

professionals.childhood.org.au

Uniting – Trauma Informed Practice

– Managing Disclosures – Supporting Parents, Caring for ourselves and others



Uniting



1

The Australian Childhood Foundation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians and owners of this land and waters. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to the children who are their leaders of tomorrow. We acknowledge their history and living culture and the many thousands of years in which they have raised their children to be safe and strong.



2

Welcome and introductions

We'd love to know a little more about you!
In the chat add your:

- name,
- Role and where you are based
- One thing that you enjoy doing



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

Professional Education Services
professionals.childhood.org.au

3

Principles guiding the workshop

- This workshop assumes a knowledge of what constitutes child abuse and neglect
- Abuse related trauma covers the impact of all forms of child abuse, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, family violence and neglect.
- This workshop provides a link between the neurobiology of complex trauma and its impacts on brain, body and relationships
- We will consider transgenerational trauma and its positive and negative impacts on resilience, adaptability and survival, with further emphasis on hereditary structures and epigenetics
- Your safety is paramount.

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

4

Uniting

Australian Childhood Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

5

Toxic stress

Uniting

Australian Childhood Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

6

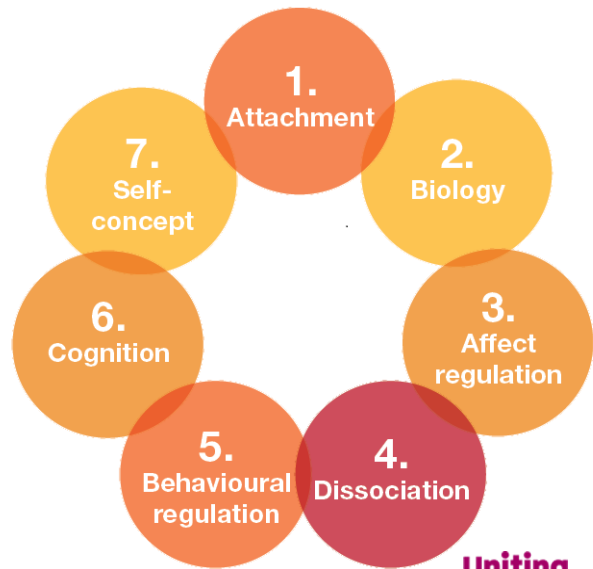
Impact of trauma

In groups discuss and record:

- 10 things you know about neurobiology and trauma

Try list one thing for each domain listed

- 3 questions that remain about neurobiology and trauma



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

7

Impact of trauma

- deep mistrust of self, others, even within family
- self-directed violence-suicide, risk-taking behaviour;
- substance misuse; unremitting grief; shame and humiliation
- intergenerational conflict; violence against women; role diffusion, including sexual abuse and other boundary violations
- cultural genocide, losing traditional values, desecrating land and institutions;
- A leadership crisis; a conspiracy of silence - an overall attitude of secrecy.

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

8

professionals.childhood.org.au

Brain development and the impact of trauma



Uniting

9

Brain development

- The brain develops through a mix of genetics and environmental factors.
- Key to this development are relationships
- The brain develops sequentially from the bottom up



Uniting



professionals.childhood.org.au

10

Sequential brain development – building blocks



- The Thinking brain**
3-5 Years
- The Emotions and Memory Brain** - Birth to 4 years
- The Movement Brain**
Birth – 2 years
- The survival brain**
Pre birth to 8 months

