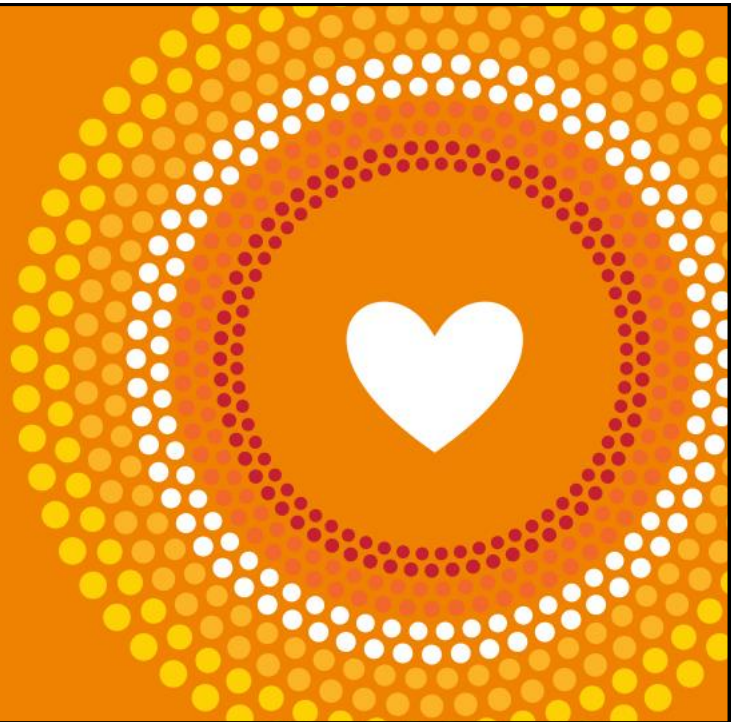


Making Space for Learning

Our Lady of La Vang
Catholic School

25th July 2022

Trainer: Carolyn Grace



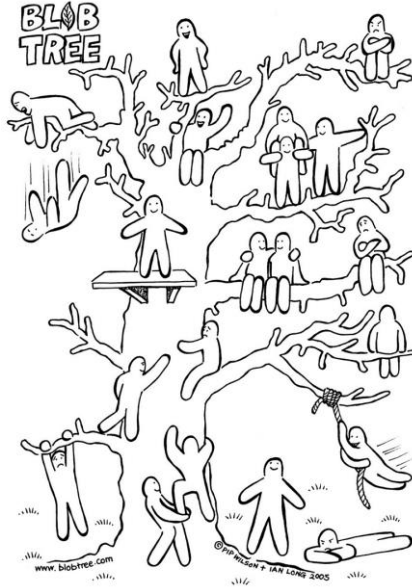
1

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.



2

How are you travelling at the moment?



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3

Principles guiding this session

- Your emotional safety is paramount**
- Our learning is about shared wisdom**
- Curiosity and learning build our brains**



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4

Learning Outcomes Making Space For Learning:

Develop understanding of trauma, the underlying neurobiology and neurophysiology and how it impacts children and young people

Learn strategies to apply in the classroom which will benefit all children and young people



5

Consider a teacher who taught you and who had a positive influence on you;

What do you remember most about them?

How did they make you feel?

