



Book A: Parent/Guardian/Carer Guide

This short guide is designed to give parents/guardians/carers a brief introduction to the **Tools to Thrive** programme, which aims to support pupils in 5th and 6th year with their well-being and mental health.

Research indicates that having a high level of well-being is the greatest predictor of happiness and success in life, for both adults and young people.

However, our young people face ever-increasing challenges and demands as they grow into adulthood. There is a vital need to equip them with the skills and tools which will help them to thrive, despite these challenges. The Tools to Thrive programme aims to introduce young people to these evidence-based tools.

The programme is based on concepts from neuroscience and Positive Psychology, which is the science of well-being. It is designed in accordance with the Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) curriculum (2024) and covers 2 of the 3 strand areas of this curriculum, namely Strand 1: Health and Well-Being and Strand 3: Into Adulthood. The programme has 2 levels, Level A & Level B, which contain 8 lessons per level.

As well-being programmes work best when there is parental/guardian encouragement and involvement, it would be very beneficial for you to discuss each tool with your adolescent, should they wish to. The information below offers an overview of each lesson as well as some ideas for you to support the young person as they progress through the programme.

At the end of the programme, you can encourage your adolescent to keep using the tools that they found useful. You might like to try out some of the tools too.

There is an accompanying online **Pupil Digital Page** with additional resources on each topic. You might also find these resources beneficial, as they provide background information on all of the topics and tools covered.

You can access the Pupil Digital Page here: www.otb.ie/t2t-a-p or scan the QR code here:



Lesson 1: How to Thrive:

This lesson outlines the importance of learning how to thrive, due to the increasing pressures and challenges of modern life. Students are then introduced to the concept of thriving as follows:

To **thrive** is to have good levels of **well-being** and to mostly feel **confident**, **happy** and **good about yourself** and **your life**. When you are thriving, you are growing into the best version of yourself and **reaching towards your potential**. You **feel connected to others**, and you **understand that you** can have a **positive impact** on the people around you and the wider world too. You feel **resilient** and **trust yourself** to be able to cope with the challenges and difficulties of life. You **believe in yourself** and know that you are **good enough**, just as you are.

Thriving doesn't mean feeling happy and positive **all of the time**, it means understanding that **all of your emotions are important** and having helpful ways to deal with difficult emotions.

In order to thrive, you must first make sure that you know how to guide your **brain** and **nervous system** into thriving mode, which means feeling **safe**, **calm** and **connected**. This is known as **regulating** the nervous system.

From this calm state, you can then guide yourself to become **energised** and **empowered** whenever you need to.

They explore the idea that some of the factors that impact our levels of thriving are outside of our circle of control and some are inside of our circle of our control. Students reflect on the 'little things' that they already do which help them to thrive and are encouraged to do some of these things every day. They also complete a self-assessment on their use of tools in each dimension of well-being and are encouraged to focus on any areas they might need to.

Support your child by: Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to do some of their 'little things' every day.



Soothe Your Survival Brain

Lesson 2: Tool 1: Soothe Your Survival Brain

Lesson 2 introduces students to the fight/flight/freeze response. This is a survival response of the brain when faced with threat or danger, which is caused by an amygdala hijack. Stress chemicals such as adrenalin and cortisol are released. Students explore the concept that while this was very helpful to our early ancestors, it is not helpful to us in modern day, as it can cause us to over-react to perceived stressors and triggers. Sometimes, these reactions can make the situation worse. Students are introduced to the **Soothe Your Survival Brain** tool, a 2-step method that helps to calm an amygdala hijack - **Notice & Soothe**.

Support your child by: Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to use the **Notice & Soothe** method whenever they feel stressed or overwhelmed.



Activate Your Thriving Brain

Lesson 3: Tool 2: Activate Your Thriving Brain

Students learn about the importance of activating their brains to thrive. As our brains are hardwired for survival rather than thriving, we may be in survival mode a lot of the time without even realising it. We may wake up each morning with lots of **Automatic Negative Thoughts, (ANTs)** which can trigger the fight/flight/freeze response. To counteract this, we need to consciously choose thoughts and actions which will release feel-good chemicals and activate our brains towards thriving.

Students are introduced to a **3-Step Morning Mental Health Routine** to help to activate the brain towards thriving. They are encouraged to try it before they start scrolling on their phones, as research shows that phone use first thing in the morning can have a negative impact on well-being. They are also encouraged to look after their physical well-being, as this helps to release feel-good chemicals too.

Support your child by: Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to use their **3-Step Morning Mental Health Routine**.



Boost Your Thriving Emotions

Lesson 4: Tool 3: Boost Your Thriving Emotions

Lesson 4 introduces students to the idea that all emotions are important and valuable. They learn that it's useful to think of two specific categories of emotions – survival emotions and thriving emotions. They learn about the purpose of survival emotions such as anger and anxiety and the concept that survival emotions have a stronger impact on us and last longer than thriving ones. For this reason, we need a 3:1 ratio of thriving to survival emotions.

Students are then introduced to ten specific thriving emotions from Positive Psychology and are encouraged to reflect on ways they can use the tool of boosting them on a personal level. The emotions are **love, joy, hope, peace, gratitude, inspiration, awe, amusement, interest** and **pride**.

Support your child by: Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to boost and savour their thriving emotions every day.



Train Your Thoughts

Lesson 5: Tool 4: Train Your Thoughts

Students learn about some common **Thinking Traps** including catastrophizing, perfectionism and emotional reasoning. They learn about the importance of challenging these types of thoughts. They are introduced to a series of questions to help them to question their thoughts and develop healthier, more accurate thinking patterns.

Support your child by: Discussing this topic with them and helping them to identify their **Thinking Traps**.



Embody Your Values

Lesson 6: Tool 5: Embody Your Values

As adolescence is an important time for the development of personal identity, this lesson encourages students to reflect on the type of person they wish to become and to be intentional and purposeful in shaping this process. Students are encouraged to identify their core values so that they can act in alignment with them and embody them in their day-to-day lives.

Support your child by: Discussing this topic with them and helping them to identify and connect to their personal values.



Believe in Yourself

Lesson 7: Tool 6: Believe in Yourself

Students learn about the importance of self-belief and identify possible barriers to their own self-belief and confidence. They explore the impact of messages from modern culture and social media which may be eroding their self-belief. They are introduced to the **24 Character Strengths of Positive Psychology**, including *creativity, curiosity, leadership, optimism, bravery, social & emotional intelligence, perseverance, fairness, humour, gratitude, kindness* and *love*. They identify their own 5 main strengths and reflect on ways they can use them every day to help them to believe in themselves.

Support your child by: Discussing this topic with them and helping them to identify and connect to their main Character Strengths.

Lesson 8: It's Time to Thrive

Your child reviews all the tools and reflects on the ones they found most useful. They are encouraged to use their tools going forward and keep track of the effect on their mood and well-being.

Support your child by: Discussing the tools with them and encouraging them to keep using the ones they find particularly effective.



Additional information on the programme can be found on the publisher's website: www.otb.ie/T2T

The **Tools to Thrive** programme uses **Aravis®** font throughout, an emerging font researched and developed by Crossbow Education that meets all possible accessibility criteria for dyslexia and the visual difficulties associated with it.