Uniting

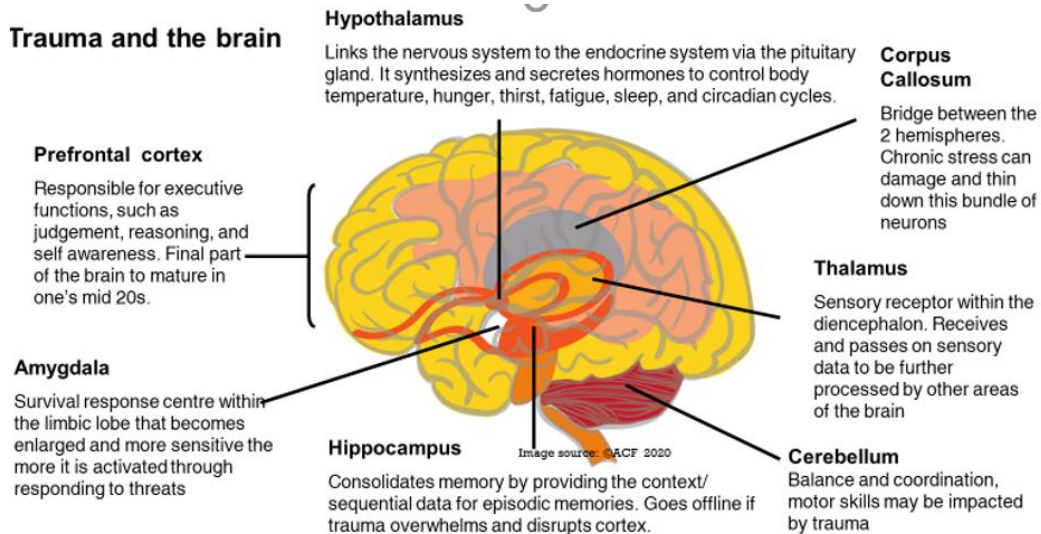


Australian Childhood Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

11

Trauma and the brain



Uniting



Australian Childhood Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

12

Blocked Trust

Blocked trust is a child's way to adapt to very poor care – **it's a survival state**. Blocked trust is blocking the pain of rejection by"

- Negative bias
- Dissociating
- Suppressing social emotions
- Provisioning – self reliance
- Manipulating
- Resisting authority – aggression, 'defiance'
- Story telling – fantasy
- Lying behaviours



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

13

professionals.childhood.org.au

Responding to disclosures



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

Uniting

14

Responding to disclosures of child abuse

- Disclosures
- Barriers to Disclosure
- Responding to Disclosures
- What do you do after Disclosure

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

15

Take care of you...

- Importance of staying safe during presentation- looking after yourself
- Know your own triggers
- Important when you think about how you react when someone discloses abuse does the child feel you can hear this)
- Need for good support , advice and supervision within your organization
- Clear organization procedures

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

16

Youtube clip- responding to disclosures of child sexual abuse

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvJ5uBIGYgE>



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

17

Disclosure

- Disclosure- by which a child conveys or attempts to convey they have been abused
- Can be verbal or non verbal
- Verbal disclosures often partial
- Can be an ongoing process
- Indirect and accidental disclosures
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and children and young people with disabilities

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

18

Indicators of Child Abuse

- Changes in behavior or emotions (running away , suicidal ideation s, depression , drug and alcohol misuse, poor school attendance, aggression and self harm)
- Physical Injuries
- Somatic Complaint
- Sexualised or harmful sexual behaviours
- Increase in anxiety
- Avoidant behaviours

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

19

Impacts of Disclosure

Disclosure can often be a distressing experience ...leading to secondary wounding

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

20

Barriers to Disclosure

- Fear of shame and embarrassment
- Fear of not being believed and or being stigmatized by family or community
- Fear of loss of placement or being told to leave
- Fear that disclosure may not be kept confidential
- Fear that the disclosure will impact negatively on the family

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

21

Barriers to Disclosure

- May lack the capacity and knowledge to understand that this is abusive acts
- Difficulty in communicating sexual abuse
- Grooming of child / their family and others
- Threatening or manipulating to stop disclosure
- Victim felt responsible for the abuse

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

22

Institutional Barriers to Disclosure

- Culture of not having policies and procedures in place
- Inadequate record keeping and information sharing
- Poor avenues for disclosure and poor responses leading to bullying
- A culture that prioritize reputation , prestige or loyalty above the individual

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

23

Improving identification and supporting disclosure

- **“ Adults need to watch kids more...if a kid changes they should ask ...find out what’s going on .That’s their job. They should not wait until the kid says something because that’s going to be too late” (Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse)**

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

24

Improving identification and supporting disclosure

- Need for safe adults with established relationships to be available and accessible
- Provide regular opportunities both formal and informal where children are asked and can talk about their fears and concerns
- Access to education programs about healthy sexuality, sexual abuse and how to and whom to disclose

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

25

Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse

Listen, reassure and respect

Listen

- Move to a suitable environment, free of distractions.
- Be calm and patient—allow for the child or young person to be heard.
- Let the child or young person use their own words—avoid asking leading questions.
- Avoid “quizzing” the child or young person about details of the abuse.
- Don't be afraid of saying the “wrong” thing. Listening supportively is more important than what you say.

