# stormbreak®
Theoretical Model

At stormbreak CIO we provide a unique integration of psychologically informed physical movement to proactively nurture mentally healthy children.

The preventative, normalising, strengths based and validating approach of stormbreak is much needed in mainstreaming and destigmatising mental health.

The World Health Organisation champions preventative, early childhood mental health interventions, including school-based programmes and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2022) recommends adopting a whole-school approach to supporting positive social, emotional and mental wellbeing of staff, children and young people in primary and secondary education.

Stormbreak supports this agenda by providing essential opportunities to nurture the emotional and physical wellbeing of future generations. This is achieved by embedding mentally healthy movement in schools, homes, places and spaces with trusted adults who live with, work with, care for and support young children. For some, talking therapies in traditional clinical settings does not meet a child's needs. Our approach removes barriers to participation and draws upon the simplicity of movement to support a child's mental health.

Stormbreak adopts essential psychological approaches when supporting children, including biopsychosocial, systemic, developmental and multidisciplinary approaches.

stormbreak® Theoretical Model

Child Centred

Positive relationship with trusted adult

Developmental
Systemic
Social Learning
Learning Pedagogy
Biopsychosocial
Neuroscience
Evidence based psychological techniques
Attachment, positive relationships & self esteem

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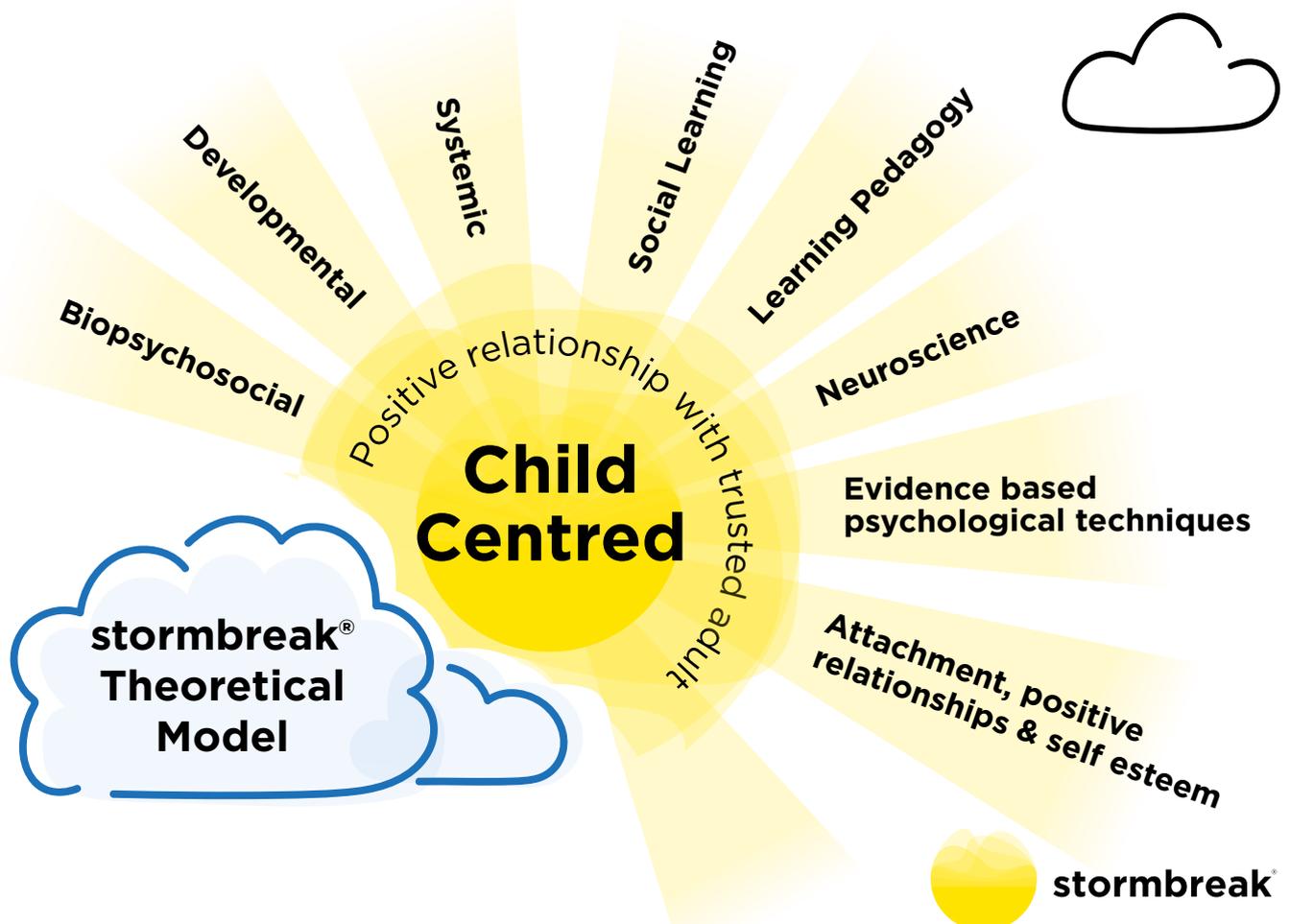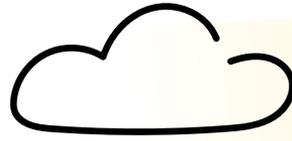
Child and Cognitive Development

