

Trauma Informed Practice in the Early Years

Barwon Child Youth & Family




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The Australian Childhood Foundation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of this land and we pay our respect to their Elders past, present and future.





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Session goals:

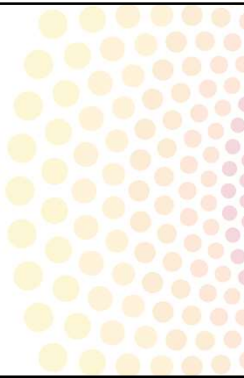
- The neuroscience of normative brain development and the effects of trauma on the brain and behaviour
- Understanding trauma, particularly family violence, and the impact on overall development and learning
- The importance of a trauma informed relationship between adults and children
- The opportunities for repair through trauma-safe environments and frameworks
- Vicarious trauma and the importance of caring for self

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Hearing from each other

- Who are you?
- Where are you?
- How are you?



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Defining Trauma



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Trauma and me

- *Where has trauma touched my life?*
- *What does it mean for me, to be working with children affected by relational trauma?*



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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



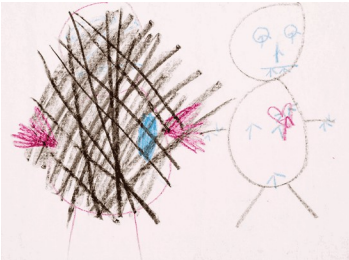
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Defining trauma?

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

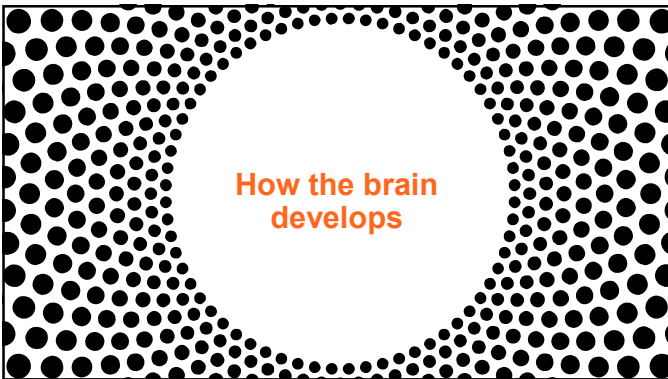
(Gabor Mate 2018)



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How the brain develops



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The growing brain

How much does a baby's brain weigh?



400 grams

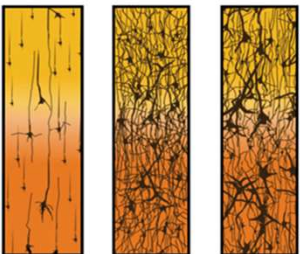
1100 grams

1300-1400 grams

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Neuronal Connections



Newborn

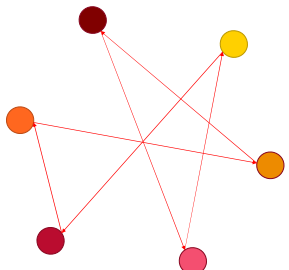
2 Years

Adult

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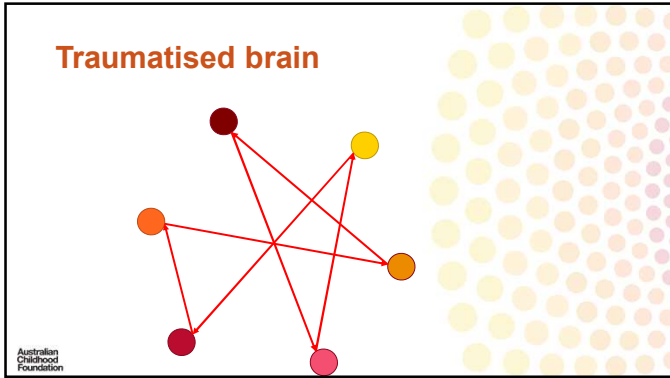
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Traumatised brain