Reassure

- Reassure the child or young person that it is OK that they have told you what's been happening.
- Address any concerns about the child or young person's safety.
- Reassure the child or young person that he or she is not at fault, and not the cause of any distress you may feel.

Respect

- Respect that the child or young person may only reveal some details.
- Acknowledge the child or young person's bravery and strength.
- Avoid making promises you can't keep—manage the child or young person's expectations.
- Explain to the child or young person that in order for them to be safe you will need to report their experience to someone else.

What happens next?

If a child or young person discloses abuse, you should report it to the relevant authorities.

Relevant reporting requirements are described in our online learning, for a detailed list of mandatory reporting requirements including who is mandated to report, see [CICA Resource Sheet Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#) (search for the word “mandatory reporting child abuse and neglect”).

State and territory contact details for reporting abuse and neglect are available on the [CICA Resource Sheet Reporting Abuse and Neglect](#) (search for the word “reporting abuse and neglect”).

[www.aifs.gov.au/cica/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect](#)

Listen, reassure and respect

Listen

- Move to a suitable environment, free of distractions.
- Be calm and patient—allow for the child or young person to be heard.
- Let the child or young person use their own words—avoid asking leading questions.
- Avoid “quizzing” the child or young person about details of the abuse.
- Don't be afraid of saying the “wrong” thing. Listening supportively is more important than what you say.

Reassure

- Reassure the child or young person that it is OK that they have told you what's been happening.
- Address any concerns about the child or young person's safety.
- Reassure the child or young person that he or she is *not* at fault, and *not* the cause of any distress you may feel.

Respect

- Respect that the child or young person may only reveal some details.
- Acknowledge the child or young person's bravery and strength.
- Avoid making promises you can't keep—manage the child or young person's expectations.
- Explain to the child or young person that in order for them to be safe you will need to report their experience to someone else.



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

26

Responses to Disclosures

- Listening and believing
- Emphasizing to the victim/survivor that they are not to blame
- Staying calm
- Explaining what you will be doing in response to the disclosure
- Accessing appropriate supports

Uniting

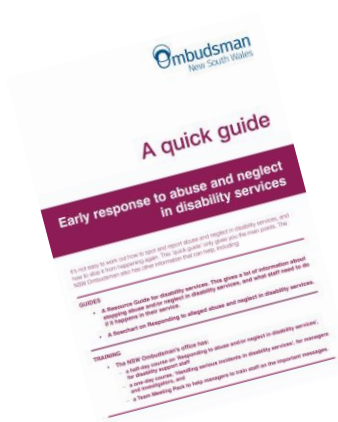


Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

27

What resources can support you?



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

28

Neurobiology of self-care



Take a deep breath.



Allow yourself to become present.

Feel the experience of the play in your own body without attempting to move away from it, avoid it, or change it.

Move if you need to – gently rock or sway.



Stay connected to yourself and the child

Uniting



professionals.childhood.org.au 29

professionals.childhood.org.au

The 5 Brain Systems –

Supporting our parents & caregivers & ourselves



Uniting

Relationship is the key!Brain systems that support parenting

Parental Approach System

- Get close to the child without becoming defensive.

Parental Reward System

- Enjoy interacting with the child.

Parental Child Reading System

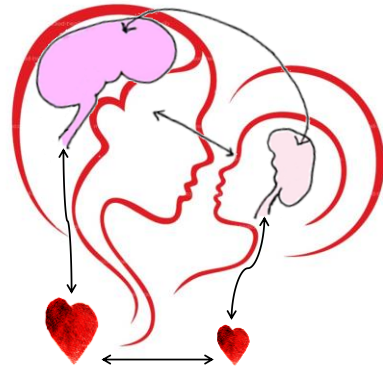
- Understand the mind of the child.

Parental Meaning Making System

- Make sense of our experiences with the child and our social life.

