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Emotion Coaching - a strategy for promoting behavioural self-regulation in children/young people in schools: A pilot study

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Abstract

Emotion coaching is a parenting style clinically observed in the USA which supports children's emotional self-regulation, social skills, physical health and academic success. A pilot study in a rural disadvantaged area in England sought to evaluate the effectiveness of training practitioners who work with children and young people in schools, early years settings and youth centres to apply emotion coaching strategies in professional contexts, particularly during emotionally intensive and behavioural incidents. The study rested on the premise that supportive adults can individually and collectively empower children and young people to build a repertoire of internal and external socio-emotional regulatory skills that promote prosocial behavior. A mixed method approach was adopted (n=127). The findings suggest the efficacy of adopting emotion coaching strategies to support behavioural management approaches and policies within settings across the age range. Data from school contexts are largely recorded here. The research is the first pilot in the UK that builds on and complements similar work being undertaken in the USA and Australia.

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Keywords: Emotion coaching; behaviour; self-regulation; social and emotional development; meta-emotion philosophy

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Emotion Coaching: A universal strategy for supporting and promoting sustainable emotional and behavioural well-being

Licette Gus, Janet Rose & Louise Gilbert

This paper positions Emotion Coaching as a universal strategy for supporting sustainable emotional and behavioural well-being within community and educational contexts. It offers Emotion Coaching as an effective strategy that promotes resiliency skills and locates it within the broader social agenda. The paper will address the key elements of Emotion Coaching which reflect a bio-psycho-social model for universal well-being and are informed by theory and research from neuro-science, interpersonal neurobiology, developmental psychology and attachment theory. The paper will review the growing international evidence base for Emotion Coaching and its multi-disciplinary application to a range of professional and personal contexts. Emotion Coaching helps to create nurturing relationships that scaffold the development of effective stress management skills, develop capacities to promote emotional and behavioural self-regulation and support pro-social behaviours. We argue that Emotion Coaching is a simple, cost-effective, empowering and universal tool that can harness well-being through improved communication, relationships, self-regulation, attainment, health, and resilience.

Keywords: Emotion Coaching; relationships; interpersonal neurobiology; pro-social behaviour; emotional well-being.

WORLDWIDE CONCERN FOR, and understanding of, childhood well-being has increased over the past decade (UNICEF, 2007). This is reflected in the increasing dominance of well-being discourse in cross party political thinking with national and societal success no longer being considered to be exclusively defined by traditional economic indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), but also by measuring well-being (Stützel et al., 2010). As childhood is increasingly seen as not only a pathway to becoming an adult but also as a stage in its own right (Ben-Arieh, 2007), a multi-dimensional view of childhood well-being has emerged, with childhood relationships considered a key factor of well-being (Rees et al., 2010; Statcham & Chase 2010). Several factors contribute to a 'relationship': features of the individuals involved, each participant's representation of the relationship, the interpersonal exchange between

the two people, and the external influences of the system in which the relationship is embedded (Pianta et al., 2003). It is the qualities of interpersonal relationships between children and key adults that is considered significant and integral to this discussion.

This paper proposes that Emotion Coaching can be both a technique (or tool) and a philosophical approach to emotions (Gilbert, 2013). Emotion Coaching supports the relationship between children and key adults, with the goal of improving children's competencies to manage difficult feelings. It can be used as an 'in the moment' technique to manage and guide a child whose behavioural response may be inappropriate or unproductive for their own and others' well-being, as well as an integrative tool to develop relationships with children and improve their emotional well-being. It is a multi-disciplinary approach that can be used in any community and educational context.

Footnote: In this article, children and young people will be referred to as 'children', and parents and carers will be referred to as 'parents'.

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Promoting social and emotional learning (SEL) in settings through emotion coaching practice: a model of engagement for practitioner use