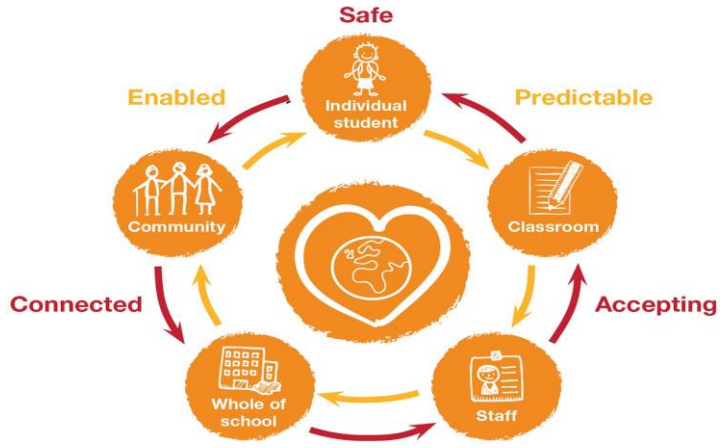


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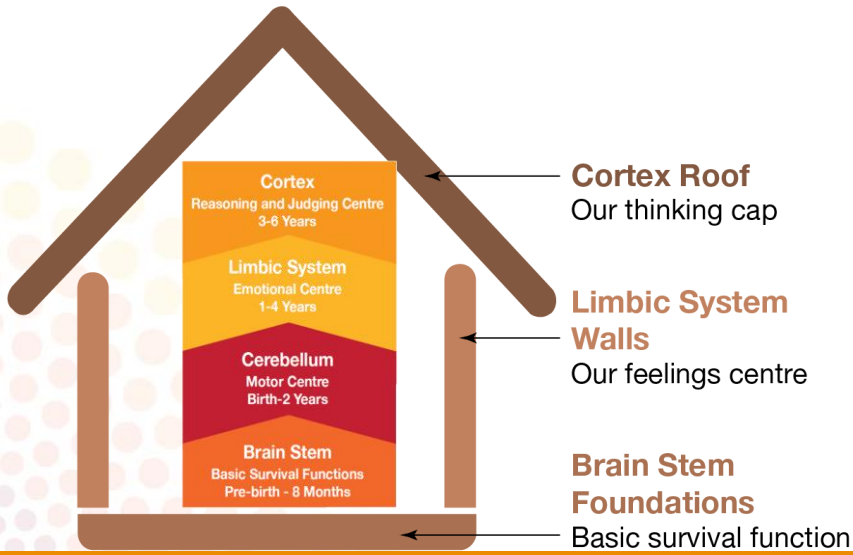
Making SPACE for Learning

Trauma Informed Practice in Schools

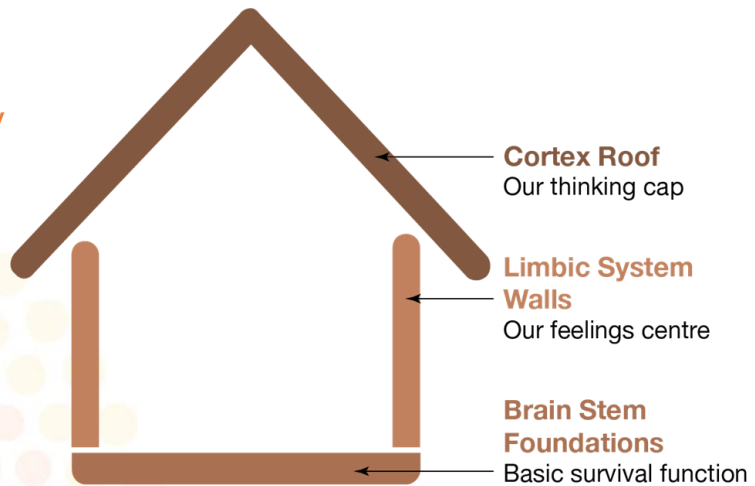


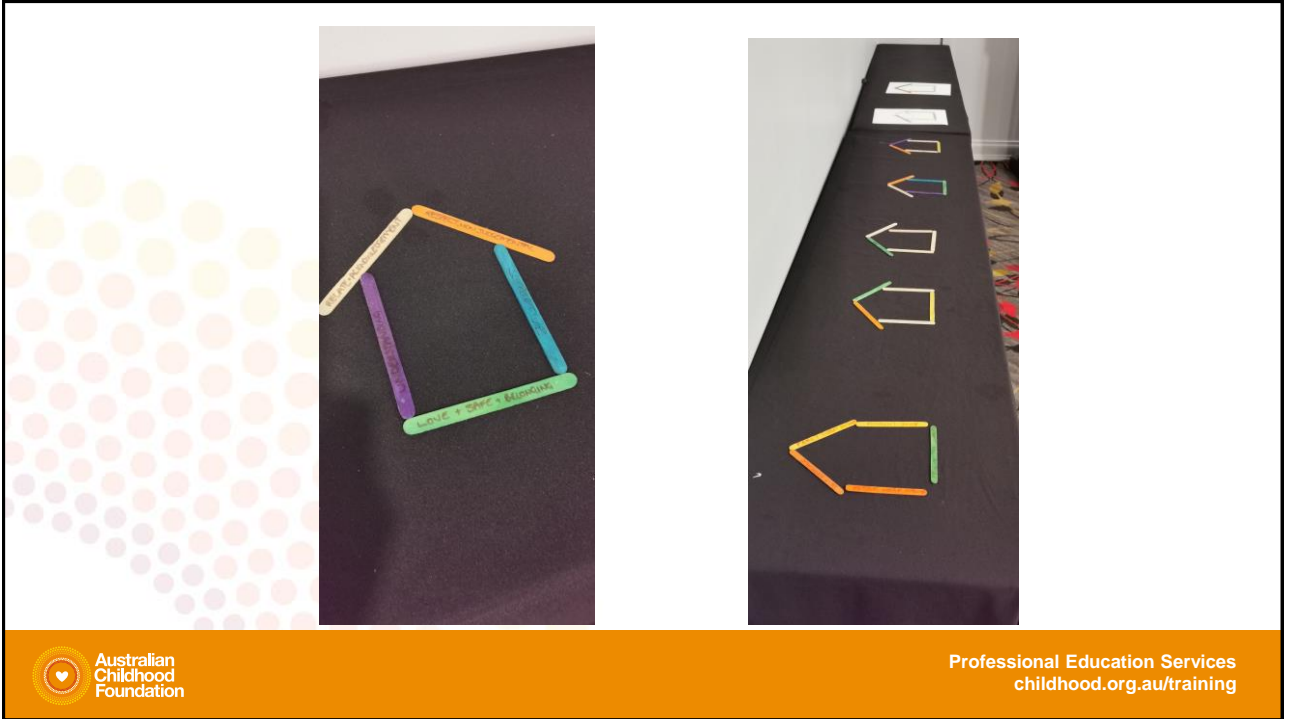
Understanding brain development and the impacts of trauma

