

# Theraplay®-informed information for Adoptive Families

## What is Theraplay®?

Theraplay® is a way of using adult-led play to connect with your child at a deeper level. It involves fun games, developmentally challenging activities and tender, nurturing activities.

These games help you to regulate your child's behaviour and communicate love, joy and safety to your child. It helps your child feel secure, cared for, connected and worthy (theraplay.org).

During activities play is used to help you discover your child's strengths and needs. Theraplay® encourages you to select play activities that target your child's needs in a positive and safe way. It helps your child to learn and develop socially and emotionally.

There are 4 dimensions of Theraplay. Play that creates opportunities for:

- ♦ Engagement
- ♦ Nurture
- ♦ Structure
- ♦ Challenge



These dimensions promote healthy attachment relationships, positive self-esteem, trust, a positive sense of self and self-regulation.

## Your role as a parent

Seek out opportunities for positive interactions with your child.

Be attentive to your child's strengths and areas of need.

Be flexible in response to how your child presents in the 'here and now'.

Observe the physical and emotional reactions of your child.

Lead your child in play activities and keep everything positive.

Support your child to achieve success.

Have fun and enjoy the 'now' moments.

## Things to remember

- ♦ Repeated experiences, routines and structure are important and will help your child feel safe and confident.
- ♦ You don't have to be a 'perfect' parent, it's the overall positive pattern of caregiving that matters.
- ♦ Pitch games at a simple level so that your child experiences success and find ways to repair when things go wrong.
- ♦ When your child is finding a situation difficult they may regress to younger behaviours.
- ♦ Distraction techniques can be helpful when negative situations arise.
- ♦ Identify your child's developmental stage rather than their chronological age. Try not to compare your child to others at the same age. Every child has a unique developmental profile.
- ♦ Laughing and playing without fear and judgement can be deeply healing.

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