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ABSTRACT

Emotion Coaching (EC) is a universal, relational approach focussed on promoting emotional wellbeing through attuned relationships. Adults coregulate children to understand different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to manage them. EC was introduced into UK educational settings in 2010 to promote children's social and emotional learning (SEL) and build resiliency. With evidence of child and practitioner benefit, it is an adaptable 'technique' to manage dysregulated children and emotional situations. This paper, reports on educational practitioners' EC experience. An inductive study, using semi-structured interviews, captured experiences and perceptions of 21, EC trained practitioners. Using constructivist grounded theory, analysis identified the fundamental role of the practitioner's emotional identity and emotional awareness; recognised practice integration was influenced by practice opportunity and reflection with colleagues and acknowledged the need for managerial support to normalise and sustain EC in settings. With use, practitioner emotional awareness increased, suggesting modification in emotional identity, creating the opportunity to reaffirm, reconsider and re-engage in practice. Integration of EC practice was viewed as an ongoing journey, being described as 'a way of being and a way of becoming'. The model of EC engagement conceptualised practice integration as a recursive cycle, starting and returning to the practitioner, with sequential, incremental stages. Through attuned child and adult interactions, EC confers, normalises and sustains symbiotic advantage. The model proposed is a practical tool, to guide planning, delivery and monitoring of practice integration.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Emotion Coaching; model of Emotion Coaching engagement (MECE); emotional awareness; emotional identity; relational approach

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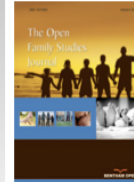
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Introduction of Emotion Coaching as a Whole School Approach in a Primary Specialist Social Emotional and Mental Health Setting: Positive Outcomes for All

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Received: June 31, 2017

Revised: August 14, 2017

Accepted: September 12, 2017

Abstract:

Background:

This paper describes the impact upon well-being of pupils, staff, and families following the introduction of Emotion Coaching as a whole school approach.

Objective:

This paper's objective is an attempt to redress the lack of published evidence about the use of Emotion Coaching in schools and to highlight how a school has been able to adopt a humanistic relational approach in a climate in which behaviorist principles are dominant in schools.

Method:

A case study approach using mixed methods was used. Data were examined from an outcomes model perspective where the benefits and changes intended from Emotion Coaching were the starting point. Perspectives from pupils, staff, and families were gained *via* interviews and structured questionnaires alongside quantitative measures of pupil academic progress and staff and pupil behavior.

Results:

Results indicate that Emotion Coaching improved the pupil's ability to regulate their feelings and had a positive effect upon teacher-pupil relationships. Family-school relationships were supported by the school's use of and modeling of Emotion Coaching with families and the ethos of attunement and non-judgemental interactions implicit in Emotion Coaching. Emotion Coaching promoted an increase in shared emotional language and trust. Shared emotional language and trust were key in the development of both teacher-pupil and family-school relationships. There was an improvement in well-being in that: rates of pupil restraint decreased, pupils made better than expected academic progress, staff absenteeism reduced, and families reported improved family life.

Conclusion:

We conclude that Emotion Coaching contributes to the promotion of sustainable, holistic improvement in wellbeing for pupils, school staff, and families.

Keywords: Emotion Coaching, Social and emotional learning, Teacher-pupil relationships, Home-school relationships, Universal intervention.

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ARTICLE



Attachment Aware Schools: the impact of a targeted and collaborative intervention

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ABSTRACT

The Attachment Aware Schools (AAS) project was a targeted and collaborative intervention between academics and school-based practitioners. The aim of the project was to promote practitioner awareness of attachment in relation to child behaviours and learning. It focused on using relational-based strategies and interventions to address the needs of children and young people. The AAS framework promoted Emotion Coaching as a universal, relational-based practice approach, with specialised targeted support for children with additional needs. Supportive managerial strategies and setting policies sustained the integration and maintenance of attachment-informed practice and school ethos. This article reports the findings from the project which included over 200 participants (107 teaching and support staff and 94 pupils aged 5 to 16 years), from 40 schools, in two different Local Authorities within the UK. Adopting a mixed methods approach, qualitative and quantitative data provided hard and soft indicators of improved pupil and adult outcomes. Findings demonstrated significant improvements in pupils' academic achievement in reading, writing and maths. There were significant decreases in sanctions, exclusions and overall difficulties. Practitioners reported a positive impact on professional practice, adult self-regulation and emotional self-control, and were more confident when talking with children about emotions. This project contributes to the growing evidence based on the effectiveness of whole school attachment-based strategies and is already demonstrating policy implications at a national level.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 12 December 2018
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KEYWORDS

Attachment aware schools;
emotion coaching;
emotional wellbeing; mental
health; behaviour;
relationships

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The facilitators and barriers to implementing Emotion Coaching following whole-school training in mainstream primary schools

