

RECIPROCITY:

The social aspects of learning, 'relating'

The capacities that make up this disposition are:

Interdependence Collaboration Empathy Listening Imitation

Empathy

Contributing to others' experiences by listening to them to understand what they are really saying, and putting yourself in their shoes.



How to make the most of the story;

A PRESENT FROM THE SEASIDE

Soli, Tasha and their mum and dad are very disappointed when grandma isn't able to come with them on their caravan holiday, but Soli has an idea to help grandma feel just a bit better.

In this story there are three specific opportunities to talk about empathy.

We hear how Soli 'could tell' how mum had changed from being cheerful to being worried; 'could tell' that grandma felt sad at not being able to join them on their holiday; 'could tell' that the boys wanted to play with him. In the discussions following the story the children are helped to think about what it is that helps us to 'tell' how someone is feeling e.g. their facial expression, their tone of voice, their body language and sometimes it's just because we know someone very well that we understand how they are feeling.



After the story

Connecting questions

- How do you think everyone was feeling when they thought about going on holiday?
- When mum answered the phone how do you think Soli could tell that she had changed the way she was feeling? How did mum feel when she heard about grandma's accident?
- When they visited grandma in hospital Soli noticed that she was smiling but he could tell she was sad at not being able to go on holiday. How do you think he could tell?
- At the caravan site Soli made some new friends. How do you think he could tell that they wanted to play with him without speaking to them?
- Why do you think he kicked the ball gently towards them? What do you think they would have thought if he had kicked the ball very hard at them?
- How did Soli know that grandma was pleased with the present he brought for her?

Transferring questions

- Do you think it's good to know how other people are feeling? Why do you think that?
- Can you tell when someone is feeling sad? What clues do you look for?
- Can you tell when someone is feeling happy? What clues do you look for?
- Can you tell when you have upset someone? What clues do you look for?
- What other clues can you look for to know how people are feeling?
- How does it help us to know how other people are feeling?
- If we can tell how someone is feeling, what should we do?

A PRESENT FROM THE SEASIDE

A story to introduce: Empathy

Just three more days. That's what mum had said. It was just three more days before they set off on their holiday. Soli couldn't wait. They were going to the seaside. They were going to stay in a caravan – and he'd never been in a caravan before. Mum said that it was just like a rather small house. Mum and dad and his little sister Tasha would be in one bedroom and grandma, who was coming with them, would be in another, but Soli would be sleeping in the room where they could watch television and eat their meals as well. It wasn't like his bedroom at home. Every night they would have to pull out a bed from the wall so that he could go to sleep. Soli liked the sound of that!

Then it was just two days until the holiday. Mum was busy getting together all the clothes they would need to take with them, and she told Soli to choose the toys he wanted to take. Dad had said that there would probably be other children staying at the caravan site. If there were, Soli wondered what they would be like. Would he be able to play with them? Perhaps he'd better take his football, just in case.

Then the bad news came. The telephone rang and his mum answered it. First of all she sounded just like she always did on the phone.

"Hello," she had said, quite cheerfully.

She was quiet for a moment then Soli noticed how her voice had changed.

"Oh no! When did it happen? Where is she? Yes of course. Yes I'll come right away."

Soli had stopped what he was doing and was looking at his mum. He could tell that she wasn't cheerful any more.

"What's the matter mum?" he asked as she put the telephone down.

Mum wasn't smiling now. She had a worried look on her face

"It's grandma. She's had an accident; a fall. She's in the hospital."

Dad came home from work to stay with Soli and Tasha while mum went into the hospital. When she came home she told them that grandma had fallen down some steps and she had broken her leg.

"Grandma will be in hospital for at least a week," mum told them.

"But we're going on holiday," Soli said.



"Won't grandma be able to come with us?"

"No she won't," said mum, "and I don't think I should go either, not while she's in hospital, but Auntie Clare says we must go and she will be there all the time to visit grandma. Grandma says it would make her feel even worse if we didn't have our holiday, so we will be going, but without grandma."

Soli was so sad that grandma wouldn't be going with them. Mum and dad took him and Tasha to see her in the hospital the day before they went away.

"I wish you hadn't broken your leg grandma," Soli said.

"I do too," said grandma. "I would much rather be coming on holiday with you than staying in this hospital. I think a caravan would be much more fun, but I can't, so I just want you to have a really good time. I'll think about you and all the things you'll be doing in the caravan and on the beach. And you can have my bedroom."

