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SMART Learning Pathway

- SMART Online Training – register through Plink - 8 hours
- SMART – 2 hour training – facilitated by a local SMART Trainer
- SMART – Day 1 – Foundation (*includes specialist packages ie Early Years, Refugees, Adolescents, Working with Aboriginal communities*)
- SMART – Day 2 – Strategies (*for the above as well*)
- SMART Train the Trainer program – 3 days
- Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma (24 F:F days, blended delivery available as well)
- Trauma Aware Schools Initiative



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Introductions

- Name
- Role



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What are you passionate about in the work you are doing, with children and young people who have experienced trauma?



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childhood.org.au

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Outline of our day



- 9.00am Start
- 10.45am – 11.00am Morning Tea



- 12.45pm – 1.15pm Lunch



- 3.15pm – Evaluations

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- 3.30pm Finish



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Session outline

- **examine** brain development in children
- **define** complex abuse related trauma
- **understand** the impact of trauma on children's and young people's development and functioning
- **develop** strategies for working with traumatised children
- **discuss** whole school or service approaches to supporting traumatised children



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Key learning outcomes – success criteria

- **develop** an enhanced understanding of complex abuse related trauma, with a particular focus on its effects on brain functioning.
- **apply** a framework for responding to children who have been impacted by trauma
- **build** on practice skills and interventions which promote recovery for children in education settings.



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Principles guiding this session



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Your emotional safety is paramount



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SMART PRACTICE

- P** Predictable
- R** Responsive
- A** Attuned
- C** Connecting
- T** Translating
- i** Involving
- C** Calming
- E** Engaging



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Safety and relationships are key

It is important to remember that safety – feeling and being safe and having safe, connected and attuned relationships are key to supporting a child or young person who has experienced trauma.



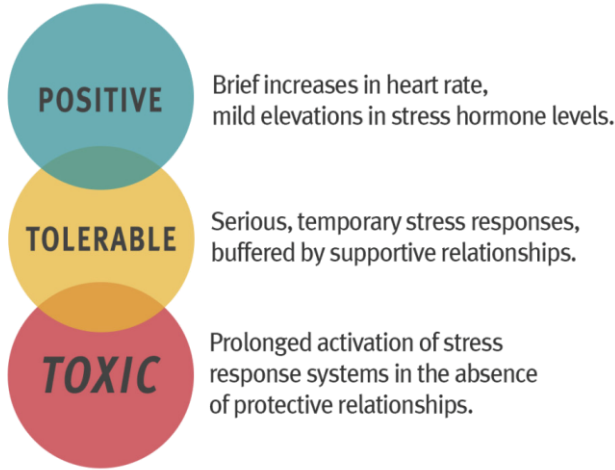
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Stress



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Trauma

How would you define trauma?

What have you noticed with your students?

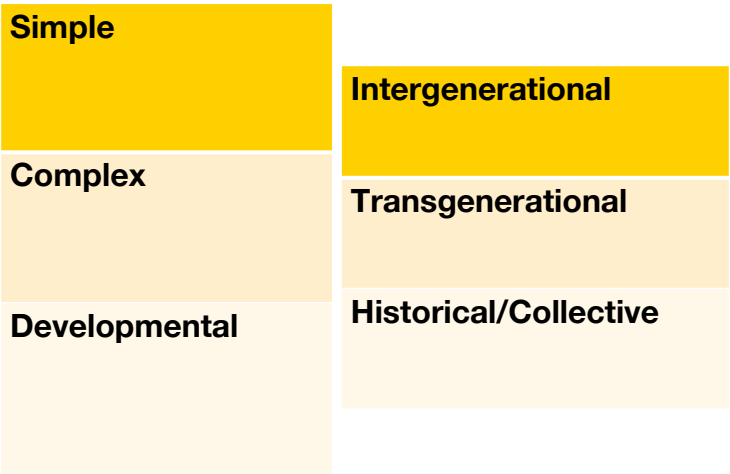


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Trauma is not what happens **to** you,
but what happens **inside** you.

(Gabor Mate 2018)



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The growing brain.....

How much does a brain weigh?



