

PARENT MENTORING

A Framework for successful therapeutic
parenting

ADAPT Scotland <https://adaptsotland.co.uk>

Helping parents help their children

by:

Understanding the family issues

Offering support and empathy for all
family members

Providing a safe environment and
valuable tools for change

Principles of Therapeutic Parenting

- Children need to 'go back to go forward'
 - to help them fill the emotional gaps
- Considers all aspects of a child's functioning
 - impact of trauma on neurobiological system
 - developmental trauma issues
 - attachment patterns
 - current behaviour
 - executive functioning difficulties

Therapeutic Parenting Support

- Starts with understanding the child's history
 - what was done to the child
 - what it did to the child
- Recognises the ways in which this continues to impact in the present
 - at a body, brain, behavioural and cognitive levels
- Recognises the impact on parents
 - Secondary trauma
- Recognises the impact of parents' own history
 - we all have attachment and trauma issues
- Allows parents to feel safe enough to explore their responses and make changes: to provide a safe environment for their children do the same

How Parent Mentoring Helps

- Bespoke programme to meet individual needs of each family and each family member.

Common elements: providing parents with:

- Understanding of the reasons for their child's difficulties and current behaviour
- A parenting plan that is relevant and flexible
- Encouragement to consider new ways of parenting
- Support to put plans and strategies into action
- Confidence to become effective therapeutic parents

Aims of Parent Mentoring Programme

- Developing greater understanding of the reasons for the child's difficulties.
- Reducing conflict and stress in families.
- Putting parents in loving control within their families.
- Giving children opportunities to trust their parents are really there for them and can meet their needs.
- Providing an infrastructure that allows children to change and manage their lives in a healthier ways.
- Establishing a safe 'holding' environment for parents.
- Help for parents look at any difficulties they have in implementing the programme: including personal issues that may be having an impact.

Key Concepts of Therapeutic Parenting

- **‘Practising’**
 - for both parents and children: ‘we’ not ‘you’
 - We all make mistakes when we practise, it’s what we learn from those mistakes that is important
- **Shared responsibility**
 - between mentor and parents
 - between parents and children
- **‘Going backwards to move forwards’**
 - thinking toddler
- **‘Language of Trauma’**
 - recognising that children’s behaviour is the language they use to let you know what is going on for them
 - Understanding that their first language is the one that was ‘spoken in their birth family; i.e. the language of trauma

Key concepts - continued

- **When to intervene verbally: to work out ‘what happened’ and ‘what we could do next time’**
 - before the child dysregulates by trying to anticipate situations that will be difficult for the child
 - after the event when the child is regulated again, recognising that this may be several hours later
- **Helping children recognise what is going on for them – in this order**
 - at a body level
 - at a feeling level
 - at a cognitive level
- **Parents need to look after themselves**
 - often the hardest thing for parents to do!

Final Reflections

- **That families are the best environment for children to grow and develop**
- **We start from the principle that children and parents are doing the best they can**
 - it's not 'won't do'; rather it's 'can't do'
- **We believe that children and parents want to be happy together as a family**
- **It's the parent mentor's job to show them ways they can do what they want to do and are able to do.**

Parenting Mentoring for Wales?

- **How could we develop a similar Parent Mentoring programme for Wales?**
- **Are you interesting in learning more about Parent Mentoring as a valuable therapeutic support to therapeutic parents?**
- **Would you consider undertaking Parent Mentor training locally?**
- **Could you or your agency make use of such a service?**