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Session Outline

- Understanding the neuroscience of normative brain development in children under 8 years
- Understand how toxic stress and trauma shapes the functioning and development of young children
- Identify a practical framework to support young children affected by toxic stress and trauma

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Key learning outcomes

- Develop an enhanced understanding of complex abuse related trauma, with a particular focus on its effects on brain functioning
- Apply a framework for assessing the impact of complex abuse related trauma on children (with a special focus on 0 – 8 years of age)
- Build on practice skills to apply key models of intervention which promote recovery for children in an education setting

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Principles guiding this workshop

- We assume a knowledge of child abuse and state mandatory reporting requirements
- While the focus of this session is on the child and their experience, there is a clear acknowledgement that engaging families and caregivers is critical in any intervention
- Discussion & questions only enhance the session
- Abuse related trauma covers the impact of all forms of child abuse, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, family violence and neglect.

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S M A R T

- Predictable
- Responsive
- Attuned
- Connecting
- Translating
- Involving
- Calming
- Engaging

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“ Play is a neural exercise and I have never met a child who is able to resist being part of this type of exercise ”
Theresa Kestley

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How the brain develops




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The growing brain.....

How much does a baby's brain weigh?

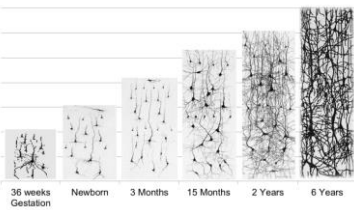


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Neural Circuit Formation in the Early Years

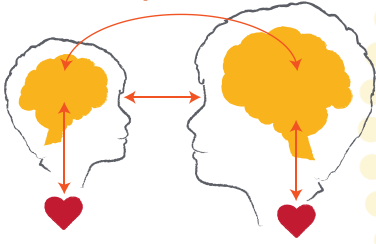


36 weeks Gestation Newborn 3 Months 15 Months 2 Years 6 Years

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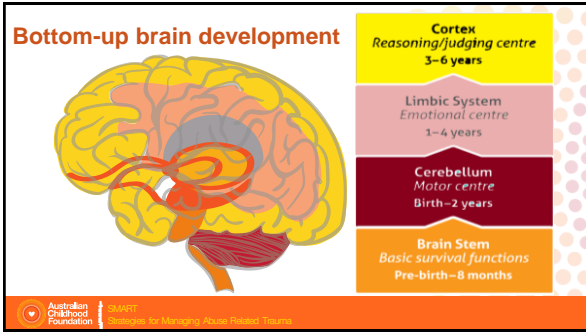
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Relationships



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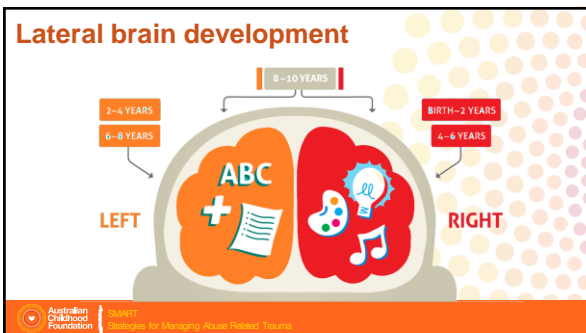
Growing the brainstem

Provide activities which are rhythmical and synchronous with others:

- Rhythmic sounds - stories, songs, rhymes & music
- Rhythmic movement
- Rhythmic touch

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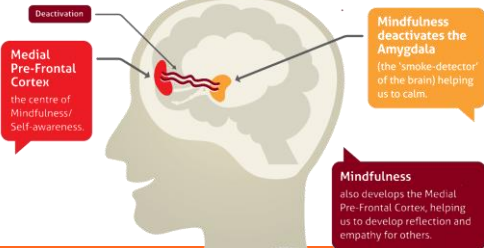
Attachment and the right brain

- Neuroimaging studies show areas of the right hemisphere lighting up in the brains of parents & infants during non-verbal interactions. (Schoore, 2003)
- A secure attachment relationship facilitates right brain development and promotes efficient affect regulation.