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ABSTRACT

Initial research into the use of Emotion Coaching (EC) in educational settings has suggested that it can support social and emotional development, and promote positive relationships and behaviour. This research used a sequential mixed-methods design to examine the factors which impact on the implementation of EC. The views of 40 staff across six mainstream primary schools in the UK who had undertaken whole-school training in EC were examined via an online questionnaire. Follow-up semi-structured interviews with 13 staff from two of those schools were analysed using thematic analysis. Key facilitators to implementation included quality training, a school ethos where wellbeing was central, and an actively engaged senior leadership team. Key barriers to implementation were the pressure faced by school staff due to time constraints and curriculum demands. Implications for senior leaders in schools, educational psychologists (EPs), and policymakers are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Emotion Coaching;
emotions; behaviour;
training; implementation

Staffordshire Virtual School **Attachment & Trauma and Emotion Coaching Training Final Report**

August 2019

Licette Gus & Louise Gilbert
Emotion Coaching UK

www.emotioncoachinguk.com



Recognising that this Staffordshire Virtual School three-strand is a novel and exciting initiative, and the feedback from participants and trainers has been positive, we would like to make the following recommendations:

1. That there is a shared overview and communication between the three strands as to the logistics of how the different strands of the project connect and coordinate, e.g. in dates, locations and content. This would help to organise the training days to ensure that they reference/ signpost the other strands in the project so maximising effect and support.
2. For the training days strand it would be useful for Emotion Coaching UK to have an understanding of how practitioners were recruited and Staffordshire's expectation of practitioner attendance to the two different training days. With this information we would be able to plan the training sessions to ensure they complement and develop understanding for practitioners who attend either Emotion Coaching or Attachment and Trauma or both training days.
3. We would like to endorse the ongoing provision of the textbook as it proved to be supportive of the training day focus, confirm and extend the training day content, and facilitate independent learning.
4. Having completed the analysis of the training day we would like to offer all Emotion Coaching training day participants a 'reflective log' to support further development of practice. These simple reflective records allow participants to record incidents where Emotion Coaching was used and monitor their practice progress.
5. Recognising the demand for ongoing support post-training, and the need to 'practise to improve and embed practice' we would suggest that it could be useful to offer further, post-training sessions in localities. This could allow the development of support hubs, which could then generate sustainable and accessible support.

7. Citation

Gus, L & Gilbert, L. (2019) Staffordshire Virtual School: Attachment & Trauma and Emotion Coaching Training Final Report.

5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This report used data taken from participant evaluations of the Attachment & Trauma and Emotion Coaching training days. The findings suggest that practitioners who attended these training days felt that the training was appropriate, accessible and of good quality in content and delivery. The training affirmed, updated and developed practitioners' knowledge and understanding in regards to children's learning opportunities and emotional regulation. It provided an opportunity to engage and share in new knowledge and understanding with peers, and reflect on personal and setting practice. The provision of a supporting textbook which included and extended the focus of the training days was popular, and seen as effective post-course support to further independent professional development.



SUPPORTING ADULTS TO DEVELOP EMOTION COACHING IN SCHOOLS

KINGSBURY SCHOOLS TOGETHER

Training Evaluation Report

May 2018

Licette Gus



2. KEY FINDINGS

School staff feel they are more knowledgeable and skilled in using EC as a strategy to support pupil emotional health and wellbeing

Learning about empathy- its nature, development and impact upon children's emotional development was significant for school staff on the one-day training. This suggests that relational approaches may be supportive in schools. Notable learning also related to the role of vagal tone in our body's stress response system.

Confidence and ability to use EC increased: 85% of staff report that their ability and confidence to EC had increased 'quite a lot' or 'very much so' as a result of the workshops.

Specific emotion socialisation skills used by school staff increased

All school staff perceive that their emotion talk, modelling of emotions, reactions to pupil emotions and explicit teaching about emotions increased. Of particular note was that 65% of participants felt that their reactions and responses to pupil emotions had changed "quite a lot" or "very much so". This suggests an understanding of how the school's social and emotional communicative environment can positively impact pupil development.

Staff felt their inter-personal communication and relationship skills with pupils had improved. 95% of staff noted their awareness of pupil emotions had increased "quite a lot" or "very much so" and 80% felt they were listening to children "quite a lot more" or "very much more".

EC training improved school staff self-regulation and this supports positive interactions with pupils

School staff enjoyed the opportunities for practicing various self-regulation strategies which they then shared with pupils. Staff intra-personal skills can be seen to have benefitted from the training and 70% of staff feel that their emotional awareness and self-regulation skills have increased "quite a lot" or "very much so". Staff also became more aware of the impact of pupil emotions on their own personal and professional wellbeing.

