



## Book B: 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 and Level B, which contain 8 lessons per level.

As well-being programmes work best when there is parental/guardian/carers 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 Companion 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-b-p](http://www.otb.ie/t2t-b-p) or scan the QR code here:

### Lesson 1: From Surviving to Thriving:

This lesson reminds students of the importance of learning how to thrive, due to the increasing pressures and challenges of modern life. Students are then reminded of the concept of thriving which was introduced in Level A 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.

The nervous system states of survival and thriving are explored and students are reminded that because everyday challenges can often trigger the nervous system into survival mode, they need to have tools to regulate it and guide it towards thriving mode. This is especially important in 6th year when there are many additional challenges.

**Support your child by:** Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to do some of the calming techniques which are introduced in this lesson, including Box Breathing, Notice & Soothe and 3, 2, 1...Breathe.



Manage Your Mood

### Lesson 2: Tool 1: Manage Your Mood

This lesson introduces the concept of moods and how we tend to feel generally at different times. Moods can last from shorter to longer periods and we can generally classify them into positive or negative moods. If the nervous system is in survival mode a lot of the time, we may experience negative moods more often and they may be more intense. To be in thriving mode, students need to aim to create a positive mood for themselves as often as possible. Of course, it's not always possible or appropriate to be in a positive mood. The importance of reaching out for help and support should they experience a low mood over a longer period of time is also reinforced.

**Support your child by:** Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to use some of the 'Mood Boosters' introduced in this lesson. Remind them of the importance of reaching out to you for support whenever they need to.



Activate Your Goals

### Lesson 3: Tool 2: Activate Your Goals

This lesson outlines the importance of setting and achieving goals as an important part of thriving and growing towards our full potential. Setting them is an important first step and then we also need to activate them, which means taking the correct actions and behaviours to make them happen.

Two types of goals are introduced and explained - outcome goals and behaviour goals. Students are also introduced to the idea of visualisation as an aid to activating and achieving goals. Visualisation helps to prime the brain to focus on positive outcomes. Being able to deal with frustration, disappointment and failure are also key aspects of working towards goals, students are encouraged to stay flexible and adapt their goals as they need to.

**Support your child by:** Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to set some outcome and behaviour goals.



Control Your Attention

### Lesson 4: Tool 3: Control Your Attention

Lesson 4 introduces students to the importance of learning how to control our attention, in order to thrive. This means training our minds to focus on whatever we consciously decide to and to be able to tune out other distractions.

In today's busy world, there are many things demanding our attention constantly, so if we don't make the conscious decision to control it, we may find our focus and concentration being pulled subconsciously by external stimuli and distractions.

Students are introduced to the concept of external and internal distractions. External distractions come from our environment whereas internal distractions come from within our own minds, for example, feelings of boredom or frustration. Learning strategies to cope with both forms of distraction is important in controlling our attention. Students are introduced to techniques such as the '10-minute rule' to help them deal with distractions.

**Support your child by:** Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to use some of the attention aids outlined in this lesson, including 'time-blocking' and the '10-minute rule'.



Communicate to Connect

### Lesson 5: Tool 4: Communicate to Connect

This lesson introduces students to the 5 common styles of communication – assertive, passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and manipulative. As developing an assertive style of communication can help to build strong relationships, students are introduced to the characteristics of this style and are encouraged to develop it in their personal interactions with others, in order to become more confident, empowered and self-aware.

**Support your child by:** Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to explore and develop the characteristics of an assertive style of communication as outlined in this lesson.



Embrace Stress

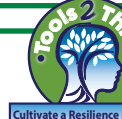
### Lesson 6: Tool 5: Embrace Stress

The stresses and challenges of modern life can often trigger the nervous system into survival mode – fight, flight, freeze, so it is important for students to have strategies to cope with this. Learning to embrace stress as part of the process of growth towards our potential is an important part of thriving.

Research shows that how we think about these physical symptoms has the power to either escalate or de-escalate them. If we think of these symptoms as harmful and to be avoided, we may become even more stressed. If we try to reinterpret these symptoms as signs that the body is helping us by preparing us to deal with the challenge, this calms the stress response, helping us to feel more in control and less overwhelmed.

Students are introduced to the idea of helpful self-talk in dealing with these symptoms. Students are also reminded that getting out of our comfort zone usually leads to feelings of stress and that this is a necessary step towards growth.

**Support your child by:** Discussing this topic with them and encouraging them to use the strategies and techniques introduced in this lesson, including helpful self-talk.



Cultivate a Resilience Mindset

### Lesson 7: Tool 6: Cultivate a Resilience Mindset

Lesson 7 introduces resilience as the ability to cope with and adapt to, the challenges of life. It is a key part of thriving. To cultivate a resilience mindset means to deliberately focus on doing the things we need to do to help us to feel mentally and emotionally stronger. It doesn't mean that we are not affected by these challenges – we can be resilient while still feeling sad, upset, disappointed or anxious. Asking for help and social support is vital in cultivating a resilience mindset.

In this lesson, students discuss what helps them to feel resilient. They also explore their use of unhelpful coping strategies and are encouraged to replace them with more helpful strategies. They are reminded of some of the tools already covered in the programme which can help them to cultivate this mindset. For example, learning ways to calm and soothe their nervous system, manage their mood and control their attention can all help them to deal with setbacks when they happen. They are also reminded of the 24 Character Strengths which were introduced in *Tools to Thrive: Level A*.

**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

Students are reminded of the meaning of thriving and also of all of the tools introduced throughout the programme. They reflect on ways in which they can optimise the use of the tools going forward.

**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](http://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.