My Brain House - A brain development metaphor



A student's Brain House needs safety and support from attuned and connected relationships in order to grow and learn (Grace, 2022)



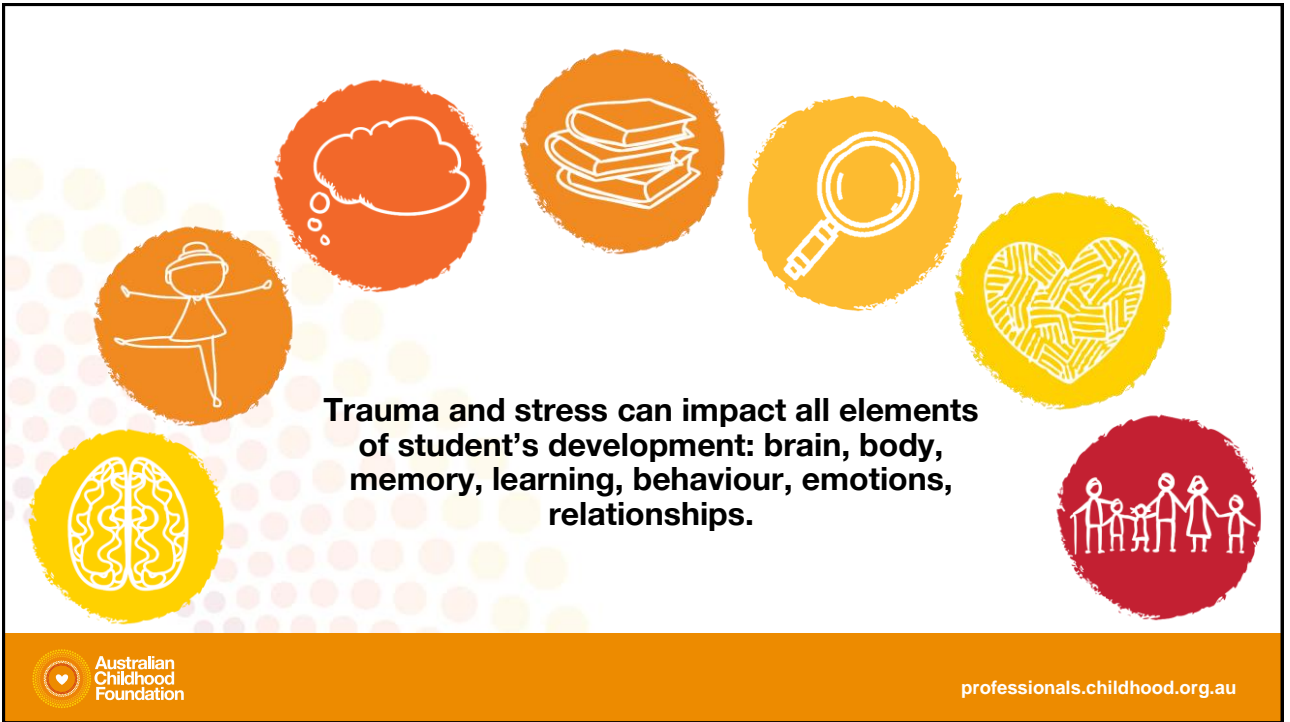


Trauma

Any single, ongoing or cumulative experience which:

- is a response to a **perceived threat**, usually to survival
- **overwhelms** our capacity to cope
- feels/is **outside our control**
- often evokes a **physiological** and **psychological** set of responses based on fear or avoidance

The diagram consists of a large circle divided into three segments: 'Developmental' (orange), 'Simple' (yellow), and 'Complex' (red). To the right of this circle are two circular arrows. The top one is orange and labeled 'Intergenerational', and the bottom one is red and labeled 'Transgenerational'.