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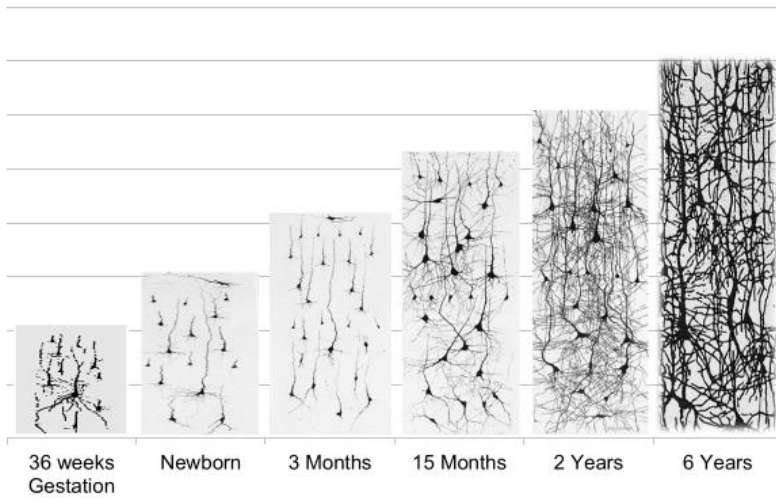


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Neural Circuit Formation in the Early Years



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Brain development

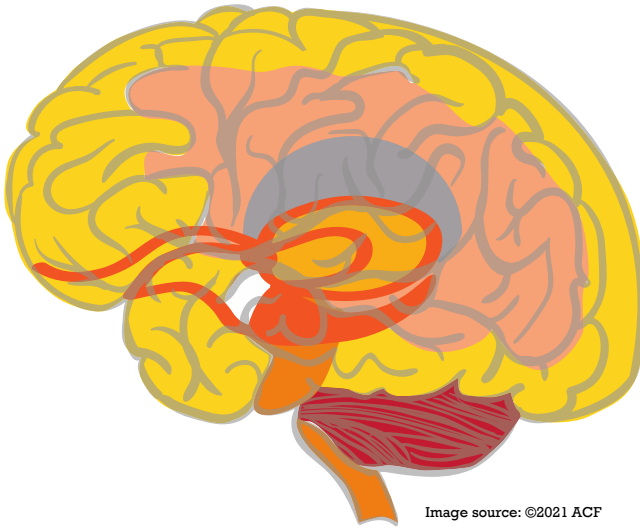


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Cortex
Reasoning/judging centre
3–6 years

Limbic System
Emotional centre
1–4 years

Cerebellum
Motor centre
Birth–2 years

Brain Stem
Basic survival functions
Pre-birth–8 months



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Neuronal connections

- The neural system has the ability for one neuron to communicate with up to 10,000 other neurons
- The newborn brain has approximately 100 billion neurons

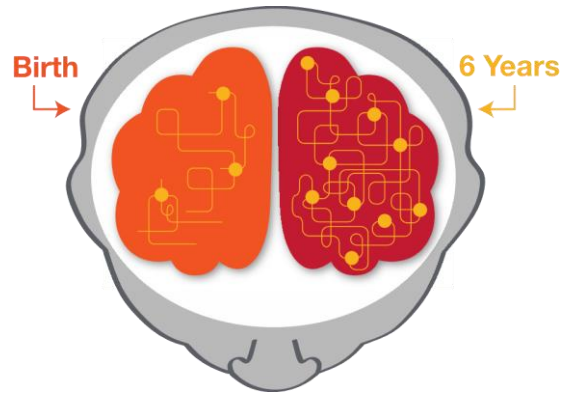


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Three Core Concepts in Early Development



Experiences Build Brain Architecture

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Center on the Developing Child HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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Strengthening neuronal connections

Provide opportunities for repeated experiences

- Ensure students have an opportunity to practice tasks over and over
- Provide encouragement when tasks are achieved as this will connect to the brains' reward system
- Include lots of physical activities that are repetitive – playing musical instruments, skipping, dancing etc
- Model positive relational connections, emotion, fun and relational attunement



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Brainstem – survival centre

- basic life functions
- first part of our brain to develop & the most developed brain part at birth
- responsible for regulation of our
 - heart rate
 - breathing
 - sucking, swallowing chewing reflexes
 - temperature control
 - blood pressure
 - circadian (sleep) cycle
 - involuntary reflexes



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The brain stem under stress and trauma

- may experience fast or slower heart rate
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- sleep disturbances and unsettledness
- sucking and swallowing and digestion difficulties
- may feel hot or cold or not notice changes in temperature

What do you notice?



