

Webinar 20

## Shrinking problems with children and families

7:15 pm to 8:30 pm AEST  
Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021

**Emerging  
Minds.**

**National Workforce  
Centre for Child  
Mental Health**



Emerging Minds and MHPN wishes to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands across Australia upon which our webinar presenters and participants are located.

We wish to pay respect to the Elders past, present and future for the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Indigenous Australia.



## Welcome to series three

This is the sixth and final webinar in the third series on child and infant mental health, presented by Emerging Minds and the Mental Health Professionals' Network.

### Series 4 webinar:

- Making children visible in work with parents
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Looking back, to the present, and forward in work with children and parents
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Working with parents of infants and toddlers
- Strategies for case formulation with children

Subscribe to receive your invitation:  
[www.emergingminds.com.au/Subscribe](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/Subscribe)



3

## How to use the platform

To access the interactive features and resources, hover over the colourful icons to the top right of your screen:

-  open the chat box
-  ask the panel a question
-  access resources including the case study, panel biographies and supporting resources
-  open the survey
-  reload the page/webinar room



4

## Learning outcomes

At the webinar's completion, participants will be able to:

- Discuss how to enable children to describe problems in their own terms and in ways that are meaningful and useful for them.
- Outline how to work with children to understand how problems are impacting on their lives and noticing the limits of these impacts so that children's strengths, skills, and know-how can be explored.
- Identify how to ensure problems are understood in the social context of children's lives so that shame is minimised and overcome in the lives of children.
- Discuss how to help children to notice when problems are shrinking, and the skills and know-how they have used to shrink the problem.



5

## Tonight's panel



**Emi Smith**  
Child & Family Partner, SA



**Dr Jamie Lee**  
Psychologist, SA



**Carolyn Markey**  
Family Therapist, SA



**Facilitator:**  
**Chris Dolman**  
Emerging Minds, SA



6

## Child & Family Partner's perspective

### Language



Emi



- Listening to the speech of Ava during conversation allows the practitioner to model both Ava's words and the practitioners words to Ava.
- This helps to demonstrate to Ava that she is being heard and builds a relationship based on trust and shared knowledge.



7

## Child & Family Partner's perspective

### Problems in real time- identifying and skill building



Emi

- Kids often have a range of skills that they already bring to a problem, often not realising they do.
- Ava would already be using skills and strategies to manage this.
- There can be a tension between Monica wanting to fix things and the practitioner allowing Ava to identify and find solutions herself.
- It is important for the practitioner to guide Ava through this process.



8

## Child & Family Partner's perspective

### Monica



Emi



- As a parent, this is a very upsetting issue. It is very hard for a parent to navigate this territory.
- Monica is an important part of this story and her fears for Ava, and her wish to be a part of the solution needs to be heard also.



9

## Child & Family Partner's perspective

### Without shame



Emi

- I think it is important for the practitioner to talk to Ava about shame and guilt.
- This allows Ava to break apart how these two emotions are used by the bully to cause harm.
- This will help Ava work through the conflicted feelings she is having about the issue in the safe space of the practitioner and patient relationship.



10

## Child & Family Partner's perspective

### Language



Emi



- The practitioner can work with Ava to come up with strategies around this issue.
- These tools can then be used in later situations.
- Ava will also be able to identify from this experience the skills and abilities she has already to bring to difficult situations.



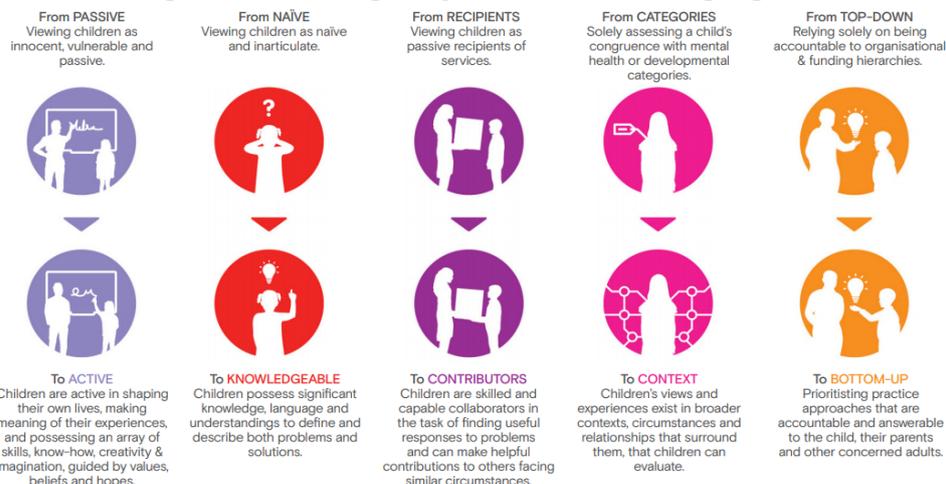
11

## Psychologist's perspective



Jamie

### Welcoming children's agency and acknowledging their context



Source: Emerging Minds online course *Engaging Children* "Five shifts in perspective"



