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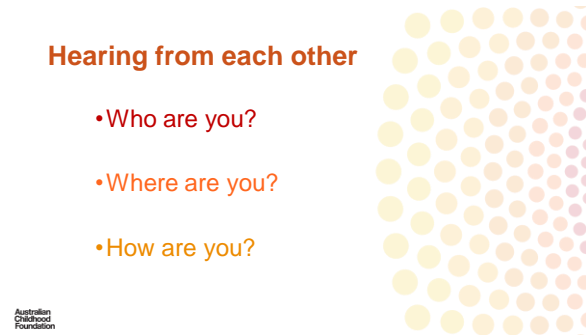
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### Understanding vicarious trauma



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### Impacts of working with trauma

Personal:

- Experiencing current stressful life circumstances
- Blurring the lines between home and work
- Forgetting to take time out or undertaking activities that are pleasurable, relaxing and fun



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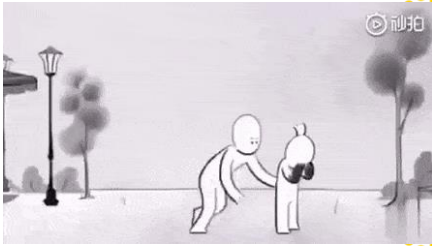
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### Signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma

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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### Impacts of working with trauma

Professional:

- Hearing stories of children's and family's trauma and abuse
- Lack of experience, training and understanding of children who have experience trauma
- Not accessing supervision



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### Behaviours we might see

Signs that may present:

Decreased

- communication with colleagues
- ability to accept change or adapt
- ability to try new things/explore
- self esteem
- attendance in staff meetings, PD, other functions




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### Supporting each other

- Recognise signs and symptoms in others
- Provide education about vicarious trauma
- Support and value each other
- Ensure the workplace culture acknowledges and accepts vicarious trauma as a real condition
- Encourage taking time out and taking leave




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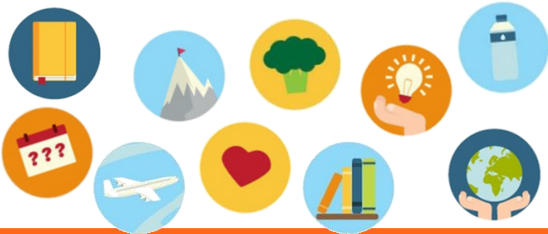
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### What do you do to look after yourself




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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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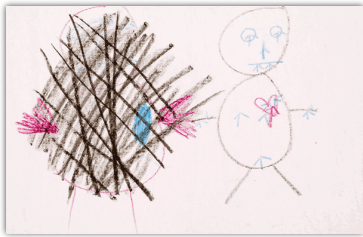
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### Defining trauma?

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



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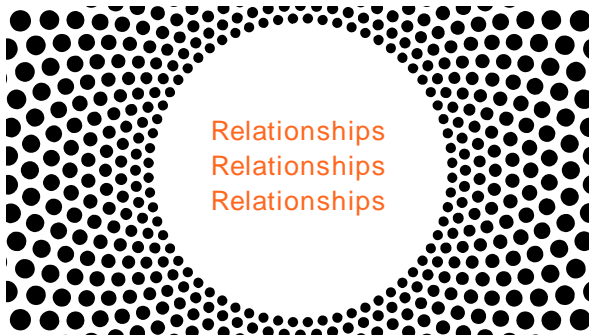
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### Trauma and relationships

As we know a secure relationship is central to the development of:



- a positive sense of self
- empathic and sensitive interaction
- adaptive and flexible emotional regulation skill.

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### How are you going to.....

- Build relationships?
- Be playful?
- Be empathic?
- Engage?
- Be curious?
- Be accepting?



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### How do we.....



Image source: <https://unsplash.com>

- Build relationship with children and learn their stories?
- How do we ensure there is relational repair after a conflict/rupture in our relationships with children?

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### Engagement



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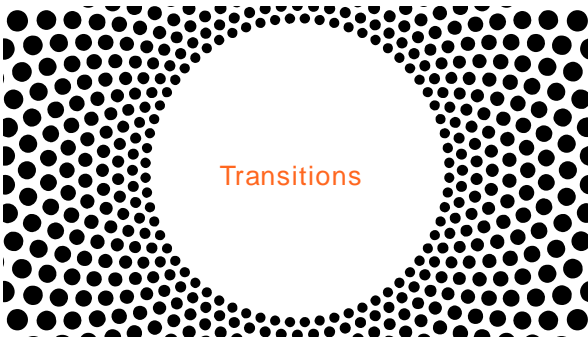
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### Building safety and connection

- 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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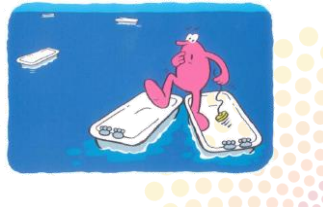
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### Neuroception of safety: predictability

*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 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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What might you change to ensure the following in your work with children:

- Predictability
- Consistency
- Safe transitions
- Engagement




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Behaviour  
Management  
versus  
Working with  
Protective  
Responses




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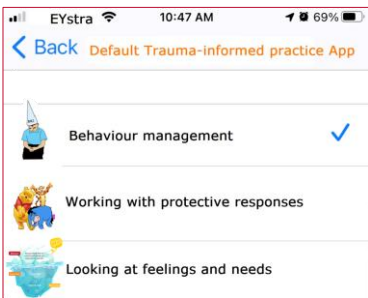
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Recognising  
Thoughts,  
Feelings  
and  
Behaviours