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Cerebellum – body and balance centre

- helps us with our posture and balance
- helps us with our coordination and to control our movements
- helps us to know where our body is in space
- helps us with our voluntary movements such as walking and writing



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The cerebellum under stress and trauma

- lack of coordination and balance
- difficulty in maintaining posture
- difficulty in undertaking tasks that require balance
- lack of awareness of their body in space
- difficulty with voluntary movement tasks – walking or writing

What do you notice?



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Growing and regulating the brainstem

Provide activities which are rhythmical and synchronous with others:

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



Image source: ©2021 ACF

SMART PRACTICE Focus – Predictable and Calming



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Growing and regulating the cerebellum

Provide activities which have support and balance, develops gross and fine motor skill elements and are synchronous with others

- Balancing activities
- Stretching – aligning the spine activities
- Spine/lumbar support
- Throwing and catching objects
- Writing, drawing, colouring, making



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Diencephalon – sorting and sending centre

- develops mainly after birth
- sorts out “messages” coming into the brain and sends them out to other parts of the brain
- uses hormones to send signals to body
- hormonal signals tell your body what it needs, eg. food, water, love



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The diencephalon under stress and trauma

- becomes overwhelmed and cannot sort the information
- is unable to send information to the memory and thinking parts of the brain – that pathway shuts down
- it alerts the amygdala which sets of a sensory information response sequence

What do you notice?



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Sensory information response sequence

Three Core Concepts in Early Development

3 Toxic Stress Derails
Healthy Development

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Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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Strategies for transforming – diencephalon



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SMART PRACTICE Focus – Responsive and Translating



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Limbic lobe - emotion and memory centre

- develops mainly after birth
- helps us attach an emotion to an experience or memory
- particularly involved with the emotions
- heavily involved in attachment processes
- two important brain parts – the amygdala and the hippocampus are in this part of the brain



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Amygdala

Has three roles:

- Alarm centre - the 'smoke detector' of the brain
- Memory centre - processes & stores implicit memories
- Emotion centre – helps with emotional understanding and regulation



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The amygdala under stress and trauma

- can be over active or under active
- can evoke reminders and flashbacks of the trauma (awakenings)
- may have difficulty in emotional regulation
- may have difficulty in reading facial expressions

What do you notice?



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Strategies for transforming – Amygdala – ALARM CENTRE, IMPLICIT MEMORIES, EMOTIONS



Image source: ©2021 ACF

SMART PRACTICE focus: Responsive, Attuned and Connecting



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Growing and regulating the amygdala

Provide activities that support emotional and social connection, understand the implicit memory needs and that calm and connect

- Explicit emotional literacy teaching
- Calm, sensory supportive environments
- Support the child, reassure
- Stay present – provide safety



Image source: ©2021 ACF



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Hippocampus

- explicit memory centre
- provides context to memories
- provides consolidation of information from short term memory to long term memory
- memory puzzle sorting centre



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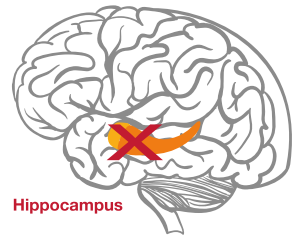
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The hippocampus under stress and trauma

- doesn't function properly - it feels as if the trauma hasn't ended.
- reduction of hippocampal volume up to 25% as a result of high levels of cortisol
- working memory, retention and recall (retrieval) capacity is severely impacted



Hippocampus

Image source: ©2021 ACF

What do you notice?



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Implicit and Explicit Memory Systems

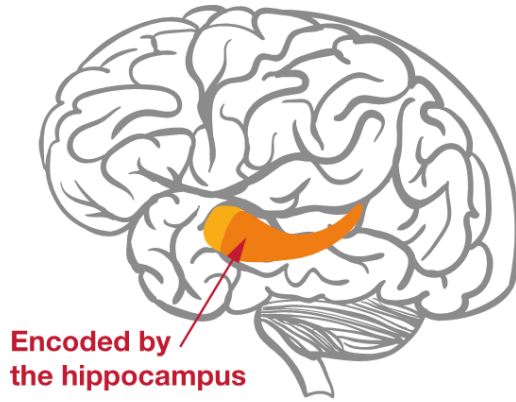


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Strategies for transforming – hippocampus – EXPLICIT MEMORIES