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Mindfulness

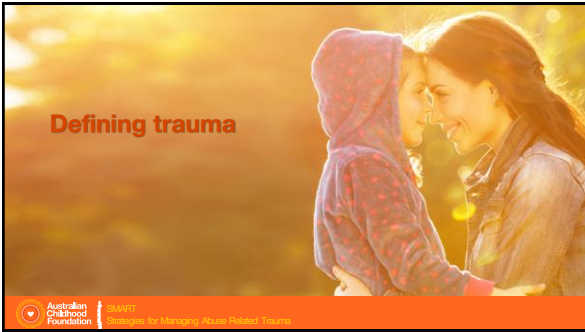


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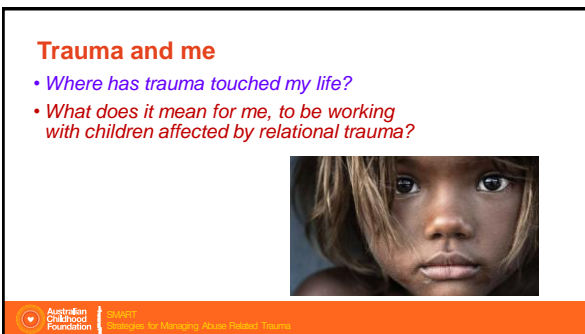
Stop...Pause...Play



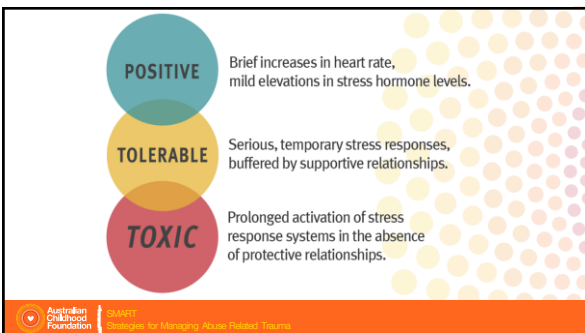
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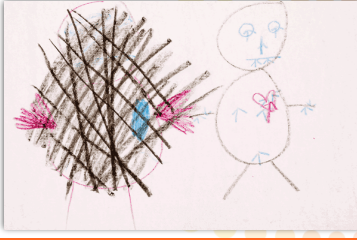
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Defining trauma


Trauma is not what happens **to** you, but what happens **inside** you.
(Gabor Mate 2018)



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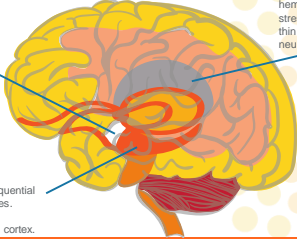
Trauma and the brain



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Where trauma affects the brain



Amygdala
Survival response centre within the limbic lobe that becomes enlarged and more sensitive the more it is activated through responding to threats

Hippocampus
Consolidates memory by providing the context/ sequential data for episodic memories. Goes offline if trauma overwhelms and disrupts cortex.

Corpus Callosum
Bridge between the 2 hemispheres. Chronic stress can damage and thin down this bundle of neurons

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Developmental trauma

- The better integrated the different parts of the brain are the more adaptive we can be to our environment
- **Developmental trauma is dis-integrative, disconnecting, and disruptive** to both brain and body



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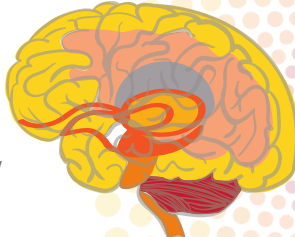
Bottom-up brain development



- Cortex**
Reasoning/judging centre
- Limbic System**
Emotional centre
- Cerebellum**
Motor centre
- Brain Stem**
Basic survival functions

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- Children are very vulnerable to the effects of trauma because of their brain's developmental immaturity - their brains are malleable, so the impact of trauma is faster to manifest and leaves deeper tracks of injury
- Children's development can slow down or be impaired often leading to children experiencing splintered development



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Internal working model of traumatised child

I can't trust adults to give me what I need

Adults frighten me

The world is a scary place

I'm a bad person

Adults cannot comfort me

I am unlovable, worthless

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Behaviour is a story

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The family

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The paradox of the family

We look to it for nurture and care



It is the institution in society where most violence occurs

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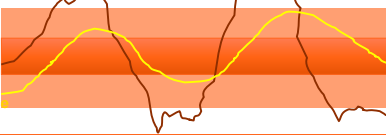
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Interpersonal attunement

- When people are in relationships, the ability of one to regulate him/herself, affects the other's ability to regulate
- The child's arousal shapes, and is shaped by, relationships

Child's movement in her/his window of tolerance

Movement in my window of tolerance



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Attunement, misattunement and repair

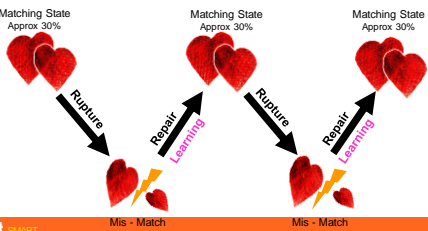
'good enough' parenting (Ed Tronic)

Matching State Approx 30%

Mis - Match Approx 70%

Rupture

Repair Learning



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Attunement, misattunement and repair

(Ed Tronic)

In even the healthiest relationships, rupture is inevitable and can have positive effects. Children learn:

'Life isn't perfect. We can recover from mistakes'
'I can change my feelings'
'Together we can face the world'

Prolonged rupture without repair causes a cascade of negative psychophysiological effects. Children learn:

'I am helpless'
'You can't be trusted'
'The world is threatening'

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Reframing our approach

Rather than asking:

"What are you doing?"
 and
"How can I stop it?"

