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**Therapeutic work with children and young people in the online space when responding to family violence - a trauma responsive approach**



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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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### Outline of session

Consider a trauma responsive approach to providing child-centred relational therapeutic support and intervention in the on-line environment

Explore how interactions across the screen of digital platforms can help shape powerful meanings and opportunities for children and their network of important adults to share experiences of past hurt, imagination, play and healing

Understand the principles of trauma responsive and relational work and learn practical and creative strategies to ensure ethical safe and successful intervention with children and the relationships that care for them



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### What we know now in 2021:

In the past few months there have been numerous media reports about the risks to the safety of victims of domestic violence including concerns about an increase in violence, and the impact of social distancing measures on the ability of victims to seek help (Morton 2020; Nancarrow 2020; Pfitzner, Fitz-Gibbon & True 2020).

Relatedly, there are concerns that opportunities for women to contact and engage with domestic violence services or the police have been even more constrained during periods when social movement was restricted (Fitz-Gibbon & Meyer 2020).

There are particular concerns about the safety of women experiencing coercive controlling behaviour (Pfitzner, Fitz-Gibbon & True 2020).



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### Current research suggests:

telemental health is equivalent to face-to-face care in various settings and an acceptable alternative

normalizes mental health care, especially among generations now who are so accustomed to interacting with people using technology and erodes barriers

when digital interventions are positive, effective experiences for patients, they may go on to seek face-to-face therapy



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### Mr Rogers

In the recent Tom Hanks film about the 1950's children's television show, A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood, its host, Mr Rogers said

"when I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, *Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping*"

This loved character displayed a genuine representation of care and empathy to children

He showed that interaction over a screen can offer resources to children that can shape powerful meanings and opportunities for them and the people that care for them



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### Activity



Consider a television character that connected to you when you were younger?



What was it about that character that resonated with you?



Have you carried anything about that character or his or her qualities from then until now?

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### Madagascar and metaphor: how did we cope with change caused by covid?



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### Digital formats: Screens as symbols

- An opportunity to experience and show mastery of a skill that most children have
- An amplification of a relationship that brings safety and comfort
- A reliable and anticipated relational presence "neural expectancy" Porges
- Proximity to trust and intimacy and intensity
- An opportunity to create and practice stories of resilience and connection



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### Digital formats: Neuroscience of trust

- ✓ An opportunity to meet the needs of neuroceptive safety
- 👤 A way to explore relational connection through shared relationships with screen characters and stories
- 😊 A way to explore fun, joy, humor, warmth and other elements of emotional practice wisdom via screen stories
- 🧠 Access to the dopamine system via mechanism of social reward and experiences of connection through well loved and known familiar characters



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### Neuroception

- "The removal of threat is not the same as the presence of safety" (Porges, 2014)
- We need to help children who have experienced trauma detect more features of safety in their environment.



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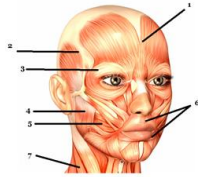
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### Detecting safety – A face, voice, heart connection

- Middle ear muscles
- Facial muscles
- Muscles of mastication
- Laryngeal and pharyngeal muscles
- Head turning muscles
- Eyelids
- Heart rate



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### Therapeutic space

“ Can we create something new together in this world that exists between us?”



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### Therapeutic Space-How can children have choices?



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### Therapeutic Space-How can we create healing ritual?

Symbol  
Space  
Sense  
Storytelling  
Themes  
Metaphor  
Healing in mind

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### Treasure Boxes

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### Domains of Intervention Protect Child and Create Safety

Protect → Create Safety

- Children's recovery starts with being afforded safety and feeling safety reverberating through them.
- Safety is a shared experience between children and their mothers.

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### Relationships as Resources

- 1 During this time, relationships are being experienced differently by children both in positive and negative ways
- 2 The meaning they make and experience children have in relationships is different
- 3 How do you think that relationships children have in general, are being affected by COVID 19?

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### Relationships as Anchors

“Children internalise the people who understand and comfort them, so that they often have the felt sense of accompaniment when they are alone” Bonnie Badenoch

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### Relationships as Anchors- How will they look and feel?

- Emotional practice wisdom and artistry
- Innate qualities
- Essence of relationship
- Capture, enhance and share

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### Relationships as Anchors-How will we make sense of them?

- Continuity care and support
- Intuitive
- Share somatic resonance and reciprocity **"warm waves of noticing each other"**
- Share meaning making experiences

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### Relationships as Anchors-Therapeutic presence

- 01 a child feeling heard, met, felt and understood
- 02 a therapists resonance with the child in the present moment experience
- 03 a shared internal embodied experience
- 04 the creation of an expanded felt sense of compassion and understanding
- 05 the provision of the non reception of safety for a child

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### Relationships as Anchors- The Power of showing Up

- offering a quality of presence
- bringing your whole being, attention and awareness to your child
- providing an experience that enables them to expect positive interactions from others and themselves
- creating neural pathways in a child that will lead to selfhood, grit, strength and resilience

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### Relationships as Anchors- Principles of relational presence



SAFE SEEN SOOTHED SECURE

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### Up!