Trauma and stress can impact all elements of student's development: brain, body, memory, learning, behaviour, emotions, relationships.

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Impacts of trauma




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Three Core Concepts in Early Development

3 Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD
Center on the Developing Child HARVARD UNIVERSITY

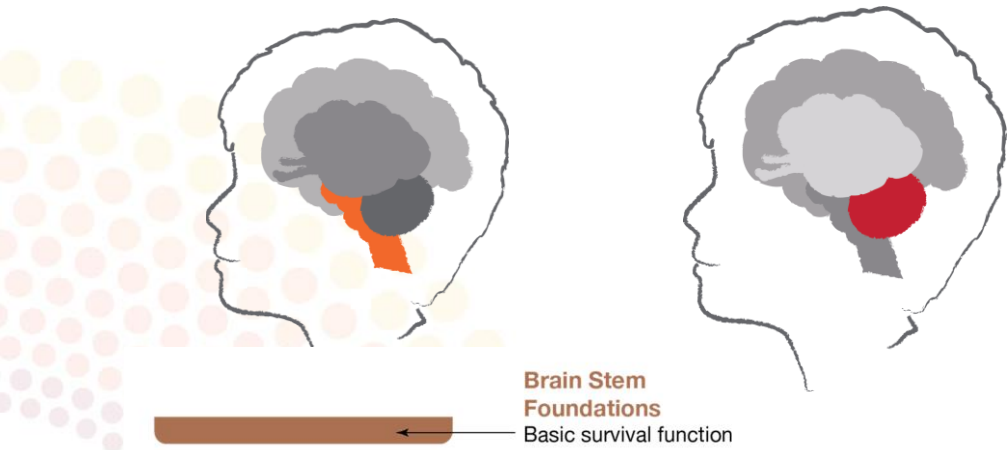


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Brainstem & Cerebellum



Brain Stem Foundations
Basic survival function



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Superior Colliculus

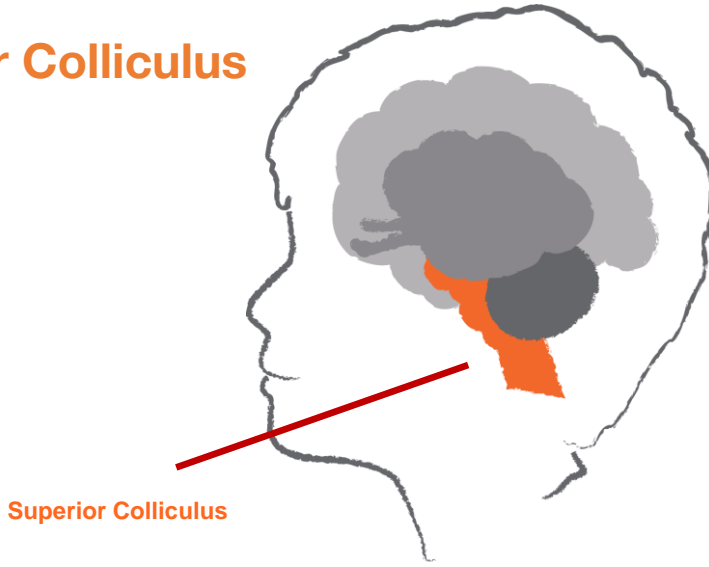


Image source: ©ACF2021



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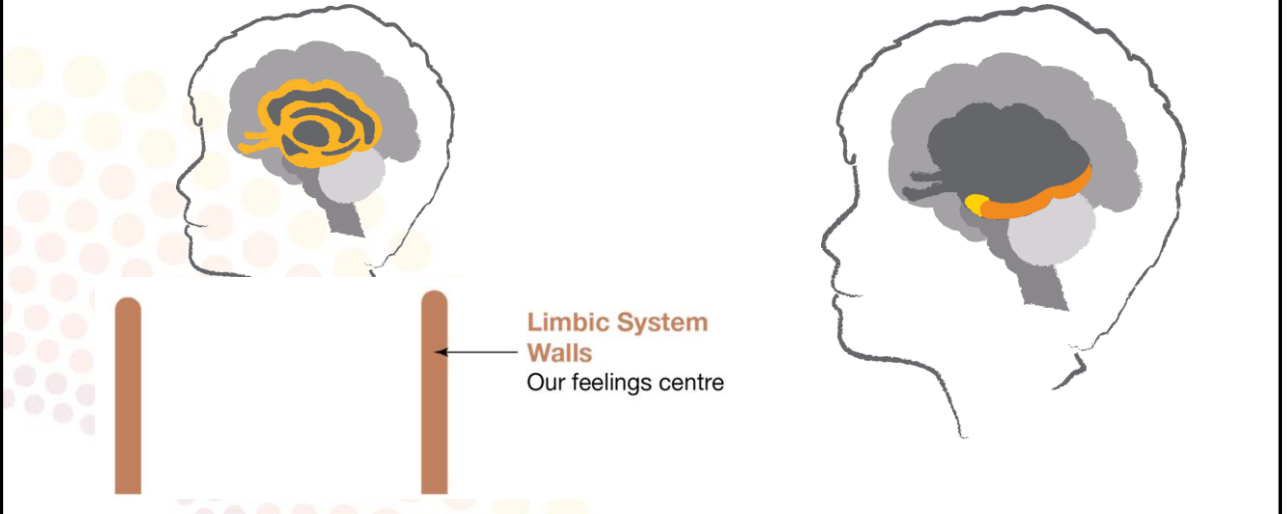


