



THE ARCHETYPE APPROACH / CASE STUDY LIBRARY

AA-CS-018

Strong Relationships, Strong Boundaries

How Firm Limits Supported Care, Voice and Justice Sensitivity

CASE TYPE	Relationships, Fairness & Boundary Development
AGE / CONTEXT	Early years child - exact age not retained in the surviving case note
DATE RANGE	Earlier practice observation - exact dates not retained
PRACTICE SITE	Children of Towan Kindergarten
PRACTITIONER	Oliver Riddett

EMERGING AA PRINCIPLE

Warmth and firmness can develop together: a caring child may still need clear boundaries around power, fairness and conflict.

OBSERVE

What is happening?

RECOGNISE

What pattern is this?

BALANCE

What is missing?

INTEGRATE

What has emerged?

Observe -> Recognise -> Balance -> Integrate

What was happening?

The pattern as it first appeared



INITIAL PRESENTATION

Across the recorded practice notes, this child was described as showing strong Helper and Friend qualities alongside a more rigid Rebel pattern. Care, relationship and social awareness were readily available, but moments involving conflict, fairness or challenge could become more fixed and intense.

RECURRING PATTERNS

- Strong Helper and Friend qualities
- Clear sensitivity to fairness and justice
- Rebel responses becoming more rigid during conflict
- Strong investment in relationships
- A need for adults to hold firm, consistent boundaries

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOURS

This case is based on a recurring practice pattern rather than one preserved incident. The surviving note records a child who was relationally strong and caring, but whose Rebel function could become rigid. Practitioners responded with firm boundaries rather than withdrawing warmth or relationship.

CONTEXTS AND TRIGGERS

- Peer conflict
- Perceived unfairness
- Moments requiring a clear limit
- Situations where relationship and self-assertion pulled in different directions

WHAT WAS THE CHILD SHOWING US?

The child appeared to need both relationship and containment. Care and belonging were already strengths; the developmental task was helping power, refusal and fairness remain connected to clear limits.

What pattern emerged?

Seeing beneath the behaviour



PRIMARY PATTERN

Helper / Friend strength

SUPPORTING PATTERN

Rigid Rebel under conflict or fairness pressure

BRIDGING FUNCTION

Rebel / Helper Power Axis - boundaries held inside relationship

SHADOW / IMBALANCE PRESENTATION

The challenge was not a lack of care. The child already showed strong relational qualities. The imbalance appeared when Rebel energy became rigid around fairness, conflict or control, making it harder for the child to move flexibly between asserting a position and remaining open to the needs of others.

POSSIBLE UNDERLYING NEEDS

- Clear and predictable boundaries
- Adults who could stay relational while saying no
- Recognition of fairness concerns without allowing them to control the whole interaction
- Opportunities to practise voice without escalation
- Permission to care for others without surrendering personal truth

DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERSTANDING

From an Archetype Approach perspective, the useful question was not whether the child was kind or oppositional. Both capacities were present. The work was to help care, relationship and justice remain available at the same time.

PERCEPTION SHIFT

The key perception shift was from 'This child is being difficult about fairness' to 'This child needs help keeping power and relationship connected.'

What was introduced?

Keeping the strength - widening access



ADULT APPROACH

- Hold limits clearly and consistently.
- Acknowledge the child's sense of fairness without allowing the dispute to determine the whole interaction.
- Stay connected while maintaining the boundary.
- Avoid turning the child's strong care for others into an expectation of compliance.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLAY ADJUSTMENTS

- Predictable adult responses during conflict
- Clear rules that could be explained rather than imposed arbitrarily
- Opportunities for negotiation and repair
- Space for both assertive voice and relational responsibility

BALANCING RELATIONSHIP

Rebel -> Helper, with Friend remaining available as relational support

Firm boundaries acted as containment rather than punishment. They allowed the child's caring and relational strengths to remain present while Rebel energy was given a clearer edge.

BALANCING SEQUENCE

Feel the injustice -> Hold the boundary -> Stay connected -> Repair

The aim was not to make the child less strong or less sensitive to fairness. It was to help strength remain usable inside relationship.

What became newly available?

Growth without losing the original strength



OBSERVABLE CHANGE

The surviving note records the balancing response - firm boundaries - but does not preserve a sufficiently detailed longitudinal outcome to justify stronger claims. The case therefore documents a clear practice pattern and balancing method more strongly than a measured end result.

WHAT BECAME VISIBLE

- Care and relational connection were treated as existing strengths
- Justice sensitivity was not dismissed
- Rebel energy was met with containment rather than suppression
- Adults held a clear boundary without withdrawing relationship
- The framework distinguished strength from rigidity

WHAT EMERGED OVER TIME?

This case is best understood as an early evidence case. It captures a recurring pattern and the response that practitioners found necessary, but future versions should be strengthened with dated observations showing how the child responded across several conflicts.

INTEGRATION

The developmental direction was toward a child who could remain caring and connected while also holding voice, truth and boundaries without becoming rigid.



Strong Relationships Need Strong Boundaries

A child can be deeply caring and still need firm containment around power and conflict. Relationship does not become less relational when adults hold a boundary. At its best, the boundary protects the relationship and gives strong justice sensitivity somewhere safe to mature.

AA SNAPSHOT

PRIMARY PATTERN

Helper / Friend

BALANCING RELATIONSHIP

Rebel / Helper - Power Axis

BALANCING STRATEGY

Firm, relational boundaries

CASE CATEGORY

Relationships, Fairness & Boundaries

RIGIDITY UNDER PRESSURE

Rebel

MAIN PRESENTATION

Justice sensitivity and rigidity during conflict

OUTCOME POSITION

Practice response documented; longitudinal outcome incomplete

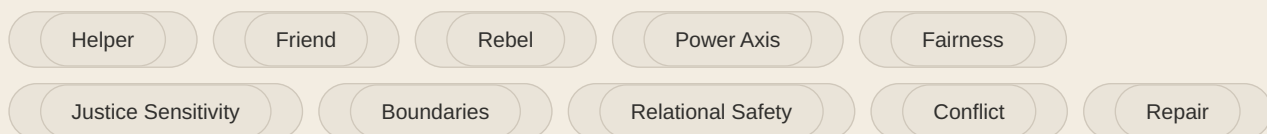
SOURCE QUALITY

Concise historical practice note

CLOSING REFLECTION

"A boundary does not have to break connection. Sometimes it is the shape that allows connection to hold."

AA TAGS



AA EVIDENCE THEMES

- Strong relational qualities can coexist with rigid refusal
- Fairness sensitivity is not the same as deliberate defiance
- Firm boundaries can be held without withdrawing relationship
- Balance rather than suppression
- This case requires further dated observations for stronger outcome claims

AA DEVELOPMENTAL REFLECTION | EVIDENCE STRENGTH: 2.5 / 5

This is a useful but intentionally cautious case. The original note is clear about the pattern - strong Helper/Friend qualities, a rigid Rebel response and the use of firm boundaries - but it does not preserve a detailed incident or longitudinal outcome. That makes the balancing logic valuable while keeping the evidence strength below the more fully documented cases. The next step is to add two or three concrete observations if they can be recovered.