Awareness of the developmental impact of the social environment and the power of relationships to act positively for children was highlighted by all staff saying they were more aware of the impact of their own emotions when interacting with pupils and 90% of staff saying they were "quite a lot more" or "very much more" aware of this.

Pupil social and emotional functioning and emotional regulation improved

Pupils were seen to have developed both intra-personal emotional competencies as well as inter-personal skills. These resulted in improved emotional wellbeing for pupils and increased inclusion. Positive changes were noted in pupil language, interactions with other pupils, prosocial behavior, ability to regulate their behavior when needed, interactions with adults and learning. Of particular note was the increase in pupil 'kindness' and pupil ability to comply with everyday routines and procedures.



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Secondary School Teachers' Experiences of Emotion Coaching

Emma Smith

Supervised by Dr Antony Williams

Research thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the Doctor of Educational and Child

Psychology

Faculty of Social Sciences

The School of Education

University of Sheffield

May 2023

Abstract

Emotion Coaching training delivered to UK schools and educational psychology services aims to provide a technique of interacting with individuals at times of heightened emotion (Gilbert et al., 2021). Research has explored its use in several settings (Gilbert et al., 2018) and found benefits to developing emotional regulation in young people and positive outcomes for the well-being of practitioners. There is limited research exploring Emotion Coaching as an embedded approach within mainstream secondary settings from the perspective of the teachers.

Using a relativist, social constructionist paradigm (Moon & Blackman, 2014), I explored four participant's (one current teacher and three previous teachers) experiences of implementing Emotion Coaching in their mainstream secondary schools. I used The Listening Guide (Gilligan & Eddy, 2021, Tolman & Head, 2021) to analyse data from the four 1:1 narrative interviews (McAdams, 1997).

The Listening Guide allowed for in-depth analysis of the participants' stories, including reflections of their Emotion Coaching journey. There were intertwined plot-lines which contributed insights into the research questions and these are explored in the discussion. Participant stories highlighted the journeys needed to embed Emotion Coaching in their setting. They shared ideas of its flexibility but also talked about the difficulties of fitting Emotion Coaching in as an intervention. Their stories offer insights into what experiences are like for staff taking on Emotion Coaching as a new approach and add a new perspective to the support Educational Psychologists might need to consider. The limitations and implications were considered in relation to the implementation of Emotion Coaching approaches within mainstream secondary settings.

***Doctorate in Professional
Educational, Child and Adolescent
Psychology***



Programme Director: Vivian Hill

UCL Institute of Education

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology

**Exploring the facilitators and barriers to implementing
Emotion Coaching following whole-school training in
mainstream primary schools**

April Romney

- 1 -

Abstract

Background: Emotion Coaching is a relational approach to supporting social and emotional development, promoting relationships and supporting behaviour. Initial research into its use in educational settings has shown promising results. However, there are concerns about the extent to which Emotion Coaching has been implemented in primary schools that have been trained in the approach.

Aims: This research sought to examine the implementation of Emotion Coaching in primary school settings further. First, the research examined the extent and ways in which Emotion Coaching was considered useful to school staff. Second, it explored the factors that were perceived to act as facilitators and barriers to effective implementation.

Method: This pragmatic research used a sequential two-phase design. Phase 1 involved an online questionnaire for staff (n=40) across six primary schools which explored their views of Emotion Coaching. The second phase involved a more detailed examination of Emotion Coaching in two case study schools. Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were conducted with staff from a range of roles in each school, including head teachers, to undertake a detailed exploration of their views of Emotion Coaching and its implementation.

Results: The results revealed that staff overwhelmingly thought that Emotion Coaching was a useful approach for professionals. Thematic analyses undertaken separately for each school revealed that staff were finding Emotion Coaching useful in a range of situations and perceived it to be having a positive effect on children. Key facilitators to implementation included quality training, a school ethos where wellbeing was central and an actively engaged senior leadership team (SLT). A key barrier to implementation was the pressure faced by school staff due to time constraints and curriculum demands. However, it is acknowledged that all the results should be interpreted with caution given the potential positive bias in the sample of participants who opted to take part.

Conclusions: Educational Psychologists (EPs) have an important role in providing quality training and implementation support for those trained in Emotion Coaching. SLTs in primary schools should actively commit their staff to using the approach following training.

