Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking — A guide for parents and carers.

What is Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking?

Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking is our preferred approach to behaviour management within Cambridgeshire and is based on the philosophy *"You can't teach children to behave better by making them feel worse. When children feel better, they behave better."* Pam Leo.

It is a relationships-based, therapeutic-thinking and trauma-responsive approach to learning about behaviour. What does this mean for your child? It means that all adults in a school using Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking understand what causes positive and helpful as well as disruptive, difficult, or dangerous behaviour. They recognise that all behaviour is communication and work to unpick what each behaviour is telling us, rather than punishing. These adults focus on developing positive experiences and feelings for everyone in the school environment, recognising that these usually lead to positive and helpful behaviour, as well as looking at how to help to change behaviours that we want to reduce.

What does Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking look like when schools are using it well?

Ethos: Staff have shared values and beliefs as to the importance of the Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking approach. Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking uses a restorative approach – teachers and children work together to rebuild relationships and repair any harm done.

Training: All staff in a school or setting will have training in the Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking approach. They will know how to promote positive and helpful behaviour and manage disruptive, difficult, and dangerous behaviour. They understand what a child's behaviour might be communicating to them.

Shared approach: Staff teach and model positive and helpful behaviour. They have a consistent approach to managing situations and responding to incidents, using the same language and techniques.

Priorities: Staff focus on preventing and de-escalating incidents, rather than reacting to them.

Consequences: Behaviours will have logical consequences that provide an opportunity for a child to learn how to change a behaviour. Pupils don't just 'miss a break' because they were disruptive in maths, for example. They might need to catch up uncompleted work, but adults will also try to understand why they were being disruptive; pupils don't lose their break as a punishment.

How can schools and parents work together?

Talk: When parents and schools talk to each other regularly about positive behaviours as well as those that we are wanting to reduce, we start to appreciate all that a child can be.

Share: It can help to make sure that the approaches at home and school are as similar as possible. This can mean sharing ideas to reduce difficult and dangerous behaviour and teaming up to respond to situations in the same way.

Support independence: Supporting children to become independent in their positive and helpful behaviours in and out of home is important. We can do this by helping a child to understand why they are being asked to do something rather than bribing or punishing them.

Why is the Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking approach important?

Parents and carers can often struggle to understand why their child does the things that they do and why it might sometimes feel that they 'never seem to learn'. The key to understanding children's behaviours and making life a bit easier for everyone, is to understand 'why'. It's never straight forward but working together with the adults at your child's school will help your child to feel safe, understood and supported.

Some ideas to try at home.

Help your child to participate in positive experiences to generate helpful feelings and behaviours. These could be simple activities such as going to the park or for a walk, playing a family board game or talking around the dinner table.

Encourage your child to talk about their feelings. Be prepared to talk about your feelings too. Try to develop a 'word bank' and help your child to understand and use as many words as possible to help them accurately share what they are feeling.

Help them to calm down when their feelings become too big for them to cope with. All children get upset but often, they can't manage these feelings alone.

You can help by:

- showing your child that you understand what they're feeling,
- letting them know they are safe,
- being patient and remaining calm,
- helping your child to understand what has happened,
- use pictures, puppets, or stories to help your child to develop some strategies to understand they are not alone in how their emotions make them feel,
- try calming activities such as breathing techniques to help them get rid of frustrations.
- Let your child know that it is OK to face challenges and difficulties and to ask for help. Encourage your child to stick at something they find difficult: support them with a difficult piece of work, a tricky jigsaw puzzle, or a long walk. This will build up their confidence and promote their positive feelings about themselves.
- Make sure you take care of yourself – develop healthy habits, do at least one thing that's just for you, put pressure aside and accept help when it's offered.

Remember 'PACE'

Playful (spontaneous and fun) — *"Can I join in?"*; *"Let's skip or dance!"*; *"What game can we play?"*

Acceptance (unconditional and positive) — "You are loved, no matter what."

Curiosity (be curious for them) — "I wonder...?"; "Tell me about that."

Empathy (listen until they stop) — "I can help you with these feelings."; "No wonder you're upset, that must have been hard."

For additional information, please contact.

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