

Colour Monster story, black is fear

‘To achieve an **enthusiastic and supportive learning community** where there is a **sense of belonging**, where each pupil is valued for their **unique contribution**, where children have **built the confidence, independence and resilience to enjoy challenge, explore creativity and fully engage in rich and deep learning experiences**, where **children respect each other** and have a **sense of pride in their achievements**, you could start with considering Emotional Literacy’ (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)

Emotional literacy involves having **self-awareness** and **recognition of your own feelings** and knowing how to manage them, such as the **ability to stay calm when you feel angry** or to **reassure yourself when in doubt**. It includes empathy, i.e. having sensitivity to the feelings of others.

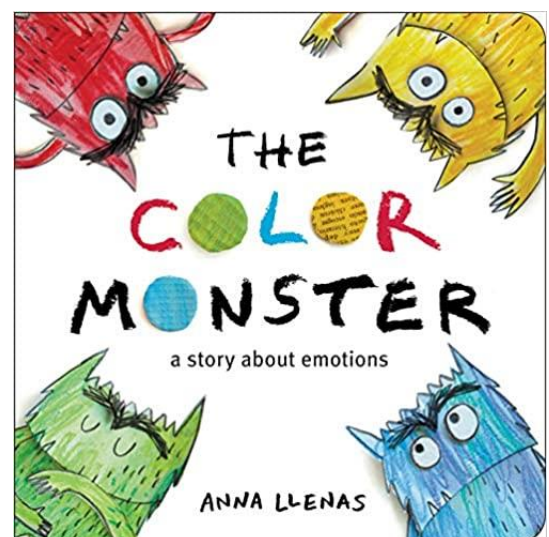
Emotional literacy also includes being able to **recognise and adapt to the feelings of other people**, whilst at the same time, learning how to manage and express your own emotions effectively.

This is helpful in developing good communication skills and the development and enhancement of relationships.

Supporting children of all ages to express their lived experience and talk about feelings.

Labelling your emotions

Labelling emotions has long been recognised in the field of therapy as an effective way of defusing negative emotions – ‘name it to tame it’, to quote psychiatrist Dan Siegel. Naming our feelings raises our awareness. The greater our awareness, the greater our ability to regulate feelings like anger, fear, frustration. There’s also huge value to be gained from raising our awareness of good feelings. Whereas naming ‘bad’ feelings can help calm us down, labelling positive feelings enables us to appreciate and savour them more.



Considering a balanced view.

The story of the colour monster can shape and support children in developing their understanding of emotions however children could be introduced to a message that black = fear. This message could be linked to race and that a person of colour could be someone to fear.

To support and separate these ideas we would recommend that whilst offering time to talk about emotions using the colour monster story we also acknowledge the colours are emotions in the story and race is different.

Below we have offered a range of resources to allow you 'the professional' to consider how we challenge the subtle message of the colour monster story and reinforce positive messages about race, diversity, and empathy.

In the colour monster story, the feeling of fear is labelled black however the picture shows shadow and grey. The additional resources to purchase alongside the story also so grey.

Be considerate in your story telling to explain the difference to children and reinforce positive messages about race diversity and empathy alongside your use of the story.

If you do have any concerns that a child may be triggered by the use of the word black, and it being used to illustrate fear this can be addressed by creating developmentally appropriate and welcoming environments that impart messages of inclusion and diversity to children and their caregivers it is also important to offer empathy and understanding to children who may feel marginalized in some way.

The books below are great tools to instil positive messages of inclusion.

