



Give it back

Sometimes people don't look after my things.

I'll protect you.

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www.berrystreet.org.au
Celebrating 130 years of protecting children and strengthening families

The following is a story from a Berry Street staff member who cares for a little girl. It's about their experiences of using '21 Friends for Life' to learn to communicate with one another about the sorts of things that our children and young people often struggle with - their feelings and emotions:



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My little girl is 8 years old. She has been in our care since she was just over three years old. Like many of the children that come into the system she has a very traumatic background and this impacts on her every day.

She demonstrates a strong belief that the world is a bad, hostile place and people want to hurt her.

If a kid runs past her and bumps her in the playground, she will retaliate. If someone looks at her for more than a second she will assume she has done something wrong. My baby spends her whole day trying to work out what she is supposed to do or say to make people like me, her mum, want to love her.

One of the toughest things about this for my family is that it is very hard to talk with our little girl about this.

She knows she has “big feelings” (frustration, aggression, anxiety) but it has been a tough road to find a way to send her the messages of hope, love, understanding and protection that she needs. And we do have great hope for her. As most carers know, our kids are very special and my little one is no different.

Recently we were lucky enough to come across The Black Dog Project and Janine's '21 Friends for Life' - a series of cards that help put words to some really tough feelings and situations.

When I looked at them the first time, they made me cry.

I felt like they were a mirror in to my little girl's world. *

I took them home and shared them with her. We went through all of them once and then I put them away. I then started to pull out an appropriate card that I thought explained a moment or situation we had just been through.

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Sometimes I didn't get it right and she would tell me that the problem was about a different card, but every time it allowed us to have a caring loving discussion.

When I told my little girl that I was going to share the idea of the cards with others her first response was concern.

She thought the cards had been written just for her. She was amazed to learn that someone else on this earth had similar feelings to her . . .



. . . and was able to artistically represent those hard feelings. Once we overcame that hurdle she told me that

“All kids who have worries need the little girl cards. “

I asked her which card she thought we should share to help others understand how special they could be. This is the card she chose. Maybe these cards might help another “caring” family.

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Missed a spot

Sometimes it doesn't matter how hard I try—
I still can't get it right.

I know you did your best

'21 friends for life' postcard collection available on website theblackdogproject.com