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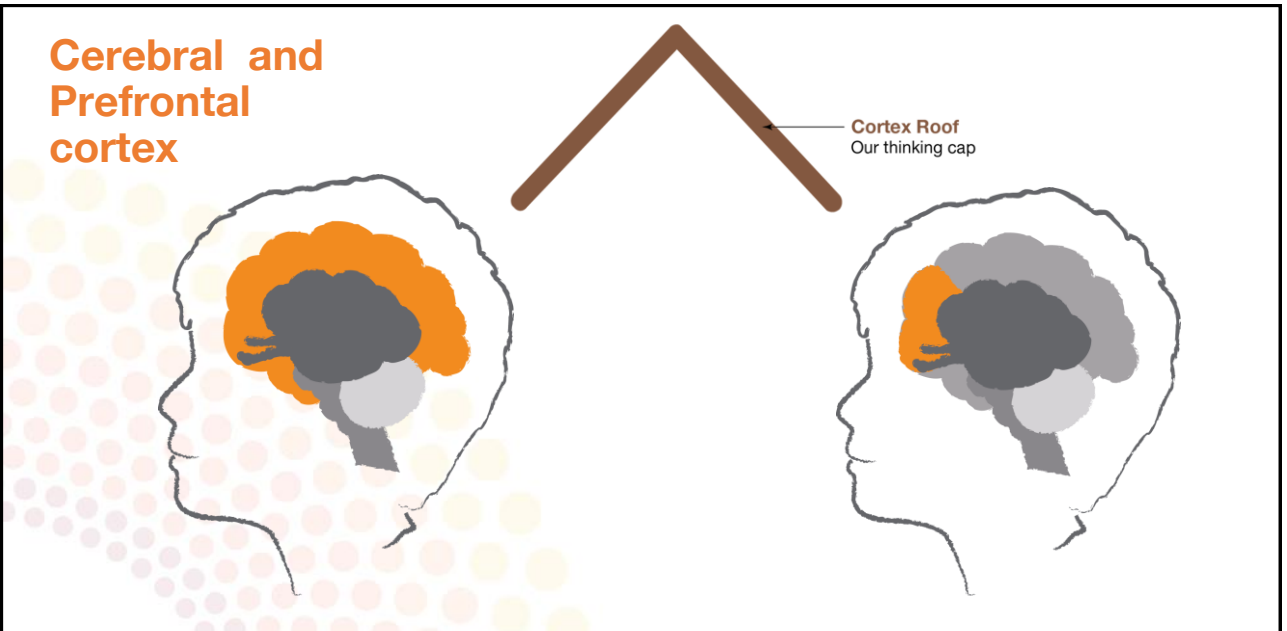
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Limbic lobe - Amygdala and Hippocampus



Cerebral and Prefrontal cortex



Broca's and Wernicke's areas

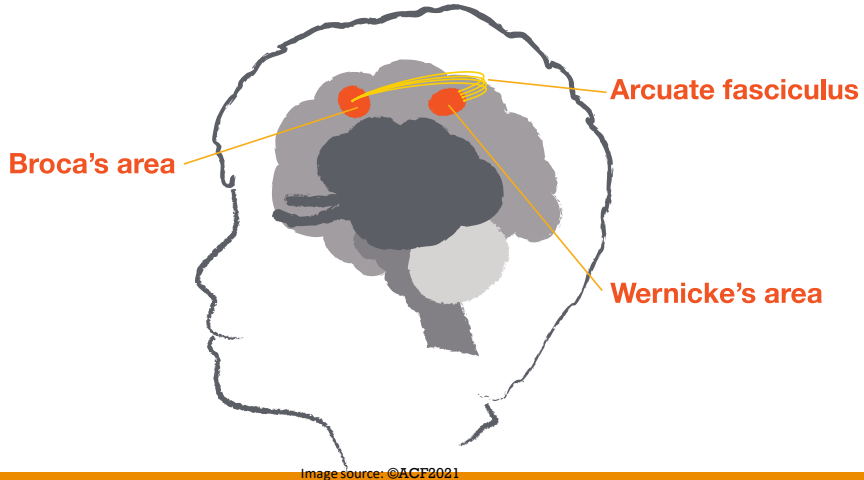


Image source: ©ACF2021

Safety & the body

Mindful “with-it-ness”