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### Trauma and loss

Family violence can lead to experiences of loss on multiple levels for children. These include a loss of:

- sense of safety and connection
- predictability and familiarity
- contact
- Routines
- belongings
- Connection to culture, belonging & identity



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### Trauma Frame

The diagram consists of four orange-bordered boxes arranged horizontally. From left to right, they are labeled: 'Culmination of experience', 'Relational', 'Residue of violation', and 'Unmet needs'. The background features a pattern of light-colored dots.

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### Trauma and the current context

- 01**

The essence of trauma is more about a child's felt sense of "aloneness" in times of pain and fear than the actual event
- 02**

Thus, those experiences and histories of children are being amplified for children in the current context. They might be feeling **isolation, loneliness, fear, uncertainty, distance**
- 03**
  - Children's experiences and stories of trauma and **unmet needs** are becoming entangled with the meanings of COVID-19

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### Inside Out

A screenshot from the Pixar movie 'The Incredibles' showing Mr. Incredible and Elastigirl looking concerned.

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### Trauma Themes

Themes hold explanatory frames that recognise children's specific unmet needs	These themes emerge as organisers of a child's life and relationships	Therapeutic work can be articulated in the meeting of those needs
The relationship becomes the counterpoint to the trauma experience	It offers experience and embodied presence not available at the time of trauma	It offers a new felt sense of safety and a new narrative

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### Trauma Themes and Healing-Key trauma themes are being magnified by COVID 19

- Feeling alone can be met with experiences of accompaniment, comfort validation and care
- An uncertain future and felt anxiety can be met with experiences of anticipated reliability and trust knowing and protection "embodied implicit anticipations"
- Limited power and control can be met with choices and practice of those with relational reinforcement
- Diminished confidence can be met with experiences of mastery, participation and practice

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### Trauma Themes and Healing

- Feelings small can be met with experiences of amplification of identity
- Missing fun can be met with experiences of play and imagination
- "when we make room for children to play, their wisdom coupled with the safety of just playing allows embodied trauma to be held as they awaken"
- Feeling unfamiliar in relationships can be met with experiences of acceptance, safety and titrated novel relational experiences

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### Trauma Themes and Healing

<p><b>01</b></p> <p>These healing relational experiences can be captured and sent in multiple ways, prior to, during and after the session</p>	<p><b>02</b></p> <p>Therapeutic letters convey to children the commitment of the therapist and what they hold and notice about the child</p>	<p><b>03</b></p> <p>In them children experience a strong resonance of the values and commitments they have to themselves and others in their lives</p>	<p><b>04</b></p> <p>Social stories for children</p>
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### CALMING

A young person's cortical capacity is impaired by trauma – as a result subcortical functioning becomes dysregulated

In order to regain cortical capacity, essential for attention and learning, we must restore calm

- Be predictable
- Be connected
- Be present
- Promote understanding
- Equip the young person with calming tools they can use



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### Toolbox

Sensory and Movement Supplies

- Weighted Blankets
- Large Pillows
- Crash Cushions
- Balance Board
- Rubber tubing for pulling or pushing
- Small Trampoline
- Therapy Balls
- Balance Beams
- Spandex Body Socks
- Bean Bags



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### Toolbox

- Sensory box or basket
- Pencils, crayons with mandelas
- Anchors
- Breathing activities
- Mindfulness on phone
- Regulation strategies
- Arousal strategies
- Journals
- Drumming, Clapping, Cups
- Paper
- Art book
- Sand
- Rocks/paints
- Clay
- Modelling clay
- Brain breaks
- Physical breaks
- Exercise ball
- Dance music ready



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### 8 senses

1. Visual
2. Auditory
3. Olfactory (smell)
4. Gustatory (taste)
5. Tactile System (touch)
6. Vestibular (sense of head movement in space)
7. Proprioceptive (sensations from muscles and joints of body)
8. Introception (awareness of basic primary functions – hunger, toileting, breathing)



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### Social Stories for children



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### Therapist Experience and Orientation

**What do we need to consider for ourselves?**

- Our own backstories of important themes
- Our experiences and stories of connection with the child
- The intersubjective representation we hold about the child
- The sense of intuition and knowing about the child
- Our experiences of trusting expectation in relationships
- Our experience of resonance and sharing that in a relationship
- What is interactional regulation for us?
- How do we look after ourselves and those around us?

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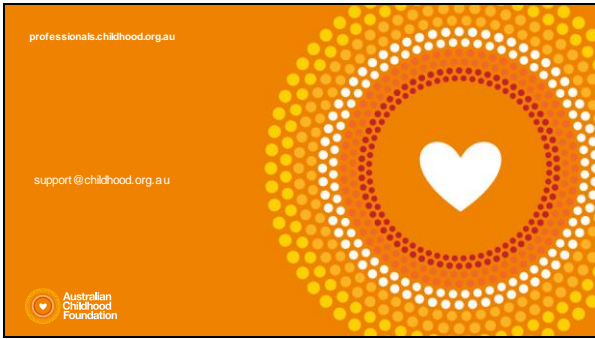
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