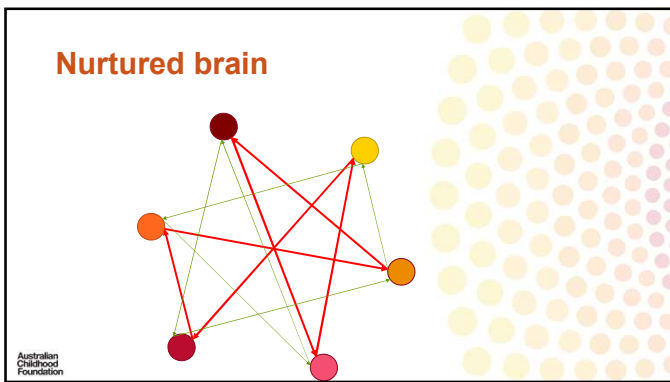


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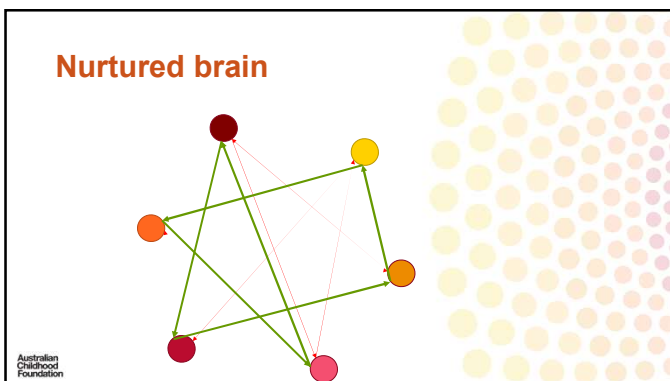
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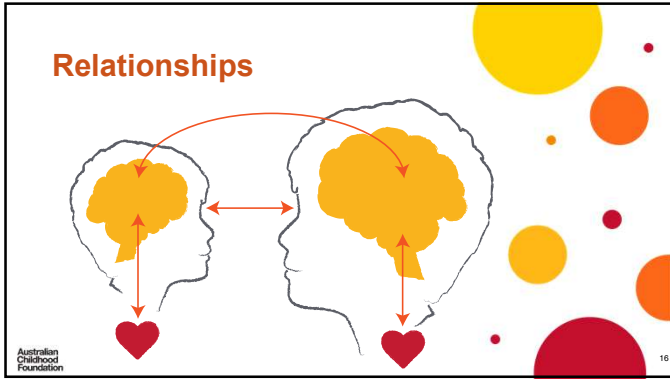
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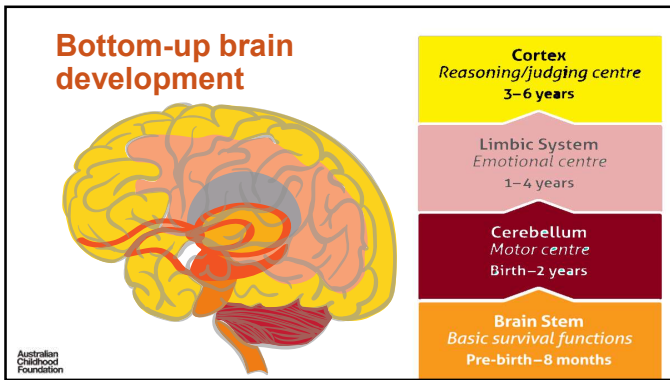
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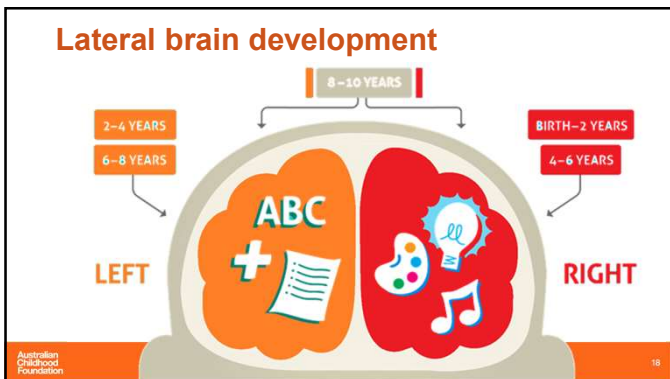
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Attachment and the right brain