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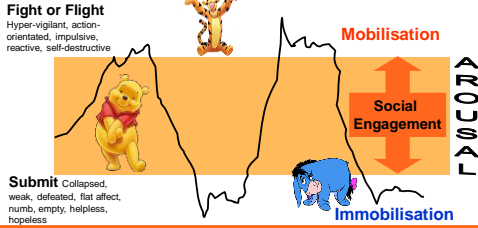
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### Working with protective responses



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### Working with protective responses



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### Working with MOBILISED responses

**Fight**



What it might look like

- Angry, aggressive, irritable
- Confrontational, controlling, shouting
- Blaming others, pushing others away, argumentative

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**Working with MOBILISED responses**  
*Fight*



Supportive responses

- Help me stabilise my hyper-aroused nervous system
- Rhythm, containing and grounding
- Match my energy before helping me calm down
- Hanging, swinging, climbing, marching
- Stomping, jumping on the spot, drumming

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**Rock Pillows**  
Designmilk.com



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**Working with MOBILISED responses**  
*Flight*



What it might look like

- Anxious, silly, manic
- Running away, hiding, disruptive
- Difficulty with free play, silly voices, distracting

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**Working with MOBILISED responses**  
*Flight*



Supportive responses

- Be kind and patient when “finding” or collecting me
- Offer me an easy task/chore to do
- Help me settle my body – weighted blankets, heat packs
- Engage senses
- Encourage me to hang/swing/carry something heavy

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**Working with MOBILISED responses**  
*Freeze*



What it might look like

- Arousal is high, but movement is inhibited
- May look confused or distracted
- Scanning the room, dilated pupils, wide eyes

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**Working with MOBILISED responses**  
*Freeze*



Supportive responses

- Be curious with the child about the freeze state - are there any places that are less frozen than others?
- Gently facilitate movement e.g. Wiggling one finger
- Play with metaphors like thawing ice
- Encourage breathing
- Engage senses

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**Working with IMMOBILISED responses**  
*Submit*



What it might look like

- Low, sad, flat mood
- Quiet, compliant
- Alone, withdrawn

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**Working with IMMOBILISED responses**  
*Submit*



Supportive responses

- Orienting to the space/grounding exercises
- Orienting the senses
- Alignment- engaging the spine

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### Maintaining Social Engagement



What it might look like

- Engaged in activities
- Chatty, talks to adults and peers
- Interacts with peers in play

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### Maintaining Social Engagement



Supportive responses

- Prosody
- Using the sing-song, story-telling voice
- Using breathing techniques



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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 (The Listening Project)
- use story-telling voice/upper register pitch
- singing/music
- use breathing techniques to regulate heart beat



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**Social engagement:**

What does living in the window of tolerance look like for each child?

What do you do to widen their window of tolerance?



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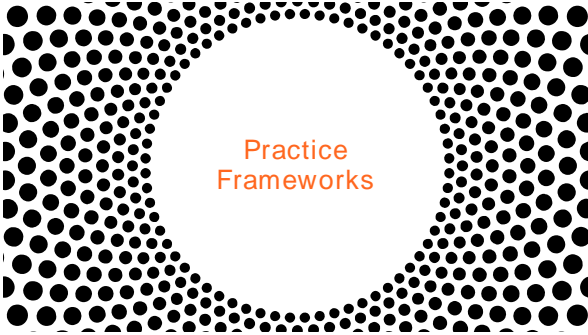
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### P.A.C.E

- **Playful** – light, open, hopeful, spontaneous.
- **Accepting** – unconditional acceptance of the experience of the child (feelings, emotions and thoughts).
- **Curiosity** – non-judgemental, active interest in the child's experience, as well as behaviours to learn what is triggering them.
- **Empathy** – about past hurts and present challenges. A 'felt' sense of the child, which is actively experienced and communicated.



Dan Hughes (2009)

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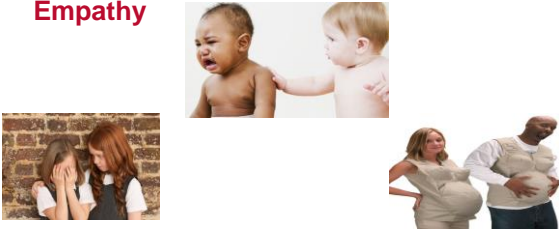
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### Empathy



'I'm sorry that happened' 'that must be really hard', 'that must feel really bad'.

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### Playfulness



"I really prefer it when you call me by my name rather than swear at me!"

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### Acceptance



"Thanks for telling me about what happened. I feel sad that you've had such a difficult time."

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### Curiosity



"I wonder if you might be feeling sad because mum left you today? Do you think that might be what's going on?"

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### Self Reflection



What could get in the way of us using PACE?

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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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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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In Summary

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### Challenging and reconstructing the child's model of relationships



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### Being PACEful with ourselves

#### Playfulness

- "We take our work seriously, not ourselves!"
- Find lightness, despite the dark... look for hope and moments of joy



#### Acceptance

- Of the person, not necessarily their actions
- With compassion and understanding, knowing they are probably doing the best they know how
- What is possible and what is not possible (be the calm in the chaos)

#### Curiosity

- Rather than assuming, be open and ask
- "I wonder..." "How are you travelling?"



#### Empathy

- Be understanding and compassionate

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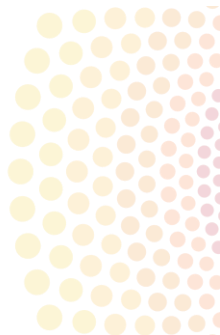
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Email:

[parenting@childhood.org.au](mailto:parenting@childhood.org.au)



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