

Individualised Settling-In Plan

Using the Five to Thrive model

This annotated version includes an overview of the Five to Thrive model and has comments and questions that will help you consider how you can use the Five to Thrive model to support children during the settling-in process.

The Five to Thrive model promotes attachment, healthy brain development and can support recovery from trauma. Five to Thrive describes a sequence of parental / carer activities found within attuned interactions with babies and children. Five to Thrive can happen in a blink of an eye, yet every part of the sequence is vital to enable the connection between parents /adults and children that builds healthy brains.

Five to Thrive can help practitioners to focus on the bond between themselves and the babies / children they care for – and help understand where they may need to focus their efforts. In addition, it can help practitioners to think about parental capacity in new ways – particularly with vulnerable families. Five to Thrive resources can be used to promote parental responsiveness, engagement, self-regulation, playfulness and verbal communication.

Respond - Responding and assessing needs (mindful awareness)

Babies and young children need adults who are physically and emotionally available to them, to notice and tune into their verbal and non-verbal communications. They need adults who 'hold them in their minds' and ask the question "What are you trying to tell me?". Adults will then be able to respond in the most appropriate way. When the adult stops what they are doing and turns their attention to the baby or child (RESPOND), patterns begin to develop in the baby's brain for feeling safe and belonging.

Cuddle (Engage)- Connecting and engaging (mindful co-regulation)

Close proximity to an adult is necessary for the nervous system of the child to match that of the adult. When an adult calms a child through physical contact or closeness, the adult's body starts to relax- the heart beat and breathing slows down. The child's body tunes in to this and starts to imitate so the child's heart rate and breathing slow down too.

Through this close proximity (CUDDLE / ENGAGE) with an adult a baby/child develops patterns in the brain for connecting with others and trusting others.

Relax -self-regulating stress

When babies are born they are not able to self-regulate their own stress. Their brains learn to self-regulate through linking and connecting with the brain and nervous system of a regulated adult. Once the child has attuned to the adult by being physically close to them, then once the adult self-regulates (relaxes themselves) (RELAX) the child matches and relaxes also. Patterning for self-regulation develops in the brain.

Play – being playful: activating the right brain (mindful co-learning)

The right brain of the adult processes all the emotional activity that is going on – through facial expressions, tone of voice and other non-verbal signs – the adult shows the baby / child what is happening in that moment. This non-verbal communication (PLAY) activates the right side of the babies/child's brain – patterns develop in the brain for understanding and managing feelings.

Talk – creating a narrative: activating the left brain (mindful co-learning)

The left brain of the adult uses words to make sense of all the activity that is going on in that moment – through verbal activity such as explaining, describing, asking chatting, signing and singing. The adult also takes turns listening to the child (words, sounds) and replying to the child (words, sounds, tone of voice) – turn taking conversation ensures both brains are active. This verbal communication (TALK) activates the left brain of the child – building brain patterns for making sense of experience through the use of words and narrative.

The Five to Thrive sequence starts with RESPOND and needs to be continued in the order as set out. It may be that some parts of the sequence need more focus than others according to the needs of the child and whether there are any attachment gaps.



Talk

Consider what methods of communication the child responds to best – it might involve pictures, symbols or a non-verbal system. Are there any special words that he /she uses for particular people or objects?
Are there any favourite songs/rhymes or stories?
Don't forget to listen and give the child plenty of time to respond with either gestures or words.
Remember to use approaches that help to make sense of day to day life and new experiences.

Play

Playing helps me to make sense of the world.
What types of play does the child become engrossed in?
What do you know about the child's specific interests and fascinations?
Does the child prefer to be outside or inside?
Don't forget to let the child lead the play and make plenty of time for this bonding experience together.

Relax

What will help you and child to be calm and relax?
Think about what people, spaces, places, resources and rituals help the child to be soothed and calm?
Consider how the environment may be affecting how the child is responding and their behaviours
What resources or areas of the environment can help with this?
Don't forget outdoors has a calming, therapeutic influence.

Cuddle

What type of physical contact, if any, does the child like (holding hands, stroking, hugs...)? What do you know about the child and their reactions to the proximity of others?
How does the child like to be physically comforted when upset?
Don't forget children like to give as well as receive physical contact.

Respond

Think about the clues and cues the child gives you when they need an adult to 'notice' that they need to be soothed, settled, or stimulated.
The child will need you to respond in a way with which they can cope – what does this look like?
Don't forget the child will be tuning into your facial expressions and body language.
Be willing to make a connection even when the child appears hostile or unresponsive – aim to give your undivided attention in the moment when responding