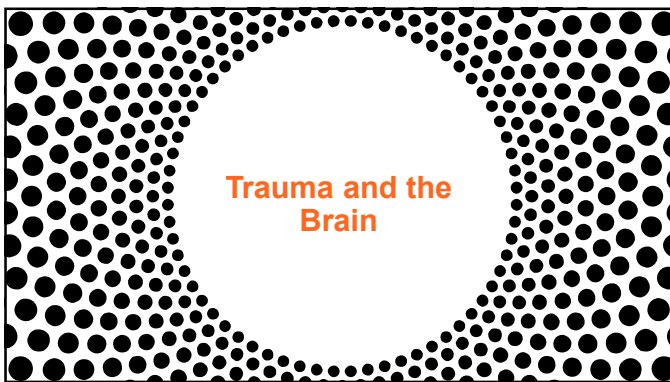
- Neuroimaging studies show areas of the right hemisphere lighting up in the brains of parents & infants during non-verbal interactions. (Schoore, 2003)
- A secure attachment relationship facilitates right brain development and promotes efficient affect regulation.



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Trauma and the Brain



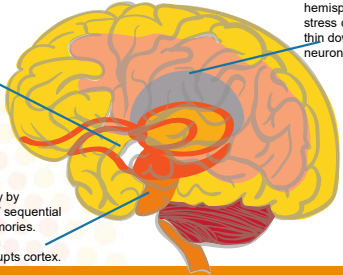
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Where trauma affects the brain

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

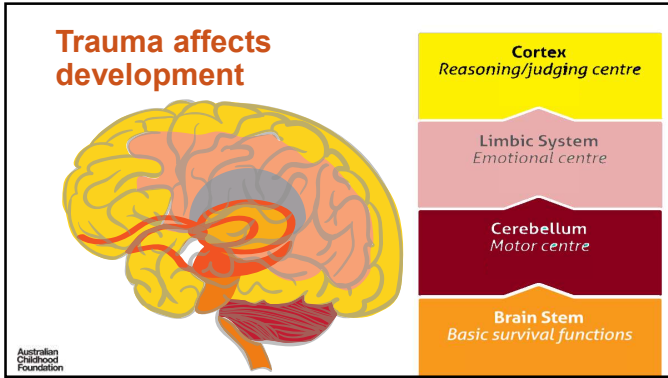
Hippocampus
Consolidates memory by providing the context/ sequential data for episodic memories. Goes offline if trauma overwhelms and disrupts cortex.