Notice and name

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you touch/sense
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Polyvagal theory and Protective Responses

Behavioural Functions

Body Functions

by Stephen Porges

Social Engagement

Soothing and calming
Indicates safety

- 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



Mobilisation

Fight or Flight
Active Freeze
Moderate or extreme danger

Hyper arousal

- Increases heart rate
- Sweat increases
- Inhibits gastrointestinal function
- Narrowing blood vessels - to slow blood flow to extremities
- Release of adrenaline



Immobilisation

Collapse or submission
Death feigning
Increased pain threshold
Conserves metabolic resources
Life threatening situations

Hypo - arousal

- Slows heart rate
- Constricts bronchi
- Stimulates gastrointestinal function



Neuroception

“Before we can engage in social behaviour and learning we must first feel safe.”

(Porges, 2015, p.115).

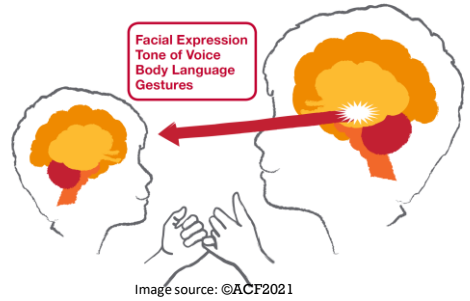


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Polyvagal Theory & Sensing Safety

	Mobilisation Fight, Flight, Active Freeze	I don't feel safe	I am filled with energy I need to move I need to act now	Red Faced, hot and sweaty Fast beating heart Muscles tensed Moving body, hard to find stillness
	Social Engagement	I feel safe	I am all set to play and explore I am ready to connect I am open to your ideas	Making Eye contact Orienting towards those around Listening Relaxed, loose, flowing body
	Immobilisation Flop	I don't feel safe	I am numbed out I am retreating inside I am collapsed, small, and distant	I have cold extremities Glazed eyes, distant stare Slow movement Lethargic & passive body



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Detecting Safety with our Social Engagement System

- We feel safe together in this state.
- This is a calm behavioral state
- Often characterized by mirroring and reciprocation.
- Tell tale signs– people are orientated towards one another with engaged faces



Neuroception of Safety

Neuroception = the way our neural circuits quickly and implicitly work out if situations or people are safe or dangerous



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Mobilisation in safety.....danger

Play



Fight or Flight or Active Freeze



Neuroception of Safety

Neuroception of Danger

Access to Social Engagement System

No access to Social Engagement System



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Immobilisation in safety.....danger

Being still with others for pro-social reasons like sharing a hug.
Finding pleasure in stillness.

Submission or collapse



Neuroception of Safety

Neuroception of Danger

Access to Social Engagement System

No access to Social Engagement System



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Polyvagal Theory

I am showing you....

On the inside.....

I need you to....

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
Feeling safe, staying in relationship, connection oriented
You might say I am:
• Making eye contact
• Listening
• Engaging in play and exploration

I am feeling:
• Safe, Calm, Happy, Sad, Annoyed, Reflective, Playful, Curious
My body says:
• Approach others
• Sit still
• Breathe deeply

Help me to stay engaged
• Play and have fun with me
• Role model positive relationships
• Set boundaries and natural consequences
• Use reflective and problem solving skills so I can learn them too
• Notice and acknowledge my strengths and my skills

MOBILISATION
Fight, flight, active freeze, action oriented
You might say I am:
• Aggressive
• Loud
• Fighting
• Running away
• Hyperactive

I am feeling:
• Anxious, Frightened, Lonely, Hurt, Confused, Overwhelmed
My body says:
• Run away
• I'm hot
• I can't sit still
• I need to move

Help me to down regulate
• Keep me safe
• Co-regulate - be safe, attuned and responsive to me
• Use movement - big then smaller, jumping, hanging, swinging, climbing, star jumps
• Create a safe space near you where I can retreat to until I calm down
• Model deep breathing
• Repair our relationship - 'we are ok and our relationship is strong'