Ask: ***"What are you trying to tell me?"***
 and
"What do you need from me?"

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Repair in practice

*'What you did is not ok,
 but you are still a good person
 and I still love you'*



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Building safety and connection

- Children effected by trauma need stable, safe, consistent environments and relationships to help them to be calm and open to learning
- Safety = predictable and consistent routines, relationships and responses

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Neuroception of safety: predictability

Predictability is a metaphor for safety.

“The removal of threat is not the same as the presence of safety”
(Porges, 2014)



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Center for Clinical Intervention
TRAINING
VIDEOS

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Predictability: a metaphor for SAFETY

Children affected by trauma experience any change as a potential threat.

Consistent caregiving and continuity of care is vitally important to traumatised children.

Protective and predictable relationship provides attachment security.



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Building predictability

Predictability is achieved by:

- Reliable routines e.g. bedtime story/song
- Using visual cues to help children prepare for the day – sequencing...better to use photos of the actual child, than clipart
- Preparing children for what's coming next
- Talking to baby/child about your intentions
- Same caregiver/s every day

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Building safety and connection

Managing transitions and change is extremely difficult for traumatised children

- ▶ transitions are experienced as a threat
- ▶ they feel a lose of their sense of safety
- ▶ they may revert to survival mode

How can you help children to feel safe during TRANSITIONS?

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Transitions


List all the transitions you expect children to traverse in one ordinary day

- How many are essential?
- How can you provide safe passage for children through the transition?
 - ❖ Safe Person
 - ❖ Safe Activity
 - ❖ Safe Place

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Practice frameworks



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Models of trauma informed practice

Playful
Accepting
Curious
Empathic

P.A.C.E



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Models of trauma informed practice

Needs
 Unconditional positive regard
 Re-frame child's perceptions
 Time in & repair
 Use words for child's experience
 Reflect back child's feelings
 Enjoy play together

N.U.R.T.U.R.E

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| | CHILD 1 | CHILD 2 | PARENT 1 | PARENT 2 | PARENT 3 |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| Anticipate child's Needs | | | | | |
| Unconditional positive regard | | | | | |
| Reframe child's perceptions | | | | | |
| Time in and repair | | | | | |
| Use words for child's experience | | | | | |
| Reflect back child's feelings | | | | | |
| Enjoy play together | | | | | |

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Trauma and relationship



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Challenging and reconstructing the child's model of relationships



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Calming and regulation

- Traumatized children find it difficult to regulate their own feelings of stress/distress.
- The best way to help the extremely dysregulated child is to remain calm and regulated yourself.



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Working with traumatised children

Relationships:

- Respect and empathy
- Connection and sense of belonging
- Personal competence

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Outcomes for children

- Develop connection and belonging
- Experience trust and respect
- Develop a sense of personal competence



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Quality and best practice

As educators there are particular skills that are central to quality and best practice:

- Relationships and Connections
- Child led practice
- Positive interactions
- Consistent approach
- Compassionate Practice



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Get comfortable with discomfort!

- There are certain expectations that we as educators have of ourselves, of children and of our classrooms.
- These expectations have developed over time through our past experiences.
- Sometimes theory and practice don't match. Be flexible and adapt.



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Engagement with safety

- understand & respect the child's need for distance in relationship
- increase your tolerance for 'stuckness' and 'crisis'
- practise mindfulness
- use phrases like: 'I noticed that...', 'Isn't that interesting!'
- practise self-care and seek support
- practise calming techniques

(Janina Fisher)

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Trauma-based behaviour and you

- Don't take the child's behaviour personally
- Don't take the parent's behaviour personally
- Be aware of what presses your own buttons



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Deep listening



'To listen in reciprocal relationships with no judgment, just to try to understand'

(JUDY ATKINSON 2017, the Value of Deep Listening-The Aboriginal Gift to the Nation)

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Calming parents and staff – what works for YOU?

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Safe harbour

'Be my anchor when I'm all at sea'
PREDICTABLE PERSON

'Ferry me to calmer waters'
SING-SONG VOICE
RHYTHMIC, REPETITIVE ACTIVITY WITH OTHERS (60bpm)
SENSORY INPUT

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Hope

What are your hopes for the little people you work with?

What are your hopes for your school or centre?

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Keeping in touch with SMART

- SMART Online training
- Discussion papers
- Making Space For Learning resource on website
- <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/smart-online-training>
- Prosody Blog <http://www.childhoodtrauma.org.au/>
- Conference <http://childtraumaconf.org/>



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