



# Functional Reflex Therapy and Reflexology

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"We really enjoy hand and foot reflexology therapy with Lorraine on our timetable at school"

When I was offered the opportunity to introduce reflexology as a regular therapy working with children with autism, autistic spectrum disorders, neurological impairment and complex needs in the education system, it was important that I developed a holistic framework that would:

- Have a clear aim, intention and structure to the therapy time
- Offer a pleasant, positive, valuable experience and be available for all individuals to access the many potential benefits of reflexology
- Support the multi-disciplinary team by discussing my work and developing possible links to classroom targets and personal learning targets, to demonstrate pupils working towards progress in areas identified by teachers
- Use methods of communication to meet the needs of individuals e.g. Makaton signing and symbols, photographs and gestures, to help with preparation for and in understanding of what was happening during and at the end of the session
- Acknowledge that consent is 'in the moment' and is receiver led
- Be seen to add value to the school and school timetable, keep records of sessions, reflect, evaluate, plan and provide feedback
- Be recognised and valued by the pupils, staff, parents, governors and the education authority
- Meet Ofsted requirements
- Give me the opportunity to share techniques with staff, parents and carers and where possible offer self help techniques to pupils

The primary outcome is relaxation.

It is a scientific fact that the nervous and endocrine systems are influenced by states of long term stress, anxiety, anger and tension - and that the receptiveness of individuals to learning situations and to some demands placed upon them may be restricted or hindered when such states manifest themselves in the body. These are difficult states that are often associated with many people with autism, autistic spectrum disorders, learning difficulties and complex needs in everyday life. This was my starting point when I asked myself how reflexology can work to offer support and how I can take it into school to add value to the weekly and/ or daily timetable.

It is suggested by some scientists that many hormones and many 'happy' chemicals may be released through positive touch, which may reduce the subjective sense of anxiety and increase overall calm.

Encouraging the body to relax and relieve some tension through the combination of the positive touch relaxation techniques and movements implemented through reflexology in the therapy sessions endeavours to augment the release of the many wellbeing hormones in the brain to create calming conditions.

I began to receive great feedback from staff accompanying pupils during the first few sessions, which was very encouraging...and from pupils themselves with their keenness to come to the therapy room and to follow short instructions in preparation for therapy.

*"wow - I have never seen him so quiet"*  
*"She has never attempted to put her socks on when requested or instructed before"*  
*"He is always keen to come with you to the therapy room"*



Staff training.  
Functional Reflex Therapy.

Staff then began to ask me about the sessions; they signed up to and enjoyed some short sessions in lunch times and after school to experience reflexology for themselves. They asked me to teach them some techniques to use in the classroom.

The solution was the development of Functional Reflex Therapy which is 'similar yet very different' to the therapy offered by a qualified reflexologist. It is now being used in the school and is taught to the multi-disciplinary team through attending a workshop.

Functional Reflex Therapy (FRT) is designed to empower the multi-disciplinary team in the education system nurturing children and young adults with autism, autistic spectrum disorders, neurological impairment and complex needs, with non-invasive, safe relaxation techniques drawn from original theories and practice of reflexology. It is a short, repetitive routine consisting of a combination of relaxation techniques with linking moves using hand, finger and thumb movements to specific reflex points and areas on the feet and lower leg or hand and forearm, which staff can implement into their

classroom at a time to suit their timetable and best meet the needs of their pupils.

### The tool kit

The framework for school is supported with the FRT tool kit which includes:

- Objects of reference and resources
- Planning, recording and evaluation sheets



Multi-Disciplinary Team delivery of Functional Reflex Therapy in the classroom



The Functional Reflex Therapy 'FRT bag' on the peg in the corridor



This all helps the sessions to be effectively timetabled as a regular classroom activity which may further support behaviour management strategies that are already in place and may offer an opportunity to work towards personal learning targets. There is a classroom box of resources and a lever arch file for evidence and information available. The FRT kit bags are available for pupils to bring some responsibility for them in order to help them to prepare for the session with a few resources.

The sessions are often as calming and relaxing for the giver as the receiver - how nice for employers to be able to think about the wellbeing of their staff whilst they're working for the benefit of the pupils!

### Where would I like it to go?

I would like to see:

- Reflexology delivered by qualified, registered and insured reflexologists in schools, perhaps using the Functional Reflex Therapy Approach
- FRT kit bags on all children's coat pegs in schools throughout the world

The team are beginning to deliver Functional Reflex Therapy in the classroom and I am just starting to roll out 'similar yet different' workshops for parents, carers, grandparents, siblings and keyworkers, further developing the home/ school links. It would be great in the future to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of this therapy to highlight the positive results and reflect on its outcomes.

With regular relaxation reflexology and possibly Functional Reflex Therapy, can we enhance the classroom environment as a whole and nurture pupils in their personal preparation for learning?

I would like to say a big thank you to the pupils, staff, parents and governors at Harlow Fields School and college for all of the opportunities I am being offered there.

**Lorraine Senior B.Ed MAR (Hons)**

[www.functionalreflextherapy.co.uk](http://www.functionalreflextherapy.co.uk)



Functional Reflex Therapy

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