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

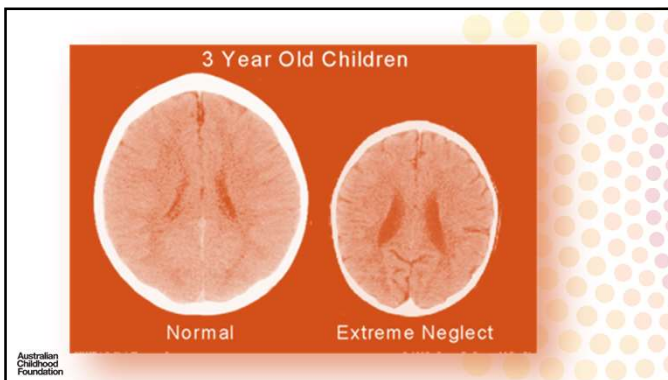


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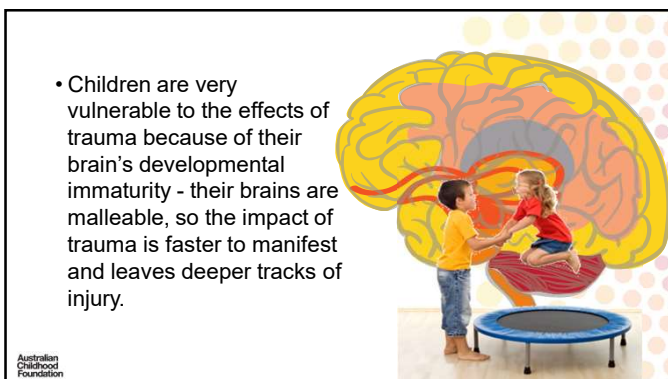
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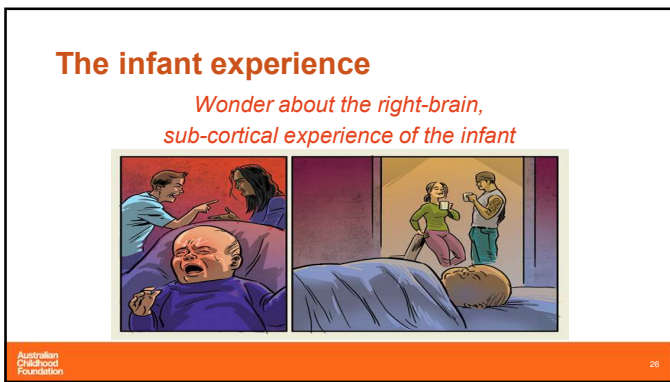
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Living in survival mode

Fight





Flight

Freeze






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Polyvagal theory and protective responses

by Stephen Porges

Behavioural Functions	Body Functions
 <p>Social Engagement Soothing and calming Indicates safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowers or raises vocalisation pitch • Regulates middle ear muscles to perceive human voice • Changes facial expressivity • Head turning • Tears and eyelids • Slows or speeds heart rate
 <p>Mobilisation Fight or Flight Active Freeze Moderate or extreme danger</p>	<p>Hyper arousal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases heart rate • Sweat increases • Inhibits gastrointestinal function • Narrowing blood vessels - to slow blood flow to extremities • Release of adrenaline
 <p>Immobilisation Collapse or submission Death feigning Increased pain threshold Conserves metabolic resources Life threatening situations</p>	<p>Hypo - arousal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slows heart rate • Constricts bronchi • Stimulates gastrointestinal function

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The 'Still Face' experiment

Ed Tronick



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Behaviour is a story

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The Family

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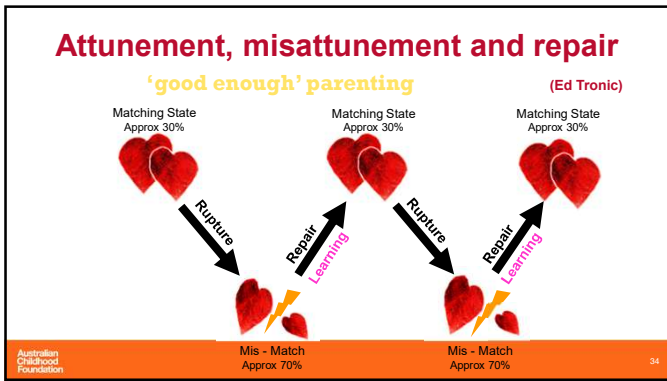
The paradox of the family

