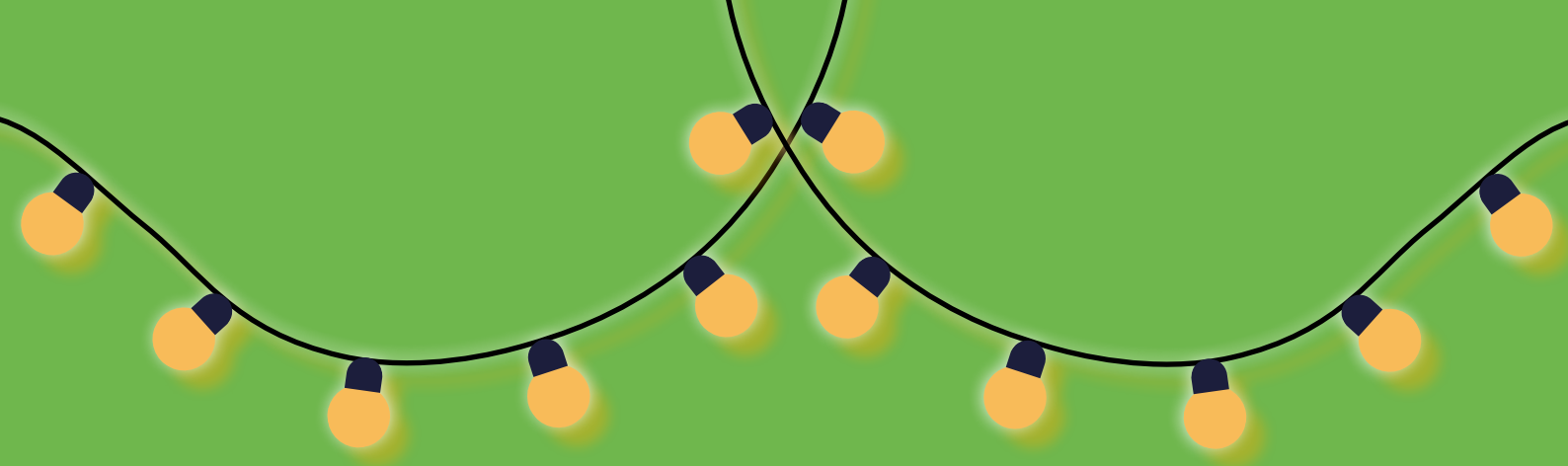




AN INTRODUCTION TO USING A THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

CHILDREN AND YOUTH LEADER HANDBOOK



Safe
Families



Home
for Good



CONTENTS



Definitions	3
Who could benefit?	4
Six principles of trauma-informed support	5
Trauma and diagnosis	6
Complex needs	7
The hand model	8
Supporting others to feel calm	12
What to avoid	13
Safety Plan	14
Triggers	16
Emotions iceberg	17
Promoting safety	18
Visual timetable	20
Regulation	21
PACE	22
The experience of the parent/carer	26
Resources	28

This booklet is designed to accompany our Children and Youth Leader's session on using a Therapeutic approach.

DEFINITIONS



TRAUMA

Deeply distressing or disturbing experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, leaving lasting negative effects on their mental, emotional, or physical well-being.

CARE EXPERIENCED

Anyone who has spent time in the care system, covering foster care, residential homes, or kinship care.

COMPASSION FATIGUE

The physical, emotional and mental exhaustion and overwhelm from the demands of parenting/caring.

SEN

Special Educational Needs including disabilities.

ATTACHMENT

The emotional bond between a child and their primary caregiver.



WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM A THERAPEUTIC APPROACH?



- Children and young people with SEN
- Care-experienced children and young people
- Children and young people who have experienced trauma
- Children who need extra support in church settings

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Children with disabilities and their families are **1.15 to 1.84 times more likely** to avoid attending church altogether

Approximately **107,000 children** are looked after across the UK



Christians are **2x more likely** to foster or adopt than non-Christians

We want to seek to address any barriers that families may experience in accessing church settings. We believe that this in line with God's heart for everyone to be included and welcome.

SIX PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED SUPPORT

This is from the government guidance for Trauma Informed Practice. These are useful principles to guide our approach in supporting everyone.



