

OXFORDSHIRE, JULY 2015

INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER OF ROSS

FAMILY DETAILS:

Ross is the middle child of 3. He has an older half-brother of 14 and a younger sister. He was born in South East Asia and moved to Australia at 2 years. Ross' parents are now divorced but his father is still very much present in his life.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CLIMATE:

His first 3 years were spent predominantly with his mother, with no extended family around. During this period, the elder boy was at school, and the mother welcomed the chance to spend time exclusively with Ross and felt this had been very beneficial to his development; she had not had this opportunity with the older boy as she had worked during his early years.

The father is described as "very driven", educated to PhD level and working in management. The maternal grandmother is also a high achiever, recently retired and now living close by. The family is happy to be back in UK despite the change in circumstances.

When asked about any periods of stress during Ross' upbringing, particularly around the age of 2, Ross' mother described

their life in Australia as "stress-free" with no money worries, an idyllic outdoor lifestyle, with lots of quality family time and no sibling jealousies, largely because the older boy had desperately wanted a sibling and established a very close bond with Ross.

The mother stressed that she was not a 'pushy parent' and unlike her own mother, is content "as long as Ross is happy". She felt that her older son was pushed too hard at a private school, and regressed as a result, until he returned to state education. She is now more confident as a parent and therefore fairly relaxed with Ross.

Ross spends a lot of hands-on time with his paternal grandparents, doing activities like cooking, and, increasingly, with his maternal grandmother, now that she is retired.

CHILD CHARACTERISTICS:

Ross' mother found him an easy child from the outset and always saw him as 'clever'. She felt that the environment played a key part. All 3 children had very different personalities. The oldest boy was described as "more relaxed"

and the younger girl as "a little tornado tornado"; Ross was much more analytical and cautious than either of the other two and "always seems to be thinking". He is very curious by nature, e.g. he will always pick up stones to look underneath them.

There was a period of about six months when he was more timid but now he can be described as "quietly confident, friendly and sociable, not shy but not a loud child." He is independent and happy to do things by himself, often sitting at a table for up to three hours to complete a task. He shows determination and persistence, and likes to be very organised in his activities, making up rules for himself and taking them very seriously. Drawings are always very detailed and precise.

"For 99% of the time, he shows self-control and self-regulation but he can be demanding and can shout his orders sometimes. Occasionally, he will explode and slam doors and so on but it is always short-lived." "He will sometimes get grumpy rather than asking for a hug. He keeps things inside." Although he is not always

relaxed, his mother commented that he appears to have developed coping strategies to deal with anxiety and stress. He is empathetic to others and this characteristic has been demonstrated in his contributions to the school council and his helpfulness to other children. He has many friends.

A key characteristic is that he has a very keen imagination. Examples are setting up a whole city made of bricks, or starting stories on long car journeys which others can continue. He also shows real involvement when he begins any extended writing.

HOME EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES:

He enjoys doing jigsaw puzzles and reading; he is surrounded by lots of books/ kindles and the whole family are keen readers. He is less adventurous than his brother in physical activity, for example he is only just starting to ride his bike without stabilisers. However, he enjoys being outside and will happily play football during breaks from indoor activities.

PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES:

From the age of two up to attendance at pre-school, Ross was involved in various swimming groups and toddler groups and attended the local nursery at three and a half years, a term prematurely. He loved the move and became very attached to his key person and teacher. He established some very close friendships, particularly with one girl, to the point where they were moved into different classrooms to encourage both of them to make new friends.