- 4 -

Wider policy decisions which prioritise wellbeing would facilitate the implementation of the approach further.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



Nicolette Catherine Shaw

University of Strathclyde

Thesis submitted to the School of Education for the qualification of
MEd: Early Years Pedagogue

Emotion Coaching: Moving from Behaviourism to Nurture in a Nursery Class

Date of Submission: June 2018

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the process of moving from a Behaviourist approach to managing young children's behaviour, to an attachment-led approach supporting nursery-aged children to regulate their own behaviours through emotion-coaching experiences. The study supports the development of new understandings about emotion-coaching as a strategy for supporting young children's meta-emotion, social interactions and attachments within a Scottish nursery context. Such a study is important in order to respond to new understandings about attachment and brain development. The research approach adopted in this dissertation, included a comprehensive review of relevant literature on Attachment Theory and emotion-coaching, linked with an ongoing Action Research framework within the focus nursery class. Adopting a child-centred approach, the study collected the perspectives of pre-school children experiencing emotion-coaching in their nursery environment, utilising the participatory tools of The Mosaic Approach. The findings from this research offer evidence that the experience of emotion-coaching provided an increased repertoire of emotional language in young children; supported a developing understanding of the emotions behind behaviours; enabled children to choose appropriate strategies to respond to strong emotions; and enhanced young children's ability to self-regulate their emotions and subsequent behaviours. The main conclusions drawn from this study are that emotion-coaching provides early years educators with a practical application of an attachment-led pedagogy; that emotion-coaching supports young children's developing emotional intelligence and subsequent social skills; and that

young children can learn to regulate their own and others' emotions when supported to develop their meta-emotion through emotion-coaching. This dissertation recommends that educators, rather than 'disciplining' a young child's behaviour patterns through sanction/reward approaches, should focus instead on supporting children's increasingly complex meta-emotion to develop emotional self-awareness, self-regulation of behaviour and increasingly empathic co-regulatory responses.

Embedding emotion coaching in an early years setting: its implementation and impact from practitioners' perspectives

AUGUST 2022

Esther Glaser

Staffordshire Virtual School



Reflections, conclusions and recommendations

Objective 1: Investigate the impact emotion coaching has had on children's emotional development

This was difficult to quantify and verify as we can only rely on practitioners' examples that were shared in the interviews. As the study progressed, there was a gradual shift towards objective 3 which focused on practitioners' meta-emotion. This was deemed to be of more importance to the success of emotion coaching than originally thought. On reflection, the investigation into the impact of children's emotional development could be a research study in itself. It could be beneficial to replicate Shaw's study with this setting as part of an action research cycle. Child-centred research methods could be used to better illustrate their responses to emotion coaching rather than the methods used in this practitioner-focused study.

That being said, all participants in this study could give specific examples of the positive impact emotion coaching had had on their children and expressed a desire to continue embedding the principles of emotion coaching. This indicates that it has been valuable for the children that have the participants as their keyperson.

Objective 2: Describe and evaluate how emotion coaching strategies have been embedded by practitioners and to what effect

Participants could give specific examples of how they were using emotion coaching with their children. The increased use of empathy and labelling and validating children's feelings were used more than limit setting and problem solving. Participants shared how these two steps had changed their mindset and their daily practice. They recognised this had a positive impact on the children in their care.