SAFETY

Supportive and predictable environments



COLLABORATION

Working together and being flexible



TRUSTWORTHINESS

Clear communication and consistency



EMPOWERMENT

Building resilience and wellbeing



CHOICE

Low pressure and inclusive approach



CULTURAL CONSIDERATION

Inclusive, reflective,
bias-aware practice

NOTES



TRAUMA AND DIAGNOSIS



Being neurodivergent in a neurotypical world can be traumatic.

A Therapeutic approach is **useful for all** but it is especially helpful for children and young people who have developmental trauma, are neurodivergent, have complex needs or high anxiety for any reason.

DEVELOPMENTAL TRAUMA is the psychological and neurobiological damage that results from chronic, repeated trauma and adversity during infancy or childhood.

NEURODIVERGENCE is a neurological development and functioning differing from what is considered typical, or "neurotypical". This includes diagnoses such as Autism and ADHD.

COMPLEX NEEDS - situations where an individual requires a high level of holistic support to manage their daily life, typically because multiple physical, mental, or behavioural conditions overlap and intersect.

REFLECTIONS

COMPLEX NEEDS

For children and young people with complex needs we want to think about...

- Appropriate information on a child's needs
- Information on a child's likes and dislikes
- Flexible worship spaces
- Disability access
- Different sensory options
- Rota of 1:1 volunteers
- Inclusive approach
- Being realistic and clear

All ministries and resources are different. When seeking to support children with complex needs and their families we want to **prioritise everyone feeling welcome and included.**

REFLECTIONS

THE HAND MODEL

This is a simple version of something called **The Hand Model** by Dr Dan Siegal that explains our **fight, flight, freeze response**.



Imagine your hand represents your brain.

Your wrist is the spinal cord leading up to your palm which is the base part of your brain.

Some people call this our primitive brain and it is where our automatic functions happen such as breathing, swallowing and blinking.



If you tuck your thumb across your palm, this represents the amygdala which acts as our threat detection system.

We can think of it as a **danger alarm**, looking out for any threats so we can respond, to stay safe.

NOTES

Then if you fold your fingers over your thumb, this represents our thinking brain, sitting behind our forehead.

This is where we can think logically, listen to reason, and rationalise.

When our amygdala detects threat or danger, it floods our brain with the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol, and blocks access to our thinking brain.

This gets us immediately into our survival response, our fight, flight or freeze. This is so we can fight, flight (that means run away from) or freeze from the danger in order to stay alive.



If you imagine your fingers uncurling from your palm and standing straight upright.

As the danger alarm has been triggered, the thinking brain is completely offline, this is where you might have heard the phrase “they flipped their lid”.

This person is now unable to think logically or listen to reason. They are in their survival response, their fight, flight or freeze.



NOTES

IT'S HELPFUL TO THINK:

What is the feeling behind the behaviour?

Has their thinking brain gone offline?

Has their danger alarm been triggered?

NOTES

**When someone is triggered it can be scary.
They might feel...**

Scared

Frozen

Tearful

Dizzy

Shaky

Disconnected

Worried

Angry

Aggressive



Wobbly



**When someone's alarm is
triggered they might...**

**Hide under
a blanket**

Shout

**Push
people
away**

Run away

**Throw
things**

**Head
bang**

**People
please**

**Completely
freeze**

Bite

**Break
things**

**Say rude
things**



WAYS WE CAN BRING CALM

When a child or young person is in a fight, flight or freeze response, we need to concentrate on **supporting them to feel calm** and reduce their stress hormones to help them feel safe again.

**Calming
ourselves**

**Have a
designated
calm space**

**Going for
a walk**

**Fidget/
sensory toys**

**Drink/
snack**

**Breathing
exercise**

**Special
interests**

Music

Lego

Colouring in

**Going back
to their adult**

**Compression
items**

Safety plan

Quiet

Bubbles



THINGS TO AVOID

Shouting

**Threats of
consequence**

**Rationalising/
reasoning**

**Dismissing their
experience**

**Conditional
rewards**

What could calm look like in your setting?

SAFETY PLAN

Sometimes when a child or young person is stressed, their behaviour can become unsafe. It is helpful to have a **safety plan** ahead of time that all appropriate adults are aware of.

Remember to always follow your safeguarding procedures.

