for example, he's only a tiny tot, we could easily have picked him up and plonked him on a chair, that wouldn't have been a problem, or we could have picked him up and walked him out of the room where he wouldn't be disturbing everybody, that's not a problem, but what is Sammy learning by that? Well, Sammy's learning that when he cries adults will do something to him or for him and what we want Sammy to learn is that he needs to take control of his own behaviour.

So it's about teaching him strategies to take control of his own behaviour and what's really important is that we don't force Sammy to do anything against his will. He needs to take control of himself.

This might appear as though Nathan is allowing him to do whatever he likes but, probably, what Sammy wants to do is to be part of the session, but at this stage is not able to cope with what's going on here. The crying is a communication. It's saying, 'I can't cope with this, you have to give me more time', or 'I have to come away from the group a little bit'. If we don't listen to what children are saying, then all we're going to see is an extension of behaviours. What we are actually saying to him is, 'You've got as much time as you need to have. What we are expecting is that you become part of the group eventually'.

And, indeed, in the end, although he did come into the group for a short period of time, he wasn't able to sustain it and he went back and had a very nice cuddle with somebody. It was on the edge of the group. He was watching what was going on and he was reasonably calm. Now, next week, maybe we can get him closer into the group and the following week, maybe closer still, and maybe in three or four weeks time, maybe in three or four months time, he might actually get into the group, and if he gets into the group under his own steam, that's a much, much more important lesson to be learned, rather than, 'You are a child. I am an adult. This is what you must do because I am telling you to do this'.