

FRT

Functional Reflex Therapy

Encouraging
emotional
resilience
through FRT

'a supportive therapy in readiness for
learning and coping better with
activities' Head Teacher.

EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE



With Lorraine Senior

For some children, a school day can consist of high levels of anxiety, stress, worry, and fretfulness affecting their ability to settle and concentrate in class; this may have an impact on their ability to learn. It was these issues that led me to look at how reflexology could help within this setting with the purpose of calming a child's mind.



I support young people with special educational needs aged between 7 and 19 years, with learning, language, and information processing difficulties which can make the world around them very challenging in so many ways. It is important not to focus on any specific diagnosis, although knowing about a condition and having sufficient information to support my understanding is very important! But instead, I look at the situations each young person is struggling with during the school day and consider how my session may help to bring them a more positive frame of mind.



Functional Reflex Therapy Framework (FRT) which is more than just touch, supports my reflexology. It is designed to focus on a workable objective beyond the touch, but it does give great importance to the method of the delivery of techniques. The objective encourages the person participating in the session to get involved - beginning with collection from the classroom. The repetition and rhythm of the delivery of the techniques during the session allow time to recognise, become familiar, feel, and respond to the movement. Allowing time also helps the child to make sense of what is happening and encourages a more parasympathetic state to restore calm and encourage relaxation.

As explained, FRT supports young people who are experiencing challenges during the school day. For this article, challenges can be referred to as 'stress and anxiety' which cause a rise in cortisol, and in the long term, this will have a significant impact on the balance of the frontal lobe of the brain. This is one of the distinct lobes in the cerebral cortex; the centre for reasoning, problem-solving, focus, concentration, and management of emotions.

I particularly focus on encouraging the release of oxytocin, a nurturing hormone that can help to calm and rebalance the frontal lobe; an imbalance within the frontal lobe can cause a child to struggle to cope during the school day.

An example case study

A male year 8 student (13 years of age). Very anxious; agitated; struggling with family issues at home, with a poor sleep pattern and low self-esteem. He would, on occasions, get very angry in the classroom and could find it difficult to manage his emotions and outbursts.

The main objective was for one-to-one support out of the classroom with some positive touch and kindness. My intention was also the release of oxytocin.



Before our sessions began, he had the opportunity to visit the therapy room and ask many questions, for example: What was the reflexology for? Why was he allowed out of class? He was also very worried about missing classroom time. With his teacher, we addressed his questions and he agreed to come along. This was great, as he had to be the one consenting to the sessions.





From the classroom, he would shuffle along the corridor with shoulders rounded. His eyes would look to the floor most of the time; he chose not to engage with me. He was quite uptight in the early sessions and rarely spoke. If he chose the blanket, he would usually be underneath it. If he chose to pull it down, his eyes were usually looking at the wall, avoiding me if I looked up. At all times, I respected his choices.

The position of his feet was quite upright, but he never removed them from my hands. He turned down the offer of any music, but I always offered him the opportunity.

I used my 'FRT bag' as a tool kit and we had great success with it by [session 4](#). He took the bag from me (for the first time) and pushed his water bottle in through the gathered top; then threw it over one shoulder. It only had a towel inside but that produced an inner smile from me as he was beginning to get involved.

By [session 5](#), I was aware that his upright feet had gently dropped outwards, and his ankles had softened. He initiated a little conversation which he volunteered....



**"Well, I am
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to see you and
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you."**



"I've not had a very good week," he said.

"Well, I am really pleased to see you and that you have come along today, thank you." I respond. "Would you like to tell me about your week?"

A pause. "Not really!"

This was a huge step though. He had recognised he was having challenges and voiced that. The sessions were giving him a safe space and time to consider how he was feeling.

By [session 6](#), he was telling me that he "quite liked" coming along to reflexology and which movements he liked too.

During sessions 6 -12 we shared some very relaxing therapy time, sometimes with chat, sometimes without. But I did see a real difference in the relaxed position of his feet. When we reached the summer holidays, he took away some breathing and hand reflexology techniques to help calm his mind when faced with difficult situations at home.

Teacher Feedback: He doesn't often look happy, but he usually returns to the classroom following the sessions with you with a big smile on his face.



My conclusion:

I would like to think that my reflexology and the FRT Framework introduced him to a new and enjoyable sensory experience. Even if he was not able to recognise its impact on his inner calmness, I think the team around him did, beginning to help him cope with his feelings and challenges in a more positive way. Whilst my passion with FRT has been to support young people with additional complex needs, I use and teach it to reflexologists as a framework to support people of all ages, and in all settings, to ease high levels of stress and anxiety - thus improving their emotional resilience.

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FRT provides a multi-dimensional approach; creates the right environment; gets young people involved with the sessions; works with the team around them whilst delivering the many benefits of touch through reflexology; and is a framework into which reflexologists can bring their own experiences and tools.