1. CONTACT PARENT/GUARDIAN

THINK: How can I easily contact them?

2. DE-ESCALATE

THINK: How can I bring calm?

3. MOVE TO A SAFER SPACE

THINK: What would make this more safe?





ANYTHING CAN BE A TRIGGER

Anything can trigger someone into their survival response.

We can't anticipate or avoid all triggers but recognising them can **help our understanding** and **inform our approach**.

Changes
to routine

Lack of
choice

Surprising
noises

Sensory
struggles

Shouting

Instructions

Unfamiliar
people

Special
occasions

Smells

Change
of rooms

THE EMOTIONS ICEBERG



NOTES

Being aware of triggers can help us create an environment where children and young people can engage.

We can do this through:

Being aware of our own triggers and biases

Using a low demand approach

Giving choice

Communication with parent/ carer

Using curiosity

Being non-judgemental

REFLECTIONS

When we promote emotional safety we can create an environment where children and young people are more likely and able to engage.

ROUTINE

Use visual timetables to show what is happening and when

ADULTS PRESENT

You could have a board of pictures or introduce yourself at the beginning or have lanyards with names on

PLANS AND CHANGES

Communicate any changes - think about how to navigate transitions

FLEXIBLE OPTIONS

Clear plan of where can they go or what can they do if they are feeling overwhelmed

COMMUNICATING NEEDS

Options of alternative communication like lanyards or card system, hand signals or code words

EXPECTATIONS OF THEM

Communicating clearly and fairly the appropriate boundaries of the setting

VISUAL TIMETABLE

One way we can promote emotional safety is by using visual time tables

What are we doing today?



1. Song



2. Bible story



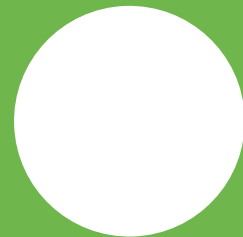
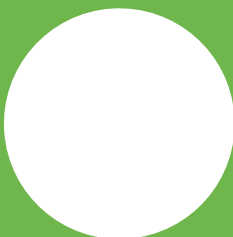
3. Snack



4. Pick up time

You could try and make your own:

What are we doing today?



REGULATION

Being regulated means to be able to manage your emotions, energy levels, and physiological responses **so you can respond calmly** to stress and daily challenges.

THINK ABOUT...

Movement

Sensory options

Profile of the child/
young person

Alternative activities

Recognising when
in overwhelm

NOTES

REMEMBER: all behaviour is communication.

PACE

PACE is an attitude and a way of being that has been developed by Dr Dan Hughes.

This approach can **promote psychological safety, de-escalate situations and build positive relationships.**

Using a PACE approach can support children and young people to engage in a church setting.

PLAYFULNESS

How can I be, or make this, more fun and lighthearted?

ACEPTANCE

Accept the thoughts, wishes and feelings that are underneath the behaviour.

CURIOSITY

Wonder what is going on using open-ended questions.

EMPATHY

Put yourself in their shoes and show you care.

WHAT COULD PLAYFULNESS LOOK LIKE?

Playing
Simon says

Giving a silly
response

Using a
relaxed
approach

Appealing to
their special
interest

Finding
alternative
ways to engage

Thinking
through
sensory
input

Being flexible
and changing
direction

Using music

WHAT COULD ACCEPTANCE LOOK LIKE?

