

22 January, 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am deeply concerned regarding the proposal to assess/screen children between 0-3 years for emotional and/or social health with the view of early intervention and pre-emptive prescription of medications. The emotional health of children is affected by many exterior factors therefore medications that will not rid the child of these adverse exterior influences, is not the answer and is a further drain on mental health funds.

The education of the young, or inability to solve a young child's problems with their education, has a far greater influence on emotional stability than many people realise. It holds great concern for me. I have a tutoring business and many of my clients are of the assessment age afore mentioned. In the last 20 years, I have observed first hand the causes of upsets, ill-temper, disassociation, reticence and stubbornness.

It is the ability of the child to assimilate our language that I find has the greatest affect on a child's emotional stability. As assimilation of the language is reliant solely on the number of words fully defined for that child, I have had the greatest success in taking hostile, impossible children, whose teachers are no longer able to help them, from anti-social to social in a matter of hours or weeks. I use a very specific educational approach that ensure all words are understood and each level fully attained before progressing to the next level.

When I show these previously emotionally challenging children the hidden reason for their anti-social behaviour, their reply to me is uniformly – 'why hasn't anyone told me this before' coupled with deep relief in the knowledge that they have a future and that they are not the problem child the system has convinced them they were. My very young clients change from reticent, shy, nervous (there are too many affectations to mention) to happy, chatty children interested in learning. This is the end result of proper instruction. The time it takes to achieve this varies, but it is attainable.

Many of my students receive Most Improved Student of the Year Awards and other accolades. I tell you all this to appeal to you to not stigmatise a young child by labelling them as emotionally unwell, or by prescribing preventative medications when all the child needs, from my years of experience, is a good education via an effective educational method.

Medications dull intellect. I know this with certainty. Far too many of my student's have told me that the medication they take makes it harder for them to concentrate as they feel 'spaced-out' and too, too many clients have told me that their thoughts upon taking medication, take a dark turn. You can understand that this deeply saddens me.

There are other external influences affecting the emotional health of children but I must add here that when one of my students improves in their study, their parents become less "troubled" and the child's life is easier. And if it doesn't, surely that is a problem with their parents. I implore you to let the young progress without interference. Life will challenge them sufficiently with real problems as they grow.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns regarding this proposal.

Yours sincerely

Paula McLennan Principal ApSFerndale