Parental Executive System

- Regulate interpersonal conflicts between approach and avoidance, pro-social and defensive reactions.



Uniting

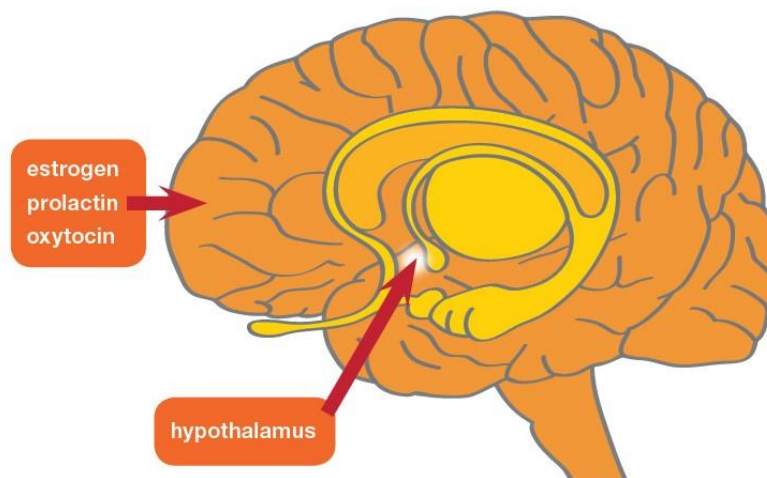


Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

31

The Approach System



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

32

Early adversity impacts on our caring ability

- The environment we grow up in can shape how we use our right and left brain systems of avoidance and approach. If we begin life exposed to insensitive care giving our right brained harm avoidance system is likely to be used a lot.
- Instead of feeling protected and connected with our caregiver, we are more likely to need to shift into a defensive state of protest or collapse in order to try to protect ourselves.