We look to it for nurture and care

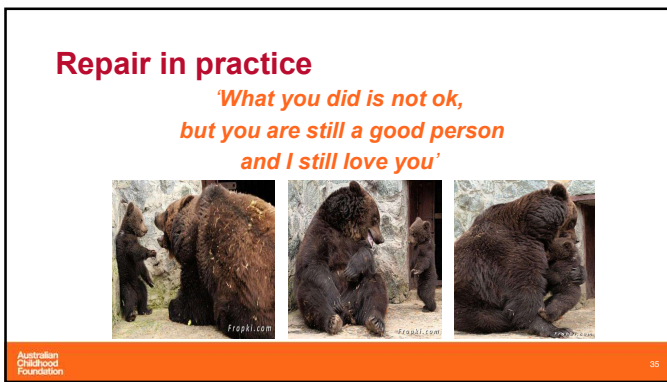
It is the institution in society where most violence occurs

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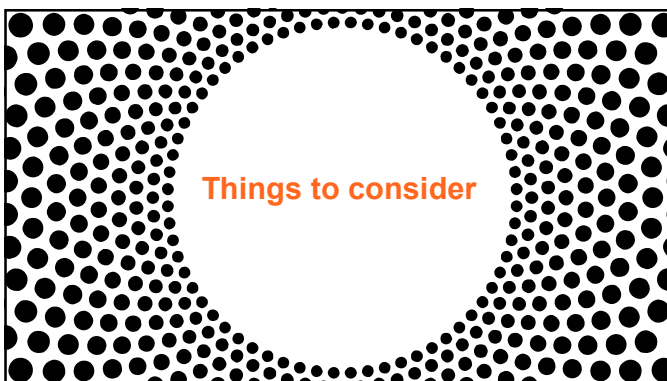
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Neuroplasticity



<http://highexistence.com/its-all-in-your-head-how-to-take-advantage-of-neuroplasticity/>


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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?”

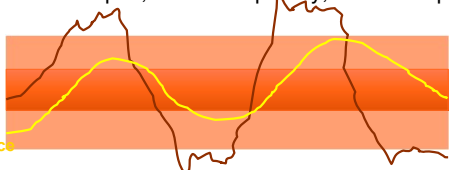


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Interpersonal attunement

- 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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Following the child's lead

Anger *Sadness*
Joy
Fear *Curiosity*
Shame

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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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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/Predictable Person
 - ❖ Safe/Predictable Activity
 - ❖ Safe/Predictable Place

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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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Engagement with safety

- understand & respect children'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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Countertransference with traumatised clients

Has being with a parent ever left you feeling:

- angry? anxious?
- hating the parent?
- wanting to quickly refer on?
- indifferent?
- helpless?

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Engagement with safety

Be aware of transference & countertransference

Children with a trauma history can arouse defences in us which are similar to those they use themselves, e.g. distancing ourselves from them or diminishing the significance of their trauma.

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The Polyvagal Model

Facilitating neuroception of SAFETY

How can we facilitate engagement with traumatised children, whilst maintaining for them, a neuroception of safety ?

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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 relationships provides attachment security.



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Healing

Healing is supported by:

- Connection – relationship
- Reconnection – family, community, culture, spirituality
- Reconstruction – re-building the brain
- Finding meaning
- Positive self-image
- Renewal of hope and love



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Healing and Parents

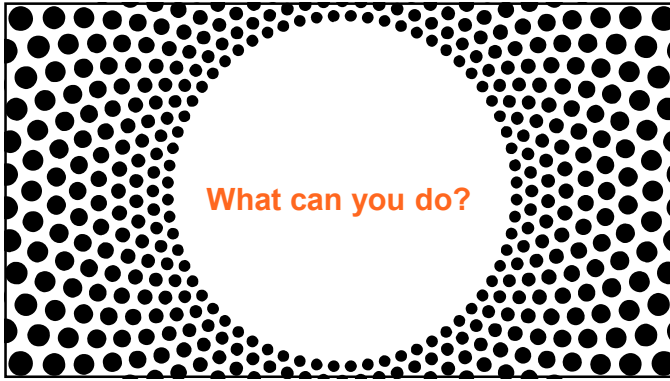
A powerful predictor of secure attachment in children, is a coherent self-narrative in parents.
(Fonagy)

A parent's reflective awareness is regulating and containing for the child - and also for the parent

Interventions which enhance parental reflective functioning, can help parents make sense of mental states and help children to feel understood.