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SMART PRACTICE Focus – Responsive and Translating



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Growing and regulating the hippocampus

Provide activities that support memory retention and recall and review and repetition

- Practice activities and learning skills over and over
- Reinforce learning through repetition
- Provide playful opportunities to learn
- Use visuals to assist



Image source: ©2021 ACF



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Cerebral cortex – thinking centre

- the largest part of the brain
- associated with higher brain function such as thought and action
- examples of functions:
 - reasoning
 - logic
 - judgement
 - voluntary movement



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Cortical areas under stress and trauma

Unable to:

- use foresight and anticipation, focus or sustain attention
- plan, organise or prioritise or make decisions well
- reflect or have self-awareness
- be enthusiastic, motivated or persist with activities
- use impulse control

What do you notice?



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The Prefrontal Cortex- executive function centre

Final part of the brain to reach maturity in one's mid to late twenties

- self awareness
- reasoning and judgement
- foresight and anticipation
- focusing and sustaining attention
- planning organising and prioritising
- decision making
- reflecting
- enthusiasm, motivation and persistence
- impulse control
- working memory



Image source: ©2021 ACF



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Strategies for transforming - cortex



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SMART PRACTICE Focus – Translating and Involving



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Growing and regulating the cortical areas

Provide activities that connect the cortical areas, through choice, problem solving, planning and voluntary movement

- Play thinking and choice games
- Map out and plan activities together
- Break down problems to work through
- Allow choice and options
- Use voluntary movement activities



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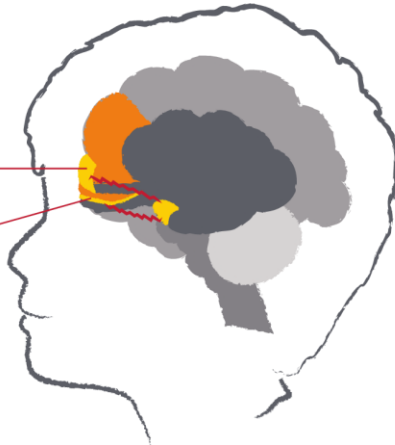
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Medial Pre-frontal Cortex and the Right Orbito-frontal Cortex

Medial Pre-Frontal Cortex
 (the centre of Mindfulness/ Self awareness)

Right Orbitofrontal Cortex
 (Regulation of Arousal)



- Mindful awareness/ meditation de-activates the amygdala
- Quality co-regulation de-activates the amygdala

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Mindfulness

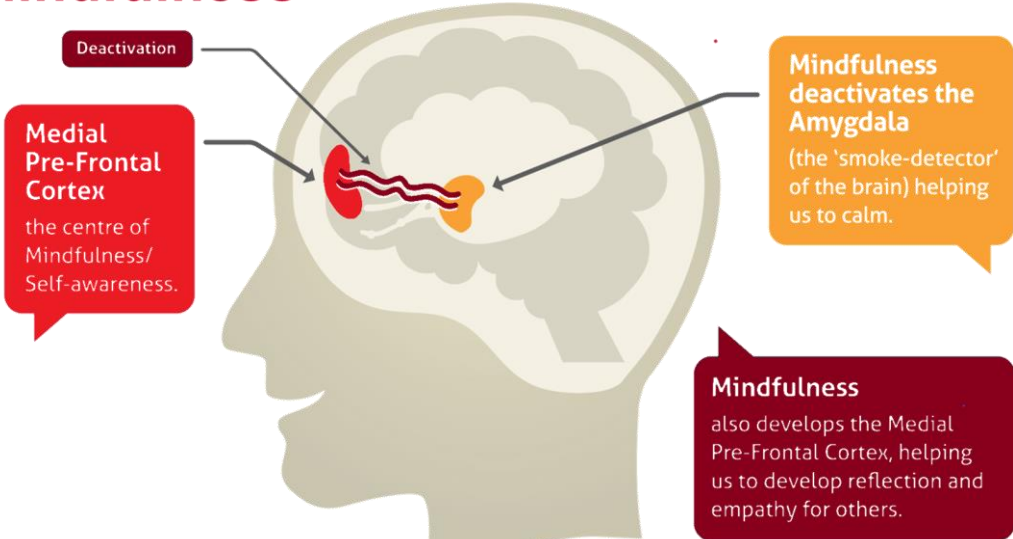


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Strategies for transforming – prefrontal cortex/MPFC



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SMART PRACTICE Focus - Attuning and Connecting



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Stop...Pause...Play



Image source: ©2021 ACF

Australian Childhood Foundation's STOP, PAUSE, PLAY technique!