Our approach and techniques are informed by developmental psychology and Piaget's (1936 & 1950) *Stages of Cognitive Development*. We understand that there are individual differences in the rate at which a child's cognitive ability will develop that is not solely bound by age. Furthermore, we recognise our children have been born into a technological era that has equipped them with an interest and skill in the use of technology. We therefore use age appropriate, tailored and creative digital adaptations to effectively communicate valuable information to coach children and adults in important emotional reasoning, social and physical wellbeing skills.

Social Learning Theory

Stormbreak activities are informed by the benefits of environmental observation, modelling, reinforcement, consequences and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others (Bandura, 1977). Reinforcement from trusted adults is rich in validation and specific labelled praise.

According to Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development Theory, children's learning always occurs in social contexts and in cooperation with someone more skilful to assist them in their progress. This 'scaffolded' approach is purposefully used in stormbreak activities and positively reinforced through group/peer learning.

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Attachment Theory: Positive Relationships and Self Esteem

At the core of our theoretical framework is the role of a positive connection with a trusted adult which supports development and wellbeing.

We promote positive adult-child connections. We adopt a validating and child centred approach which nurtures positive self-worth. We try to recreate certain aspects of a positive connection/attachment because we know that the quality of infant-parent bonding and formation of secure attachments are major factors in the development of healthy self-concept, feelings of self-worth and competency (Ainsworth, Bell and Stayton,1971; Bowlby 1969; Main and Soloman 1990). Furthermore, we acknowledge the effect of low self-esteem on negative affectivity (Sowislo and Orth, 2013).

Group activities are also a feature of many of our stormbreaks as they can strengthen self-esteem and emotional wellbeing by fostering a sense of connectedness and belonging to a peer group. As with many recommended psychotherapeutic approaches for children, we coach the trusted adults through psychoeducation to become a confident co-pilot in scaffolding therapeutic information and techniques (e.g., See the *National Institute for Health and Care Excellence quality standards for Anxiety Disorder*, QS53, 2014).

> *"An infant coming into the world has no past, no experience in handling himself, no scale on which to judge his own worth. He must rely on the experiences he has with other people around him and the messages they give him about his worth as a person."*
> (Satir, 1972, p. 24)

Some of the tools we use can also be seen in the positive parenting approaches used by evidence based parenting programmes:

- Genuine positive regard and respect
- Acceptance
- Openness
- Trust
- Curiosity
- Empathy
- Warmth
- Individualisation
- Positive attention
- Visible kindness

- Praise, encouragement, positive affirmation, appreciation, validation, celebration of achievements and participation/effort
- Play and humour
- Understanding the unmet need of the child and how their behaviour maybe communicating this

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Evidence-Based Psychological Techniques

The importance of stormbreak's core emotional wellbeing concepts of Relationships, Self-Worth, Self-Care, Hope and Optimism and Resilience can be seen in the delivery of much evidence-based psychological therapies.

These therapies are concerned with increasing a child's emotional literacy to help identify, communicate, understand and manage emotions. We coach our children to notice (self-awareness), name their feelings, recognise the impact this can have on their physicality and learn how to manage unrest. In doing so we help to lay the foundations of a child's emotional development.

When the storm rages we help children to create light, calm and change through purposeful participation in movement to shape and support resilience and positive mental health.

This is achieved by:
- using clinically proven techniques that support self-regulation
- drawing upon age-appropriate therapeutic metaphors that harness the evidence-based power of positive visual imagery that is used in many clinically proven treatment approaches
- building valuable tools of hope and optimism, often seen in reaching goals and helpful alternatives in talking therapies (e.g. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Compassion Focused Therapy)

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Neuroscience

We understand the Neuroscience of threat and emotional states. We focus our attention on settling and soothing so that we support children to learn how to best regulate themselves (Polyvagal Theory, Porges, 1995) and thus stay within/expand their 'Window of Tolerance' (Seigel, 1999). When a child is within their Window of Tolerance they can thrive, manage and cope with their emotions better. Polyvagal and Window of Tolerance theories are often used in trauma informed work.
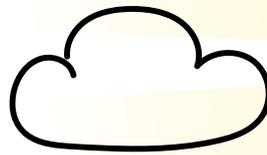
Learning Pedagogy

We harness varied learning pedagogies that enable children to learn in effective ways that are kinaesthetic, active, explorative, recursive, and playful. We associate with seminal theories such as Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1934), Embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1954/62) and Humanism (Rogers, 1959) as well as more contemporary thinking around meaningfulness through movement culture (Arnold, 1979; Krecthmar, 2000).

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Appendix 1: References

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