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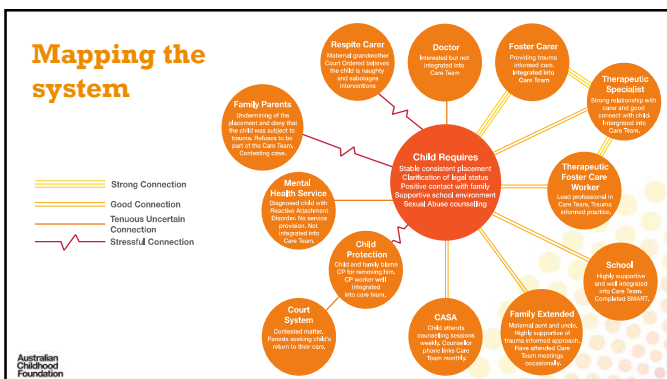
Model of trauma informed practice

Playful
Accepting
Curious
Empathic

P.A.C.E
(Dan Hughes)

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Working with protective responses

Fight or Flight
Hyper-vigilant, action-orientated, impulsive, reactive, self-destructive

Submit
Collapsed, weak, defeated, flat affect, numb, empty, helpless, hopeless

Mobilisation

Immobilisation

Social Engagement

A R O U S A L

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Adapted from Ogden, Minton, Pain 2006

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Working with protective responses

1. Mobilisation

- Rhythm
- Containing
- Grounding

2. Immobilisation

- Orientation to space
- Orientation to senses
- Engaging the spine

3. Social Engagement

- Prosody
- Breathing

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Social engagement: engaging muscles from heart to head

Social engagement through eye contact is perceived as threatening and may elicit defensive responses. Other facial muscles can be safely engaged - e.g. inner ear (Porges)

- prosody
- use story-telling voice/upper register pitch
- singing/music
- use breathing techniques to regulate heart beat

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Promoting safety using prosody (sing-song voice)


High frequency voice with lots of modulation

Brain detects intonation and feeds back to nervous system

Neural tone of inner ear muscles adjust to dampen background sounds (low frequency 'predator' sounds)

Vagal regulation of the heart



CALM



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Challenging and reconstructing the child's model of relationships

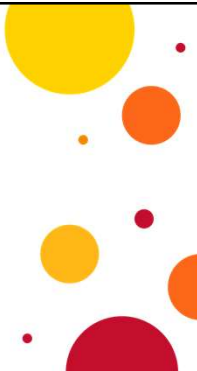
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Working with traumatised children

Relationships:

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



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Signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma

Symptoms that may present:

- Fatigue
- Impaired immune system
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Anxiety
- Hyper vigilance/control issues
- Memory issues
- Increased sick days, late to work




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Trauma-based behaviour and you

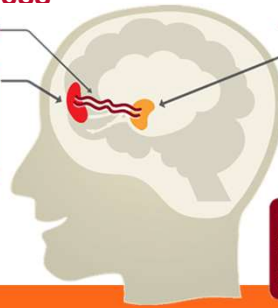
- Don't take the child's behaviour personally
- Don't take the parent's behaviour personally
- Be aware of what presses your own buttons



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Mindfulness



Deactivation

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

Mindfulness deactivates the Amygdala
(the 'smoke-detector' of the brain) helping us to calm.

Mindfulness
also develops the Medial Pre-Frontal Cortex, helping us to develop reflection and empathy for others.

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Calming and regulation

- Traumatised 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.

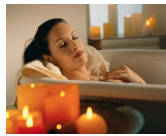
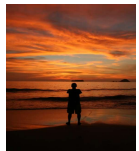


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Calming - what works for YOU?



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