HOW TO BE MINDFUL

STOP

What you are doing and If possible make sure your feet are firmly on the ground.

PAUSE

Focus on your breath. Breathe in slowly, right down into your belly, then exhale completely. Take 5 more slow breaths, being aware of each breath in and each breath out. After several such breaths, you will find that your heart rate has slowed down, your breathing is deeper and you will feel calmer. It is the out breath that relaxes your body and allows you to feel calmer and think clearly.

PLAY

Respond to your child the way you want to. When you are in this calm state, you will probably be better able to respond in a thoughtful or considered way to your child. You will also be more likely to stay connected to what is going on for your children. You will be more aware of their experience of the situation and how they might be feeling.



www.cooleybrains.com

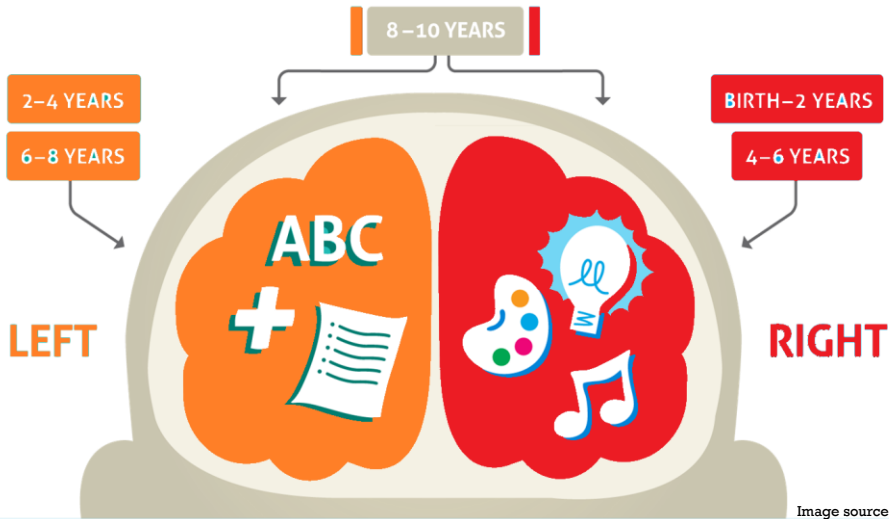
Adapted from "Mindful Parenting, The Australian Childhood Foundation, 2012"



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Lateral brain development



Hemispheres under stress and trauma

- will struggle to process the content of our words (left hemisphere - Wernicke's area)
- may not be able to speak or articulate (left hemisphere - Broca's area)
- will be tuned into the tone of voice, not the content (right hemisphere)
- difficulties with understanding and knowing feelings and articulating them
- difficulties with tuning into, understanding and responding to social cues in communication
- will be acutely aware of facial expressions, posture, gestures, intensity of movements and eye contact and searching for signs of disapproval, rejection & danger

Strategies for transforming – building RH/LH connection and the Corpus Callosum



Image source: ©2021 ACF

SMART PRACTICE Focus – Involving, Connecting, and Engaging



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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.

(Schore, 2003)

- A secure attachment relationship facilitates right brain development and promotes efficient affect regulation.



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The importance of play



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Neuroplasticity



Image source: ©2021 ACF



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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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Building predictability

Predictability is achieved by:

- Reliable routines e.g. bedtime story/song, start to day
- 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 staff & caregiver/s every day



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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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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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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)



Image source: ©2021 ACF



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Summary – Be a 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
SENSORY INPUT



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Day 2 Strategies – what's coming up in our next session...

In Day 2 you will

- Be introduced to the Polyvagal Theory and the concept of the Window of Tolerance.
- Explore the different arousal levels and consider supportive strategies for each.
- Explore further the meaning of the behaviours we see in our students.
- Build a toolkit of strategies, focusing on the SMART Audit Tool

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Holding hope



Image source: ©ACF 2021

What are your hopes
for the children
you work with?

What are your hopes
for your school?



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Thank you for your participation...

We appreciate your feedback!



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