



## The Thrive Approach

The Thrive Approach brings together four areas of research; neuroscience, child development, attachment theory and creative play. It supports children's emotional development and builds resilience.

As a Thrive school, we are working with all children, especially during this unprecedented time of the Covid-19 pandemic, to support emotional well-being. We take a whole school approach and profile every class to ensure those children who may need additional support receive this. Children throughout the school benefit from whole class Thrive activities and small group work.

We will be running our Family Thrive parent course via Team Meets in the near future and ask that you please register your interest via the office email [nhinton@bilsthorpfha.org](mailto:nhinton@bilsthorpfha.org).

In the meantime, please find enclosed information and tips about Thrive and feel free to contact Ms Hinton for more information.

### ***Remember***

***your child's basic needs are to feel safe, feel special and to have their needs met.***

## Thrive Jenga



**A strong foundation  
is needed to build  
strong resilience.**

Think of emotional resilience as Jenga blocks. Our emotional resilience is tested all of the time; we lose our keys, our family pet dies, the car breaks down. Our reactions (how much our Jenga Tower Wobbles) will depend on how our stress regulation system reacts (resilience).

For children, life events also cause wobbles in their emotional tower; new baby is born, family member passes away, child starts school. Each event can cause an emotion Jenga block to pop out of the tower.

Everybody's tower wobbles and I'm sure the recent pandemic has caused a lot more wobbling!!!

With resilience, our towers may wobble a little, but with no resilience, towers may completely collapse.

The Thrive Approach looks at the interruptions in earlier emotional development and plugs these holes through meeting these needs in real time. By building the Jenga Tower from bottom up and ensuring the foundations are strong, emotional resilience is created.

## **VRFs**

“VRFs” are Vital Relational Functions in response to your child’s emotional dysregulation. These are Attunement, Validation, Containment and Soothing/Regulation and are vital in supporting children’s emotional wellbeing.

**Attune** - You know your child and most likely attune to him/her already; being alert to how they are feeling and understanding facial expression, body language, gesture, voice tone etc.

**Validation** is one of your greatest tools; reassure your child that it is OK to feel things! Feelings are real and are our brains reaction to the situation. Separate the feeling from the behaviour. Examples of validation “I notice you are feeling very angry at the moment because you didn’t get what you wanted and that’s really hard when you don’t get what you want. I imagine you’re feeling quite frustrated”.

**Contain** those feelings; show your child you understand and can bear the emotion they are having – demonstrate it is survivable; “sometimes I feel angry when things don’t go my way too and I have to take deep breaths to calm me down”.

**Sooth and Regulate** your child’s distress, reassure them that you are there for them and they are safe.

Use language such as “I imagine....” “I notice....” and “I wonder....” to encourage your child to link how they are feeling to their behaviour. Often children may not understand the sensations felt when they have a big emotion – they need these sensations to be named.

“I notice you have a big smile on your face and you are jumping up and down! I imagine you are really excited to see your friends today...”.

“I wonder if you have a big heavy feeling in your tummy right now. I notice your face is fierce and your hands are in fists. I wonder if you’re feeling angry because you were told to stop playing. It’s hard when you are enjoying yourself and you are asked to stop. You might feel frustrated because you want to play more...”

### **Shining a Light of Behaviour**

Using VRFs does not mean your child should not be disciplined for inappropriate behaviour. Shining a Light refers to separating your child’s behaviour from their emotions and talking through the behaviour (when they are in a calm state) to help your child to find a better way to communicate their distress.

Example: “Woah! I imagine you felt really angry when your friend’s jumped on your like that. You were playing a game and suddenly they all jumped on you! I imagine I would be scared if my friends were jumping on me. I would feel scared and angry and I would want them to

get off! You felt angry and scared and that's ok but it is NOT ok to kick your friends even when you are feeling angry. Can you think of a different way to tell your friends that they are making you angry and scared? Perhaps you could have a code word that your friends know that you could use and everyone knows to stop if someone says it? That would mean that you don't have to kick when you begin to feel that way."

Below are some Thrive activities that you can do at home with your child(ren) to help develop emotional language, strong, safe relationships and resilience.