12

## Psychologist's perspective



Jamie

### Describing problems in children's terms

I don't know what this problem looks like when it's around. You know much more about it than me. Would you mind using your imagination to draw what the problem looks like to you please. Don't worry about making the drawing perfect.



13

## Psychologist's perspective

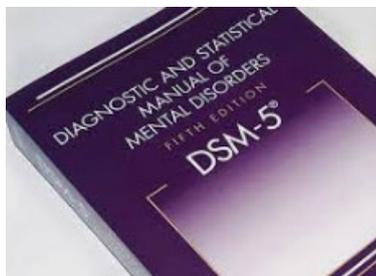


Jamie

### Describing problems in children's terms

*Separation Anxiety Disorder*

*Keep mum close kind of love*



14

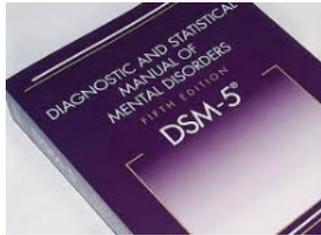
# Psychologist's perspective



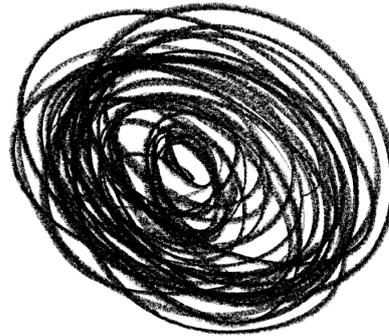
Jamie

## Describing problems in children's terms

*Adjustment disorder  
(with disturbance in conduct)*



*The temper ball*



# Psychologist's perspective



Jamie

## Be careful about our 'home team advantage'

Our session times

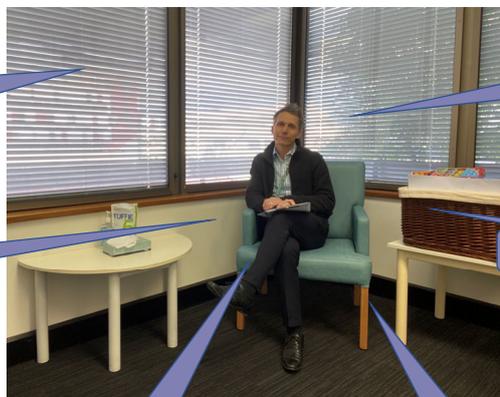
Our legislation

Our records

Our practice framework

Our resources

Our chair



## Psychologist's perspective

What about our context and privilege?



Jamie



Source: atom.smasher.org

**Make the therapeutic frame therapeutic**

- Room set up
- Disclosure about process
- Informed consent
- Risk screening



17

## Psychologist's perspective

Bringing skills and knowledge to the room



Jamie



18

## Psychologist's perspective

### Shrinking the problem, not the person



Jamie

#### Noticing change

- Being open to change
- Shifts in language, relationships, relationships to problems
- Having enough change
- The power to end the therapeutic relationship
  - Creative use of scales e.g. the "Life sucks to life is sweet" scale
- Outcomes measures and the "Story of Numbers"



19

## Family therapist's perspective

### Imperative research – the Known ,familiar and enjoyable aspects of the child's identity



Carolyn

Howdy .....

My name is Carolyn and when I was speaking with your..... They said that it would be OK to write this letter and tell you about the job I do , because we are going to meet and talk soon

My job is being a counsellor - you may have one at your school?

I talk a lot with

- primary school kids
- mums dads aunties grandies , nonas and other adults that care for kids about changes that are usually pretty BIG and unwanted

your..... mum told me that there are some of those happening in your life

I talk about things like

- too much sadness
- having bullies at school that are mean
- Having teachers at school that seem unfair

Your mum told me that you love ....how did you learn that ? and you play .....

- what position do you like to play ?

....., Id really like to understand what you think about what is going on.....

