



# Positive Parent, Positive Professional

*Dealing with difficult meetings*

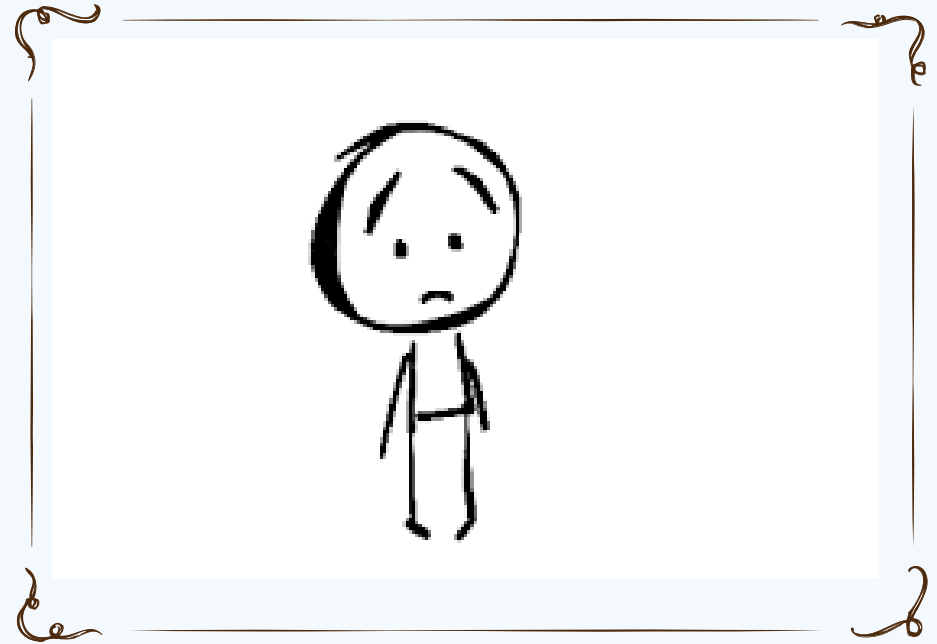
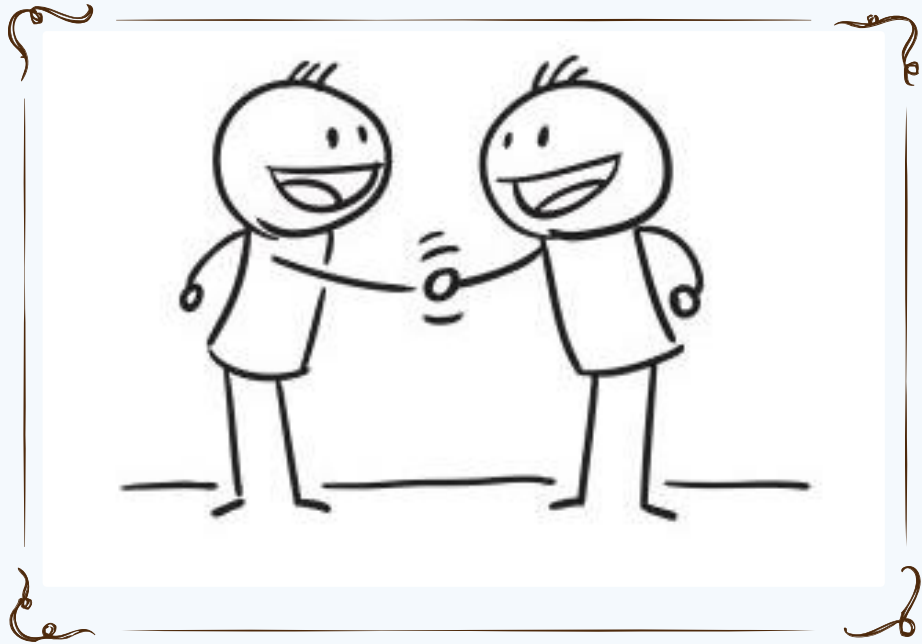
# Context and Background

- *Tori Houghton, speech and language therapist and Director, Time Specialist Support. Co-editor AuKids magazine.*
- *Debby Elley, mum of autistic twins, author and co-editor of AuKids magazine.*

# Meetings as a Vehicle for Change



How do we know if a meeting's gone well?