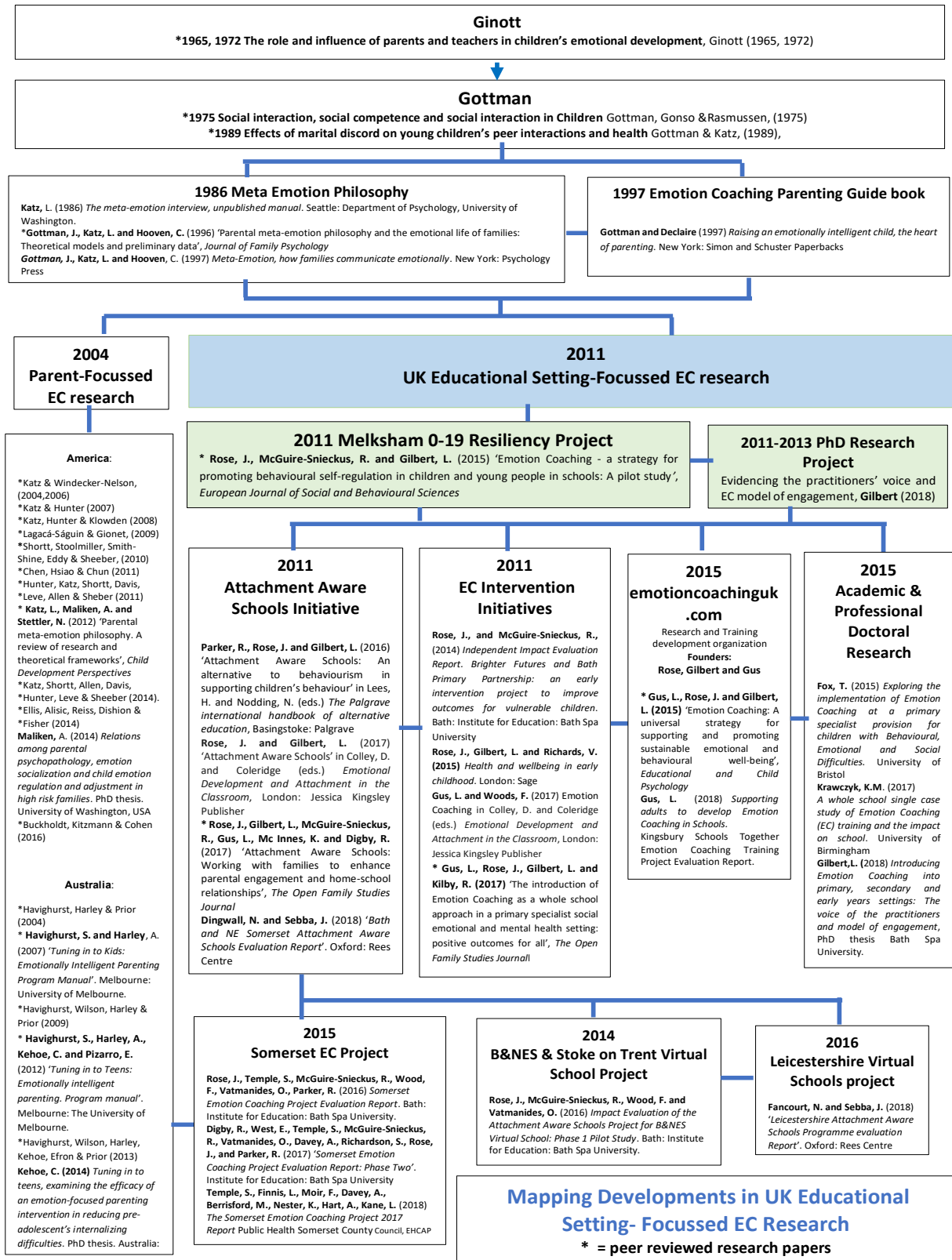
In hindsight, I should have questioned why limit setting and problem solving were used less. It might have been that practitioners' questioned whether all ages would have been able to respond to these last two steps, or that they did not feel as confident in adopting them and therefore required more training. Considering this, it would be useful to revisit this with the setting, again possibly as part of an action research cycle, with added emphasis on implementing steps three and four of the emotion coaching approach. Other research methods could be used, such as observations, which would give the researcher a more informed picture of how the approach is being used and to what effect.

Objective 3: Consider the influence of practitioners' meta-emotion on the emotion coaching of children

As previously mentioned, this became the objective of most interest as the study progressed. It became clear that practitioners' mental and emotional wellbeing was a crucial factor in successfully implementing emotion coaching. Participants were acutely aware that their emotional state impacted on their children's. In the final interviews, most participants had noticed a change in themselves and their ability to identify and validate their own emotions. They appeared to place more value on showing empathy to themselves in order to better empathise with their children.

Nevertheless, the impact cannot be easily qualified, especially in a small pilot study such as this. Not every member of staff participated in the study and not every member of staff attended the training. It would be worthwhile repeating the training, and indeed the project as a whole, with all members of staff in attendance, and assessing their attitudes and responses to emotion coaching and the idea of meta-emotion. The intention of this research project was to gather as much data as possible from as many participants as possible. However, as is often the way in research, this did not go to plan due to various barriers, including the impact of COVID and low participant consent.

Where it all began....



©Gilbert, L, Gus, L. Rose, J. (2018) Origins and Development of Emotion Coaching Research in Educational Settings