Uniting

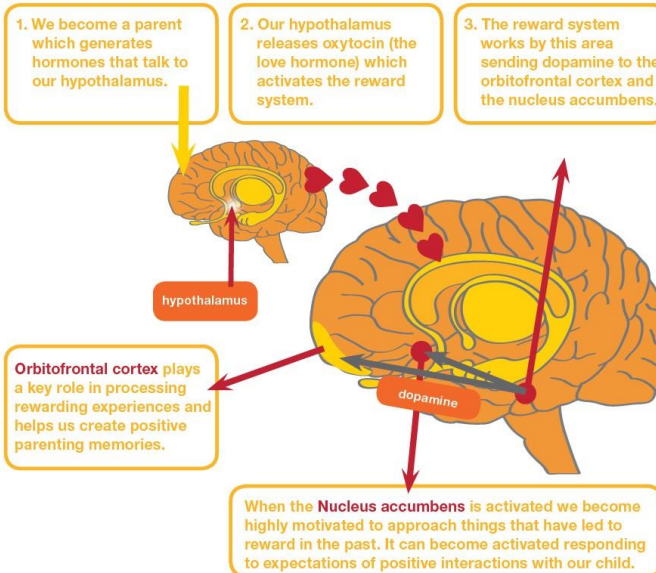


Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

33

The reward system



Uniting

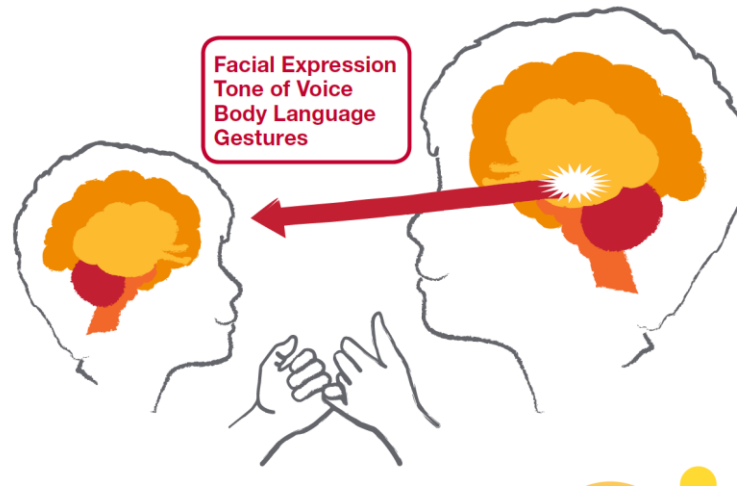


Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

34

Child reading system



Uniting

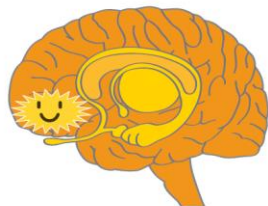


professionals.childhood.org.au

35

The meaning making system

Well-Connected Brain
Utilizing the front part of the brain



Open Flexible and Adaptive

Stressed out Brain
Utilizing the more primitive middle region of the brain



Closed and Rigid

Uniting



professionals.childhood.org.au

36

The blocked executive system

The diagram illustrates a human brain with four red arrows pointing to specific areas. Each arrow originates from a yellow box containing text. The boxes are: 'Unprocessed trauma history' (top left), 'Experiencing chronic stress' (top right), 'Exposure to high levels of adversity in early life' (bottom left), and 'Poor attachment with caregiver in early childhood' (bottom right). A large red 'X' is drawn over the brain's executive system, which is depicted as a yellow starburst with a sad face. The 'X' is also drawn over the text 'Poor attachment with caregiver in early childhood'.

Unprocessed trauma history

Experiencing chronic stress

Exposure to high levels of adversity in early life

Poor attachment with caregiver in early childhood

Uniting

Australian Childhood Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

37

Legacy of trauma

- Trauma is re-enacted in the relationship with the infant/child/young person
- Unresolved parental attachment trauma is reflected in the care and response to the child or young person
- Trauma disrupts emotional interaction and regulation
- Attachment relationship is impaired

Your thoughts?

A simple line-art icon of a thought bubble containing a heart shape, with three small circles below it indicating the bubble's trail.

Uniting

Australian Childhood Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

38

professionals.childhood.org.au

Embedding and re-establishing safety and enabling engagement



Australian Childhood Foundation





39

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

Image source: ©ACF2021

professionals.childhood.org.au

40

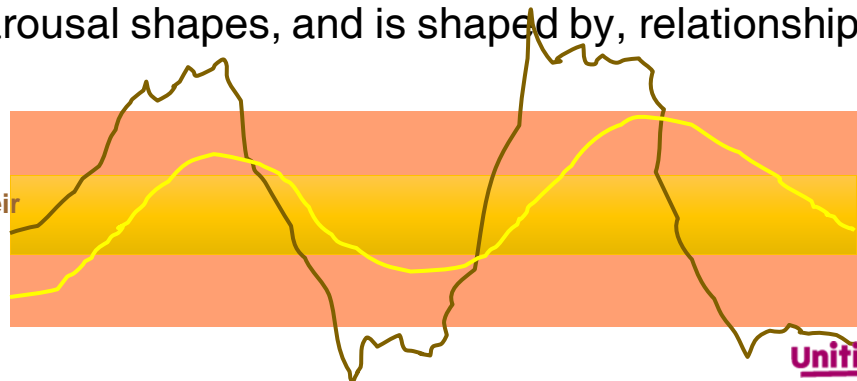
Interpersonal attunement

- 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

Parents movement in their window of tolerance

Movement in my window of tolerance



Unifing

Australian
Childhood
Foundation

41

41

Mobilisation to social engagement

Strategies to help regulation

- **Prosody** – gentle calm voice (*brainstem/limbic*)
- **Facial expressions** – (*vagus nerve/ANS*)
- **Body language** – (*vagus nerve/ANS/right brain*)
- **Offer a glass of water**, cup of tea (*brainstem*)
- **Breathing** 5-2-7 breath work (*brainstem, limbic*)



Unifing

Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

42

Mobilisation to social engagement

- **Listen and validate feelings** (*limbic/cortex*)
- **Hold space** (when safe)
- **Check in** with your own emotions/triggers (*right brain to right brain, co-regulation*)
- **Empathy** (*limbic/cortex*)
- **Connection** relating (*limbic/cortex*)
- **Draw on strengths** (*limbic/cortex*)
- **Humour** (*limbic/cortex*)
- **Unconditional positive regard** (*right brain/limbic/cortex*)

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

43

How do you promote safety in the families you work with?