"Thanks grandma," said Soli, "but I want to sleep in the bed that pulls out of the wall." He was still so excited about going to the caravan and even though grandma was smiling, he could tell by the way she gave him an extra big hug when they said goodbye, that she really was sad that she couldn't go with them.

When they finally arrived, the caravan was just as much fun as Soli had hoped it would be. You had to climb up three little steps to get in and the rooms were all quite tiny compared to the rooms at home. Dad showed him how the bed pulled down from the wall and folded up again the next morning so that they would all be able to sit around the table for breakfast. And Soli found something very exciting. When the bed was pulled down there was a little door that opened into a small cupboard. When the bed was folded up again the cupboard was hidden. A secret hiding place. Soli had an idea.

"Mum," he asked, "have you got a little box I could have?"

"What sort of box?" mum asked "What's it for?"

"Oh it's just to put some things in. Not a big box."

"What about this one?" Dad was holding up a box about the size of a small shoe box. "This one had plastic cups in for taking to the beach, but we don't need the box now."

"Yes that's good," said Soli. "Can I have it please?"

Dad gave Soli the box and he put it on the table. Later that night, when he was ready for bed, he put the box in his secret cupboard.

It was a very sunny, very warm week for the holiday. The beach was just five minutes walk away and the sand was golden and just the right sort of sand for making sandcastles. Mum was good at making really big, beautiful castles and dad bought them some little flags which they could stick in the sand on the towers and walls of the castles.

Soli made some friends at the caravan site, just as he'd hoped he would. He'd seen the two boys watching him one morning when he was kicking the football around outside the caravan while he was waiting for everyone to be ready to go to the beach. He could tell from the way that they looked at him that they would like to play so he kicked the ball, quite gently, towards them. Then he ran over to fetch the ball. One of the boys kicked it gently back to Soli, and Soli kicked it back again. Without even speaking they started to kick the ball to each other. From then on they played together some time each day and Soli had some new friends.

Everyone was enjoying themselves, though not quite as much as they might have done if grandma had been able to come with them. Every day they telephoned her in her hospital room and told her all about the things they had done. She specially liked to hear about their visit to the bird and butterfly gardens.

And then it was time to be packing up to go home – much too soon Soli thought. Mum and dad packed up the suitcases again, and Soli collected up his toys and games. He said goodbye to his new friends and dad took a photograph of the three boys together so that Soli would remember them. At last everything was stowed away in the car and Soli stood at the bottom of the three little steps clutching the cardboard box that he'd remembered to take out of the secret cupboard.

"What have you got there?" his dad asked.

"Oh it's just something for grandma," Soli answered.

They had heard from Auntie Clare that grandma was leaving the hospital that day, though she wasn't going back to her own house, but would be staying with Auntie Clare for some time.

"We'll stop at Auntie Clare's on the way, before we get home," said mum. "I know grandma will want to hear all about the holiday."

Grandma was so pleased to see them and she really did want them to tell her all about the caravan and the beach and all the other things they had done.

Just as they were about to leave mum remembered Soli's box.

"Soli has something special for you," she said to grandma. "He's kept it a secret all the week. I really don't know what it is."

And Soli passed the box to grandma.

"I collected some things for you. I knew you would be sad not to come with us and I thought you would want to know what it was like." "What a kind thing to do," said grandma, "let me have a look."

She lifted the lid of the box and, although they couldn't see what was in it, mum and dad and Tasha could tell it made her happy.

"So many things!" she said.

And she pulled them out, one at a time. First there was a shell, then a pebble, then one of the little flags from the sandcastle. There was a flower (Soli had picked it by the side of the path where they walked down to the beach each day) and there was a leaf (from the tree that grew next to the caravan). There was even a bird's feather that Soli had picked up off the ground when they visited the bird and butterfly gardens. There was a little paper bag with some of the golden sand from the beach and last of all a small plastic pot.

"You have to be careful taking the lid off," Soli said. "It's got water in it. I thought you would like to smell the sea."

"I think that is the nicest surprise present I have ever had," she said. "Now it doesn't feel so bad that I couldn't come to the seaside with you. You've brought the seaside back for me. Thank you Soli. Thank you for thinking about me when you were on your holiday."