IMMOBILISATION
Withdrawal, collapse, submission, dissociation, avoidant oriented
You might say I am:
• Withdrawn
• Avoiding contact
• Distant
• Compliant
• Hiding

I am feeling:
• Disconnected, Unfocused, Flat, Withdrawn, I'm disappearing
My body says:
• Avoid others
• I'm not in my body
• I want to hide
• Curl up in a ball

Help me to up regulate
• Co-regulate - be safe, attuned and responsive with me
• Tell me I am safe and demonstrate it with your actions, gestures and tone of voice
• Help me to orient to the room we are in by looking for specific things like something green, something on the roof or something on the floor
• Help me to feel my body by noticing different parts, such as my feet on the floor and my bottom on the chair
• Repair our relationship - 'we are ok and our relationship is strong'

Grounded in the work of Dr Dan Siegel, Dr Stephen Porges and Dr Bruce Perry



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What trauma or stress response can look like

Cognitions & Behaviours:

- Asking lots of questions
- Bravado (speech or actions)
- Attention, concentration and memory difficulties
- Black & White thinking, negative thoughts
- Generalised worries
- Rigid thinking & behaviours
- Compulsions/ repetitive behaviours
- Ruminating – what if's, should, cyclic thoughts

Mobilised Responses:

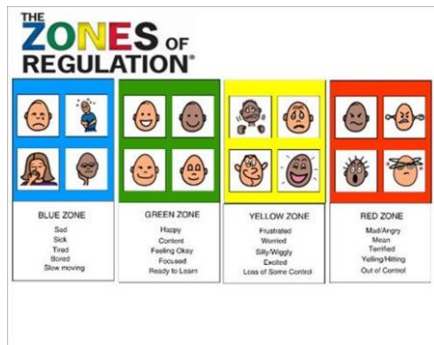
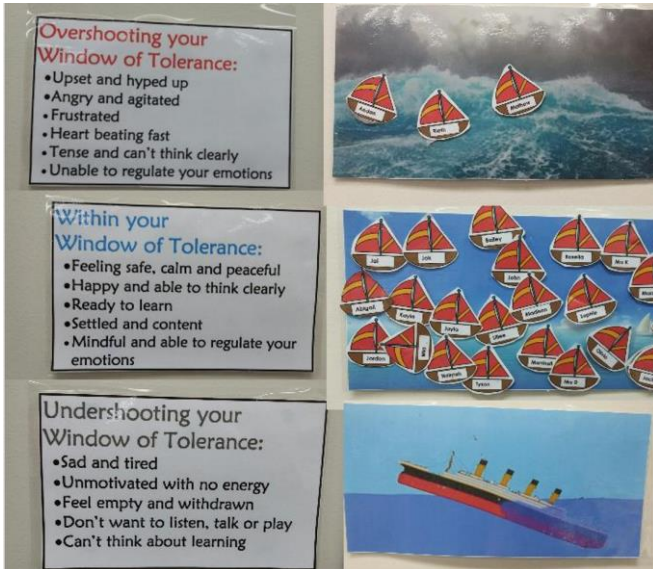
- Hypervigilant
- Edgy/jumpy
- Irritable – easily annoyed
- Poor recovery from distraction
- 'silly', loud, over-excitement
- Unsettled, sleep difficulties
- Outbursts, aggression
- Defensive, taking things personally
- Increased expectations of self and others
- Inflexible, 'controlling'
- Sensitive to sensory input

Immobilised Responses:

- Flat, numb affect
- Disengaged, disinterested
- Withdrawn
- "boredom"
- Lethargic, unmotivated
- Disconnected from peers
- Developmental regression – e.g. with abilities to self-soothe, self-care/hygiene, toileting
- Changes to appetite

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Using the WOT in the classroom - An example from a Catholic Primary in SA



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My Day feeling safe and unsafe

