**Role Play and ‘Empathic Commentary’ to practice**

**Try to remember that anger is really about being scared**

**Fear lies at the root of all reactions**

**Think ‘hurt animal’ – which might adjust your approach**

**Wonder out loud if they are …. ‘Angry- sad’ or ‘angry –scared’?**

**If in doubt go ‘lower and slower’** (react as you would towards a toddler)

**Validating child’s feelings reduces their need to ‘show us’** (I can see how angry/upset/scared you are)

**Say ‘WE NEED TO’ rather then ‘YOU NEED TO’ –**small but important message that you are supporting them– ‘together we can…’ rather than ‘you should’.

**Accept the child’s powerful feelings that underpin their actions and empathise. Alongside this we need to help them practice managing their feelings appropriately and be sympathetic towards them in the consequence for behaviour.**

**‘Wow! I can really hear how angry you’re feeling….let’s jump up and down/punch the pillow etc!’** (match intensity without the distress)

**‘I know this is difficult for you, let’s think hard together and see if we can make it easier for you’**

**It is crucial to remind yourself that your child’s behaviour is NOT a rejection of you, it is the only way they know how to communicate with you. Step back and you will see they are ‘talking’ to you, not ‘lashing out’ at you.**

**Your mantra needs to be ‘WHAT’S THIS CHILD SAYING TO ME?’ rather than ‘What’s this child DOING to me?’**

**ROLE PLAY**

I know it’s hard for you when you hit your brother and I ask you what happened

I wonder if you’re forgetting that I won’t hurt you (hit you/ reject you/ leave you…whatever you think fear might be from past)

I think that talking about it is making you feel bad about yourself

I can understand that

I want to help you with these big feelings

When we’ve done that we can think together about how we can make things up to your brother.

THEN LATER at a calmer time

‘ I know you want to…. do the right thing/not hit your brother/not get angry etc .. but my guess is your birth family didn’t help you to manage this. Guess what? This is something I can help you with. I know that we can work this out together. You might need some practice to get it right so I will keep an eye on how you get on with your brother while we are practicing’

(MESSAGE – I believe in you, I am here for you, change is possible!)Role Play

‘I need to talk to you about the biscuits that are going missing. I know how hard this will be for you’

‘How about if I gave you a cuddle to let you know I love you and it’s just your behaviour we need to sort out’

‘I know it’s hard for you and I understand. I know you didn’t get enough food when you were living with your birth mother. You must have felt so hungry at times and I think you still get these feelings sometimes, even though there is always enough food in this house’

CHILD – BUT IT WASN’T ME!!!

‘I really want to help with this and wonder if we kept some special food for you in a cupboard that might help?’

‘I know it is going to take time for you to feel safe with us and I expect you will go on letting us know when you don’t feel safe, but when that happens I’ll give you cuddles to let you know you’re safe and that you will always have enough.’

Rather than asking children WHY questions WE need to provide why answers….

**I wonder why that happened/you did that/ said that**?.(then answer)...**I wonder if it’s because you were scared/hungry/muddled/angry?**

**My guess is that you’re telling me that because you can’t quite remember what happened and you were scared you’d get into trouble/we won’t love you/we’ll hurt you/ we’ll send you away?**

**‘do you know what? I think you so much don’t want it to be you who took the biscuits/hit your brother because it makes you feel so bad that you can’t say it was you. Don’t worry, I can usually work out what is going on and help you work it out too’**

NOTICE OUR OWN CHANGING STATES/FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOURS AND VERBALISE THESE ALOUD – ‘**WOW, my angry part was really loud there, I’d better find my calm and sensible parts. Getting angry won’t help sort this out’** (you can tell child you might go get a drink/ jump up and down etc to help you calm down- thus helping them understand how you cope when stressed! And giving them strategies to try out!)

**I love you too much to let you go on practicing the angry ways that people showed you in your birth family – we want this house to feel safe for all of us and show our anger in ways that people don’t get hurt, Lets try jumping up and down shouting ‘I DON’T LIKE THISSSSS’**

With ‘out of it’ children you could shout ‘**I BLOODY LOVE YOU!’** at the top of your voice with a big grin on your face(this meets them where they are and can shock them out of it)

**‘I know it’s difficult for you to sort out these mixed-up feelings and I’m here to help. It’s my job to help you sort your muddles out, so let’s give it a go’**

**‘if you’re not in control then you feel really bad. That makes sense. You’ve had to be in control for such a long time’**

**I think you don’t like it when I ask you to do something because you feel bad if you don’t have control. I expect it feels as if I’m just being mean but I promise it is because I care about you.**

**No wonder you want to take charge…back when you were at home you had to be to make sure you were safe. I am so sorry that me making decisions for you feels so horrible. I think it’s because grown-ups didn’t make kind decisions for you in the past but we are going to stick to what I have said. I’m sorry’**