# Definition of collaboration:

*'The action of working with someone to produce something'.*

1. The meeting has an unclear purpose



# 1. Solution: Prepare

## Parent

- Be clear what the meeting is for.
- Gather any evidence you need.
- Make notes on what you'd like to ask.

## Professional

- Communicate with the parent what the meeting is for and who will be there.
- Talk about how long it will last.
- Ask them what you'd like them to bring or to think about beforehand.

## 2. Professionals have a foggy story so far

Unaware of  
parent's needs  
from meeting

Unaware of  
background to  
meeting

Unaware of  
parent's  
knowledge



## 2. Solution: Checklist before you start!

Define together what the meeting is  
for

Check the  
story so far

Check parent's  
knowledge



### 3. 'Fighting stance':

*Previous bad experiences have led to a negative vibe from the start.*

### 3. Solution: Work together, be open

#### PARENT

- Don't expect a bad meeting.
- Don't dive in!
- Express your emotions in words not actions
- Offer to work collaboratively – don't let the problem be just yours!

#### PROFESSIONAL

- Don't expect a bad meeting.
- Keep it positive
- Acknowledge emotion
- Talk personally
- Invite ideas



## 4. *The goal gets lost*

*People get carried away talking about irrelevant things*



## 4. *Staying on task*

*Agree realistic goals at the outset*

*Be mindful of the meeting's key purpose*

*Use words that indicate your expectations*

## 5. Veiled hints and accusations

### PARENT

- Hints because they don't want an outright row
- Is aggressive

### PROFESSIONAL

- Wants to blame the parent but can't because it's not polite

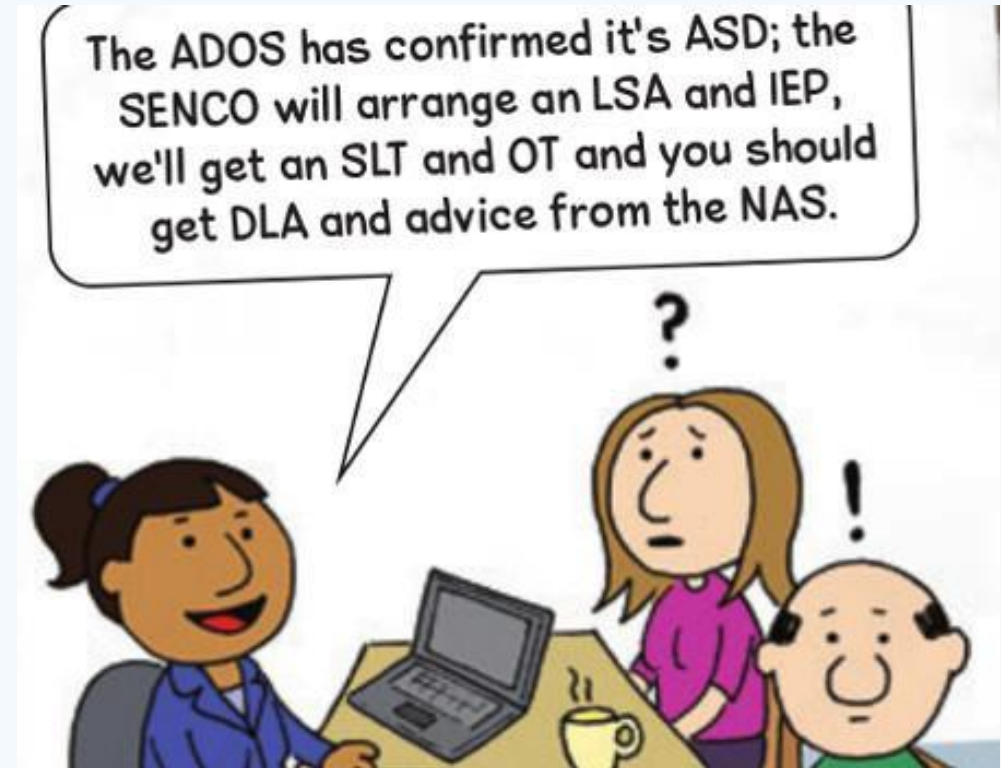


## 5. Avoiding conflict

1. Don't hint. Say it.
2. Focus on the 'situation'
3. Keep language neutral
4. Focus on what works
5. Zone in on a plan of action
6. Acknowledge emotions

## 6. Jargon – problem and solution

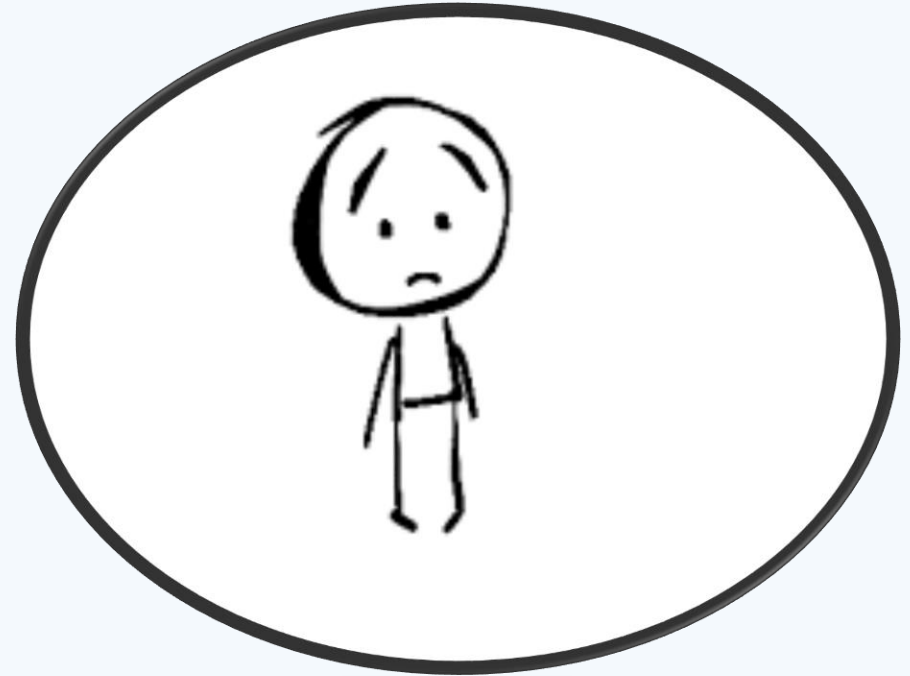
- *Ask the other person what they mean by that term*
- *Don't be afraid to say 'I'm not clear what you mean by that'.*





## 7 . Parents or professionals feel deflated

- Focus is on what's going wrong
- They feel less motivated to take action
- Feel to blame