Think about:

- Client's perception of safety
- Physical and emotional safety – triggers
- Risk of re-traumatisation – triggers
- Attunement
- Body language
- Cultural safety
- The language you use
- Environmental safety – service space – warm/cold, dark/light, noise, colours etc
- The worker-client relationship- trust, respect, transparency
- Addressing both child AND parental trauma

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

44

Trauma informed approaches



- Understanding **trauma and its impact**
- Promoting **safety**
- Ensuring **cultural competence**
- Healing happens in **relationships**
- Having a sense of control/power in **decision making – having a voice**
- **Integrating** care (collaboration)
- Belief in **hope based recovery**
- **Empowerment/** strength based
- Understanding trauma in the context of **child development**
- Worker **Self care** (NCTIC cited in Steele & Kuban, 2013:53)

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

45

Trauma informed practice with families

Any trauma informed work with families must ensure that **safety is established**

- Family assessments - risk
- Understanding the family context, history, culture, presenting issues
- Minimising re-traumatisation
- Relationship building – unconditional positive regard, respect, empathy



Safety is paramount!

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

46

Trauma Responsive Practice acknowledges:

- **Children can be reliable informants** when their experience of trauma is recognised and processed
- Healing can be achieved when children and parents are **supported to share their meaning and understanding** of how they are living with the currency or aftermath of their trauma in their own time
- Co-operation occurs when they feel they **have some control over the decisions that affect them**, when it is safe to do so – risk and safety factors are always paramount



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

47

professionals.childhood.org.au

Healing and repairing the impacts of trauma



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

Uniting

48

Therapeutic Relationships

- **Child experiences safe, attuned, consistent relationship/s.** What does this look like?
- **Worker-parent relationship** – minimising re-traumatisation, co-regulating.
- Respected, **supported work relationships**
- Program requirements enable relationship building
- **Practice frameworks** that promote therapeutic relationships – DDP, sanctuary model



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

49

PACE Model

Playfulness
Acceptance
Curiosity
Empathy



Uniting

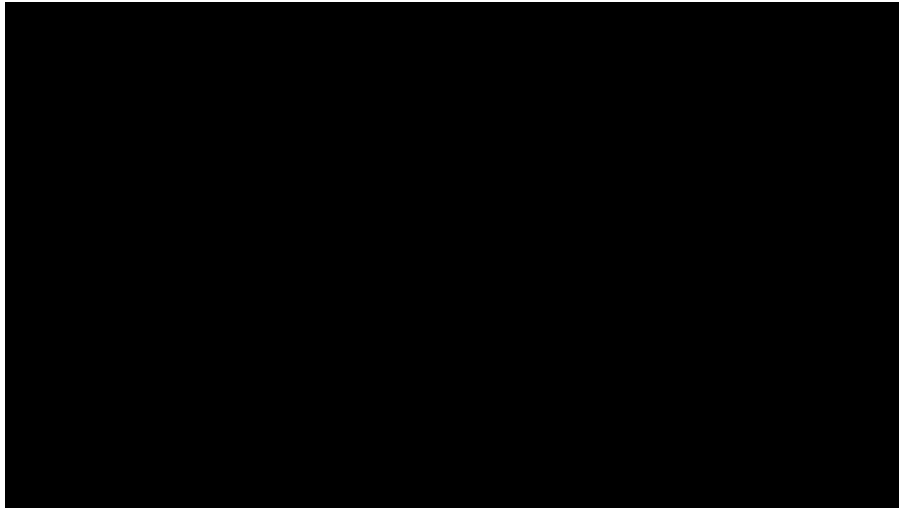


Australian
Childhood
Foundation

childhood.org.au

50

P.A.C.E video – Dan Hughes



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

51

PACE – stages to secure attachment

Stage 1: mindless mistrust – “you’re mean, I’m bad”

Stage 2: confusion: “Who, this is weird! You don’t understand why I don’t trust you and you aren’t angry about it?!”

Stage 3: Approach/avoidance/conflict – to trust or mistrust?