See you on.....

regards  
Carolyn



20

## Family therapist's perspective



Carolyn



- Getting an experience Near meaning of the Bullying Problem
- “The smelly hyena problem “
- Started to enable Monica and Ava to join together against the problem and its effects
- the bullying is the problem Ava is not the problem
- Finding out about her broader context. Enjoying investigating African animals



21

## Family therapist's perspective



Carolyn

- Finding about the effects of the problem in the external context. Not just how she is feeling
  - On life at home
  - Friendships
  - Connections to others
- It's not good at home
  - Because I'm home mums grumpy as she has to work online
  - I'm still good with Em and Sophia
- Who else might know about the smelly hyena problem
  - Em and Sophia
  - What might they do when they know this smelly hyena is trying to make you feel bad ?
  - They think its unfair
  - Is that helpful or not
  - Yeah its really unfair ... but they still do it... they're too scared to talk to them



22

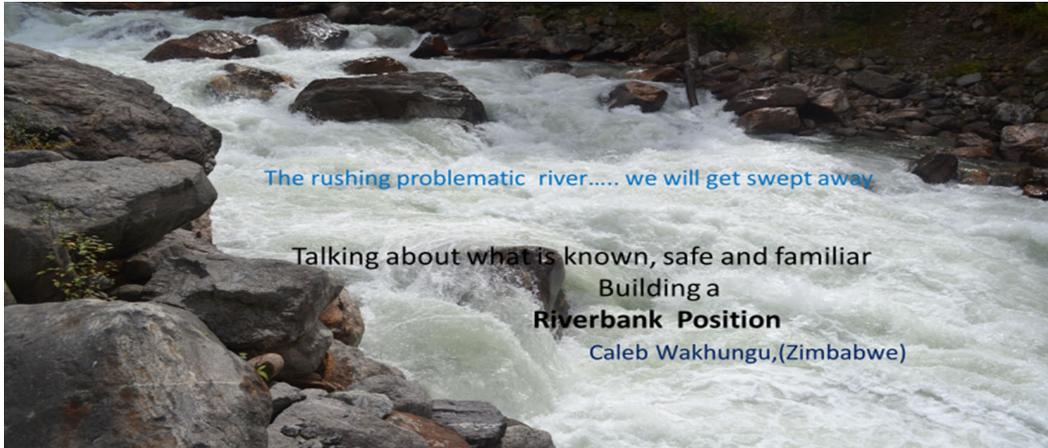


# Family therapist's perspective

## Building a platform of safety for children to dare to speak



Carolyn



The rushing problematic river..... we will get swept away

Talking about what is known, safe and familiar  
Building a

**Riverbank Position**

Caleb Wakhungu,(Zimbabwe)



25

# Family therapist's perspective

## Archives of knowledge from children – for children



Carolyn



From Clients to consultants



26



# Family therapist's perspective



Carolyn

**This is NOT an individual problem – nor is it normal**



29

# Q&A Session



**Emi Smith**  
Child & Family Partner, SA



**Dr Jamie Lee**  
Psychologist, SA



**Carolyn Markey**  
Family Therapist, SA



**Chris Dolman**  
Emerging Minds, SA



30

## Resources and further reading

Other supporting resources associated with this webinar can be found by clicking on the light blue supporting resources icon. 

For more information about Emerging Minds, visit [www.emergingminds.com.au](http://www.emergingminds.com.au)

### Upcoming webinars in 2021:

- Making children visible in work with parents
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Looking back, to the present, and forward in work with children and parents
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Working with parents of infants and toddlers
- Strategies for case formulation with children



31

## Thank you for participating



Please ensure you complete the **feedback survey** before you log out.

Click the yellow speech bubble icon in the top right hand corner of your screen to open the survey.

- Statements of Attendance for this webinar will be issued within four to six weeks.
- Each participant will be sent a link to the recording of this webinar and associated online resources within four to six weeks.



32

This webinar was co-produced by MHPN and Emerging Minds for the Emerging Minds: National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health (NWCCMH) project.

The NWCCMH is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health under the National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program.



33

Would you like to continue the discussion with local practitioners?

Or perhaps start discussing issues of local relevance? MHPN Project Officers are available to help you establish and/or join interdisciplinary mental health networks across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote Australia, either face-to-face or online.

We have 373 networks around the country as well as online networks.

Visit our online map to find out which networks are close to you at [mhpn.org.au](http://mhpn.org.au) or contact Jacqui O'Loughlin at [networks@mhpn.org.au](mailto:networks@mhpn.org.au).



34

**Thank You**



---

**Emerging  
Minds.**

**National Workforce  
Centre for Child  
Mental Health**