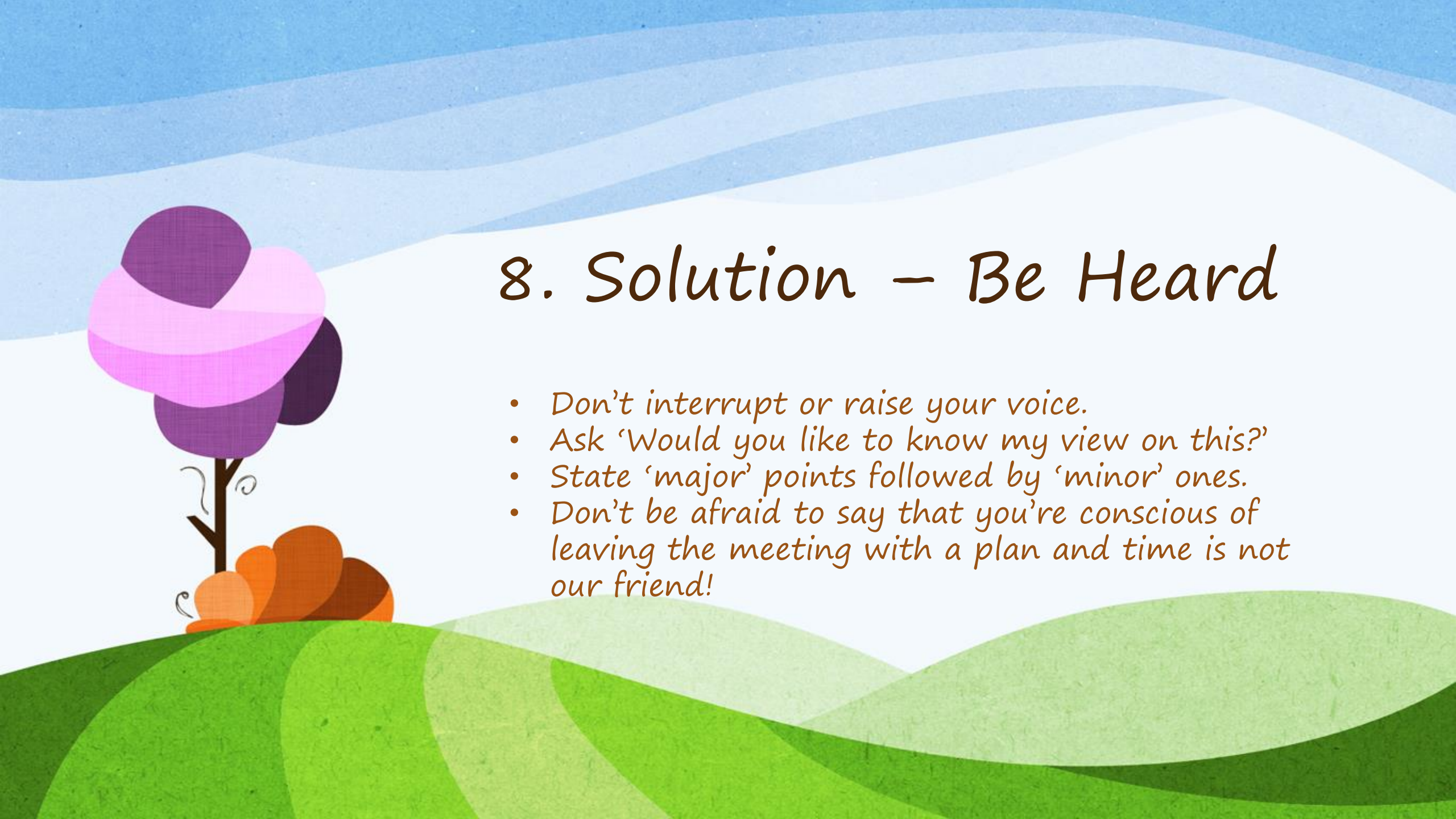
## 7. Solution: Get action

1. Define together a clear way forward.
2. Acknowledge feelings
3. Make sure both sides are happy with it.
4. Agree what both parties will do before meeting again.
5. Agree to evaluate effectiveness of plan.
6. Underline what's going well.



## 8. *Not Being Heard*

*There's more talking and less active listening*



## 8. Solution – Be Heard

- *Don't interrupt or raise your voice.*
- *Ask 'Would you like to know my view on this?'*
- *State 'major' points followed by 'minor' ones.*
- *Don't be afraid to say that you're conscious of leaving the meeting with a plan and time is not our friend!*

9. No-one leaves with a clear picture of what happens next





## 9. Getting a clear plan

- Agree at the start what the meeting will achieve
- At the end of the meeting, check that everyone knows what's happening next.
- Throughout the meeting, be mindful that a plan is what you're generating, rather than a fuller picture of the difficulty.

# 10. We're all on the same page



THANKS FOR LISTENING!

Debby Elley & Tori Houghton  
AuKids magazine

[www.aukids.co.uk](http://www.aukids.co.uk)