Not taking
it personally

Validating
feelings

Adjusting the
environment

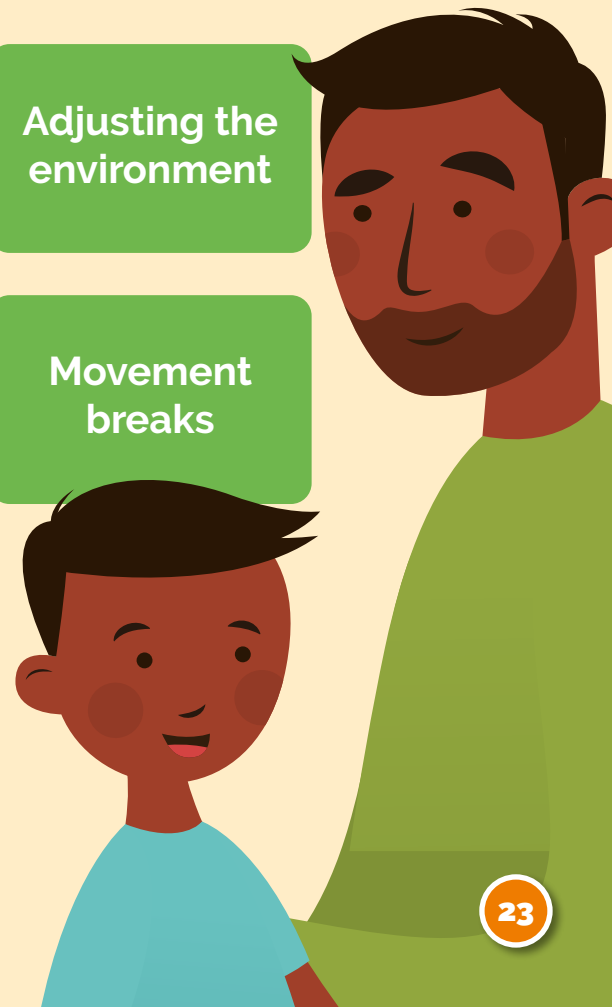
Being aware of
own bias

Clear
boundaries

Movement
breaks

Being aware of
developmental
age

Clear
expectations



WHAT COULD CURIOSITY LOOK LIKE?

Wondering
aloud

Reasonable
adjustments

Giving
choice

Asking for
feedback

Collaboration

Team
debriefs

Conversation
with parent/
carer

Alternative
communication

WHAT COULD EMPATHY LOOK LIKE?

Putting yourself in the child or young person's shoes when
planning sessions or responding to situations

"It feels awful when people say mean things to us doesn't it?
Do you want me to sit with you for a bit?"

"I can hear you're finding this activity tricky.
Would you like to do some lego instead?"

"I can see you're having a hard time. I'm here to help."

"Thank you for telling me you're not enjoying this.
Do you want to do something else or would you
like to go back to your grown up?"



WHAT COULD PACE LOOK LIKE IN YOUR SETTING?

PLAYFULNESS

ACCEPTANCE

CURIOSITY

EMPATHY

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PARENT/CARER

Being a parent or carer of a child who needs additional support can be **exhausting and overwhelming** at times.

It's important to **be sensitive** to the experience of parents or carers and we can do this through...

Being aware of
compassion fatigue

Only asking
necessary questions

Holding information
confidentially

Maintaining clear
communication

Following safeguarding
protocol

Recognising the needs
of the whole family

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS



OTHER TRAINING:

- Mental Health Awareness
- Understanding Young People
- Autism Awareness Training
- Contextual Safeguarding Training
- An Introduction to Therapeutic Parenting
- An Introduction to Trauma-Informed Support
- Understanding Secondary Trauma
- Becoming a Trauma Aware Church



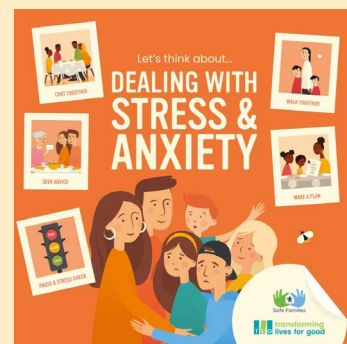
FIND OUT MORE



safefamilies.uk/training

RESOURCES

More information and support can be found in our booklets made in partnership with TLG. Booklets can be accessed via their website.



FIND OUT MORE



tlq.org.uk/get-involved/tlg-resource-shop

FURTHER INFORMATION:

GROWING HOPE: growinghope.org.uk

GOVERNMENT TRAUMA INFORMATION:
gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice

JOIN THE DOTS: jointhedots.solutions

PARENTING FOR FAITH:
parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk

THIRTYONE:EIGHT:
For safeguarding specific support: thirtyoneeight.org



FURTHER READING:

BELONGING WITHOUT BARRIERS,
Triona Brading, Lois Bunyan, Claire Wood

DIVINE ATTACHMENT, Dr Ruth Graham





safefamilies.uk | homeforgood.org.uk

Safe Families and Home for Good. Registered Charity in England and Wales No. 1150405 and Registered Charity in Scotland No. SC048207 and Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England and Wales No. 08134971. The Registered Office is 4 Diamond Court, Kingston Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 2EN