Stage 4: practicing trust over mistrust – repetition, with predictable, consistent responses

Stage 5: resolving the conflict – “I can trust you and I am a good kid”

J Baylin et al 2014

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

52

PACE Helps

- The social engagement system come online
- Connect the prefrontal cortex (thinking brain) to the lower regions of the brain (emotional and survival brain)
- Calm the threat sensing amygdala by sending a message of safety.
- Connect children and their caregivers
- Aid the growth of regulation skills.
- Build the ability to reflect
- Develops the child make meaning of themselves, their stories and their behaviour.

PACE uses all 5 parent brain systems (approach, reward, child reading, meaning making and executive)

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

53

Helping caregiver and child to repair and heal

- **Empathise** with how difficult it may be for both parents & infant/child.
- **Encourage/promote** consistent, sensitive, responsive, attuned, caregiving and replicate this in the therapeutic relationship.
- The therapeutic relationship needs to **mimic secure attachment** characteristics including:
 - ✓ worker provides consistency, reliability, attunement, reflective capacity,
 - ✓ containment by worker (ability of the worker to tolerate the intolerable feelings/thoughts of the parent(s) and/or child and not pass judgement on these feelings/thoughts).

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

54

Helping caregiver and child to heal and repair

- **Explore** what is getting in the way of parent providing this consistent, sensitive, responsive, attuned, caregiving
- Help parents to **identify arousal states** in their child and explore what's underneath the behaviour
- **Respectfully challenge** the parent about punitive or authoritarian approaches – explore the impact that this style of parenting had on them
- Help families to create **new ways of relating** through:
 - ✓ play, and
 - ✓ exploratory discussion in order to increase their capacity to reflect and to offer what their infant/child needs.

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

55

Managing parents/caregiver responses

“A coherent life story is one in which the adult has made sense of his or her own childhood experience, and has insights into how that past has influenced his development as an adult and as a parent” (Siegel 2006)

- To enable a parent to provide a child with reparative experiences they need to have a coherent life story - self narrative
- How a parent has come to make sense of their early life experiences, is the most robust predictor of how their children will become attuned to them and healed in relationship

Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

56

Managing parents/caregiver responses

- Parents need assistance to make sense of their life experience through a supportive, empathic emotional relationship which encourages authenticity, nurturing and direct communication
- Often, accessing internal recollections can enable a parent to become part of a larger narrative of their life. This is not always comfortable but can assist in discovering new possibilities.....



Uniting



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

professionals.childhood.org.au

57

Holding Hope



Image source: ©ACF 2021

What are your hopes
for the children,
young people and
their families
you work with?



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

58

Checkout:

Three words to describe the workshop:

One thing you will do tonight to look after you....



Uniting

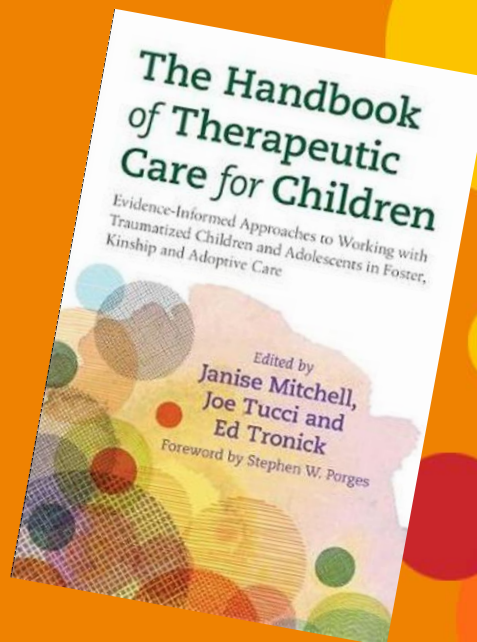
professionals.childhood.org.au

59

A valuable resource

Includes chapters from:

Martin Teicher
 Ed Tronick
 Allan Schore
 Bruce Perry
 Dan Hughes & Jon Baylin
 Kim Golding
 Cathy Malchiodi
 Joe Tucci
 Janise Mitchell
 Glenda Kickett
 Noel Macnamara



**Keep in touch with us!
 Check out other
 trainings we have on
 offer.**



60