



Dissolving Barriers to Learning

Creating insights and ideas for resolving children's learning and behavioural issues



Dissolving Barriers to Learning

Many children and young people disengage and lose their motivation to learn. Their behaviour and attendance often become a problem to the people who are trying to support them.

Dissolving Barriers to Learning (dbi) is a simple but very effective process that provides parents, teachers and welfare support with a space to explore more deeply what might be causing the difficulties.

When included as part of a school's or family's approach to developing solutions it helps them to look at the root causes of issues.



Dissolving Barriers to Learning sessions in Bath, UK

'I felt I needed to gain some better understanding of my son's behaviour at school, in particular, his tendency to be aggressive towards his peers and not being sensitive to others feelings.'

Lucy, the parent of a 9 year old boy



Case story

Chloe, a sixth former aged seventeen, brought the issue of losing her motivation at a crucial stage in her school life. Her mother accompanied her. Chloe did not want to get up and go to school anymore; friendships were difficult but she still hoped to go to university to study drama. Her mother explained that Chloe's father had died a year before, and that whilst he had been alive Chloe had been his carer part of the time, as had her brother. The mother and father had been living apart for some time before his death.

The **dbi** facilitator created a simple map of the family and school systems surrounding Chloe. Using representatives for Mum, Dad, Chloe, her brother and also 'school' and 'the future', the map or constellation highlighted they were a loving family in many ways but there was some unfinished business between the mother and father.

The constellation showed that Chloe's mother was still grief-stricken by her ex-husband's death, so much so that Chloe was not only carrying her own sadness at the loss of her father but her mother's as well. There was a very close bond between Chloe and her brother and this gave her some support but not enough. The representative of her 'future' was quite strong from the start but the 'school' seemed unsettled.

In the second phase of the constellation, the representative for Chloe explored handing back her mother's grief and other unfinished business to her mother. She found this hard to do and needed permission and encouragement from her mum. Once it had happened, the representatives of the parents stood together and hugged Chloe. This was a moving moment for everyone witnessing the constellation but more importantly it was something Chloe could hold on to for the rest of her life. After this, 'school' and 'future' seemed stronger and ready for Chloe to move forward with her life.

Afterwards both Chloe and Mum commented on the impact of the experience. They had been able to acknowledge the strength of the love in their family despite the loss and the suffering. They had begun to understand and share the grief they were each carrying.

Dissolving Barriers to Learning

Dissolving Barriers to Learning (**dbi**) does exactly what the title suggests. It is a new resource to help families and schools to work on understanding the difficulties children and young people face and most importantly it helps all those in a position of care to find ways to support children and young people to re-engage with learning.

The process is in three distinct phases – an initial discussion, a relational mapping workshop, a discussion to develop strategies.

In the first instance, the parents and/or teachers caring for the young person get an understanding of the approach, voice their concerns and agree to come together to help find a strategy to support everyone involved. This stage is done through telephone or where possible face to face meetings.

Secondly, they attend a one-day workshop and, together with other parents and educationists, using constellations to build up a picture of the various factors and dynamics that are influencing the young person's attitudes and behaviours. The adults use this map to develop their understanding of the situation and begin to explore what might be done to improve matters. The insights are often profound, opening up a range of new possibilities.

After the workshop, further discussions develop workable ideas that lead to the creation of an action plan to help effect change.

When used as a key tool to augment existing pastoral processes it has proved to be a major cost-saver in the design of appropriate and effective strategies.

*The **dbi** workshops are organised as one day events and can be delivered on a bespoke basis tailored to suit the needs, circumstances and budgets of particular schools, parents or communities.*

To learn more about **Dissolving Barriers to Learning**
email us at chris.charles@eclfoundation.org

To learn more about **ecl**'s work with students,
teachers, parents and schools, visit
www.eclfoundation.org