- Make a worry box/monster together, personalise it, have some special paper and pens that can be used for your child to write/draw and use the worry box. Decide together how often, if at all, the worry box will be checked and what actions will be taken. Talk about how it is ok to worry; give some age appropriate examples of things you may worry about and what you do to help with that worry. Ask other family members to talk about a time they have worried – normalise the feeling and demonstrate how it is manageable. *Book to read: My Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside.*





- Play games demonstrating that things stay the same over time and space; treasure hunts for example. Extend the time between hiding and finding – this could be later in the day, or eventually built to over-night or even longer. This will help your child’s trust and can help anxiety if they worry things will change if they cannot see or control a situation.
- Find a special object that you can keep on you that will remind you of your child when they are not there – make this known to them and bring the object out on occasion to demonstrate and reassure that you think of them when you are not present. This could be a marble, a photo, a small toy in your handbag. You can also make ‘magic string’ bracelets for child and parent 😊 *Book to read: The Invisible String by Patrice Karst.*



- Trust building games – blindfolded obstacle courses or walks (can be done in garden or at the park to get outside – let your child build one for you too), falling into arms, food tasting (either blindfolded or trying new/exotic foods).



Build on your current relationship; your child trusts you, they can rely on you to keep them safe, meet their needs and to make them feel special. They can trust that if you tell them they are safe that they are.

- Consequence games, for example Jenga, pop up pirate, tumbling monkeys – talk through how each choice is important to the outcome, make it fun – it’s ok to make a wrong decision whilst we learn – can we make a better choice next time? Think about tactics. Talk about a time you made a wrong choice and that every choice has a consequence – positive or negative. These games are also an opportunity to talk about body sensations (my tummy feels tight when it’s my turn to take the brick!).

- Play ‘what if’ games – use puppets or figures so that the emotions can be safely explored – “What if I (puppet) don’t want to play your game?!”, “What if I said you are mean and I don’t





want to play with your anymore?” – this allows situations and associated emotions to be explored safely and in control.

- Introduce Feel-Stop-Think-Act to help your child to recognise when they have a big emotion to stop and think of the best course of action before they respond. They may find a ‘thinking spot’ helps, or using a teddy or object as ‘Captain Thinker’. A visual flow chart may also be helpful and praise when you recognise your child has managed, or attempted, this routine. Using VRFs is brilliant with this in helping a child name what they are feeling and therefore associate the sensation with that feeling.
- Introduce sensory play through modelling getting messy/touching/smelling/listening/tasting, put your hands in, let your child put sand/paint/foam onto your hands etc, it’s OK to have a go, there is no right/wrong, demonstrate enjoyment, talk through the sensations you feel – “wow, this sand feels grainy and bity, it tickles my hands when I let fall through my fingers...”



- Shaving foam in a tray – use resources to make shapes such as straws, sponges, plastic spoon before trying with hands. Make it more interested by adding colour – paint or food colouring, if feeling adventurous

put shaving foam onto hands/arms and even face – put some on daddy’s face before he shaves

- Hand cream – something less messy than paint – take part in sharing some hand cream and massaging it into each other’s hands.



Try making hand prints on paper after applying hand cream, make it a daily shared experience, talk about how it feels when you apply it – is the cream cold, is it smooth, does it make any difference to which part of the hand you are applying it to?

- Use feathers or cotton wool to ‘face paint’ – pretend you are painting each other’s face, or hands to begin with if the face is uncomfortable. Decide what you would like painting and which colours, use your other hand to pretend you have the colour and use the feather or cotton wool to ‘apply’ the face paint. Tell your child exactly what you are doing if doing it to them, or how it feels if they are doing



it to you. Again this explores sensations and helps a child connect different sensations to emotions.

- Bubbles. Bubbles are one of many children's favourite activities. Blow bubbles, big, small, scented. Pretend the bubbles are blowing away worries – is a big bubble blowing away an extra big worry? OR imagine where the bubbles are going – are they floating away so a beautiful special land. Run around making bubbles and chasing them/popping them. Enjoy this time.



- Painting with flavoured tea bags. Using water spray bottles to wet the tea bags and let the child do what they want – they can move it around, letting the colour stain the paper, they can squeeze the tea bag, they may not want to touch it but use other things e.g. straw or spoon to move it around, they may want to throw the tea bag onto the paper. Using flavoured tea bags provides a multi-sensory experience or colour, smell and texture.

There are many activities which you may have already explored with your child and many others that you and your child can invent together! The most important thing is that you spend special time with your child, make them feel safe, special and meet their needs, acknowledge and validate their emotions and provide experiences to expand their resilience and understanding of the world.

We look forward to hearing about the Thrive Activities you have been exploring at home and welcome you to contact any of our Thrive Practitioners with any questions.

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