Mobilised

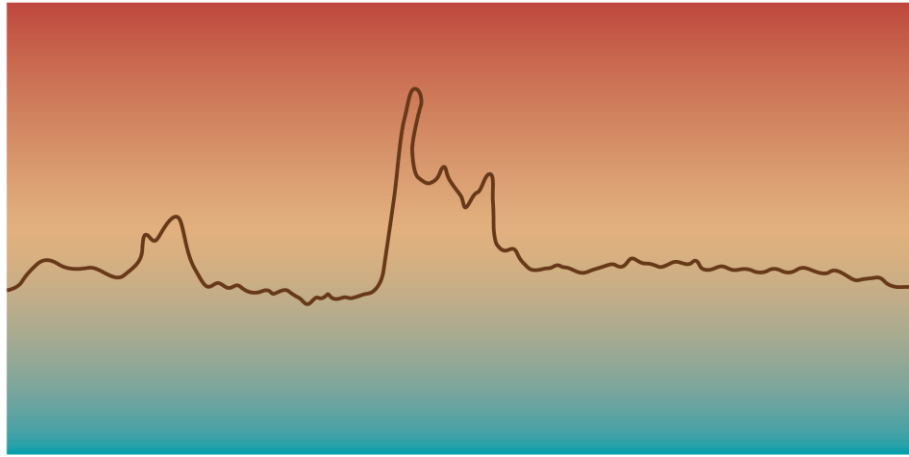
I don't feel safe zone

Socially Engaged

I feel safe zone

Immoblised

I don't feel safe zone



My Day

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Strategies

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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Strategies - MOBILISED responses - *Fight*

What it might look like

- angry, aggressive, irritable
- confrontational, controlling, shouting
- blaming others, pushing others away, argumentative

Supportive responses/strategies

- 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

Strategies - MOBILISED responses - *Flight*

What it might look like

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

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

Strategies 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

Supportive responses/strategies

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

Strategies - IMMOBILISED responses - *Submit*

What it might look like

- low, sad, flat mood
- quiet, compliant
- alone, withdrawn

Supportive responses

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

Brain break



Aligning the Spine Activities

Our midline extends down our spine and when it is aligned there is no collapse or compression of the spine.

Under stress it is hard to maintain spinal alignment

Think, too, about seating options for students.

Movement breaks help

Activities to try:

- Move like you have a tail
- Tick tock like a clock until you find your centre
- Imagine being lifted by a hook from the top of your head, while feeling the pull of gravity on the tail of your spine.
- Zip yourself up or pull yourself up with an imaginary string
- Walk with a toy balanced on your head
- Stretch up and become a tree or a tall tower



Image source: ©ACF2021

Strategies for keeping students in their WOT.

- Routine and predictability
- Breath based activities
- Grounding activities
- Movement & Regulation activities
- Use of self – social engagement



Image source: ©ACF2021

Supporting Social Engagement

Strategies to help students and young people to regulate and maintain or return to a neuroception of safety:

- **Prosody** – gentle calm voice (*brainstem/limbic*)
- **Facial expressions** - (*vagus nerve/ ANS*)
- **Body language** - (*vagus nerve/ANS/right brain*)
- **Check in** with your own emotions/triggers (*right brain to right brain, co-regulation*)
- **Connection** relating (*limbic/cortex*)
- **Draw on strengths** (*limbic/cortex*)
- **Empathy** (*brainstem/limbic/cortex*)
- **Humour** (*limbic/cortex*)

SPACE



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Making SPACE for Learning – Site Audit Tool

This audit tool can be used to evaluate the policies and initiatives of a school that resource and equip different levels of the school structure to undertake trauma informed practice. In the following table, list strategies, policies or other processes currently undertaken that support traumatised students at your school.

	Whole Site	Staff	Classroom / Group	Small Group	Individual Student / Child
S Staged					
P Predictable					
A Adaptive					
C Connected					
E Enabled					

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Domains	Domain Explanation	Translated into needs statements
Staged	The brain develops sequentially. Sophisticated functions only emerge after basic functions are consolidated. We should resource children in line with what their developing brain's need.	Children's brains need support to grow and learn My brain grows upwards step by step
Predictable	Uncertainty and unpredictability can disrupt emotional wellbeing and threaten social competence. Strategies which promote stability and familiarity enhance social and emotional wellbeing.	Children need to know what they can count on I feel better when I know what is coming next.
Adaptive	Familiar behavioural routines are more likely to be enacted in response to life challenges than new ones. Familiar routines may not always be constructive. Strategies which promote adaptability in children's behavioural routines are ones that meet children creatively with multiple options for intervention.	Children need support to grow up healthy and strong There are things I need to grow up healthy and strong.
Connected	Children's internal maps for forming, maintaining and being in relationships are affected by their experiences of relationships throughout their lives. Negotiating relationships at school can be a source of stress when children have found them hard or unsafe in the past. Relationship with safe and consistent adults and peers form the foundation for change.	Children need to feel like they are connected. I need to feel like I am connected.
		Children need to feel safe and know about what makes a safe connection. I need to feel safe. I need safe connections in my life.
Enabled	All children can benefit from engaging in the process of understanding themselves more deeply. The capacity to identify feelings and learn how they relate to the body, thoughts, and behaviours is a worthwhile life skill. Learning to communicate feelings with each other enriches social cohesion. Making sense of our stories helps us to build coherent identities over time.	Children need to know more about what makes them who they are. I grow stronger as I learn more about what makes me, me.



Staged

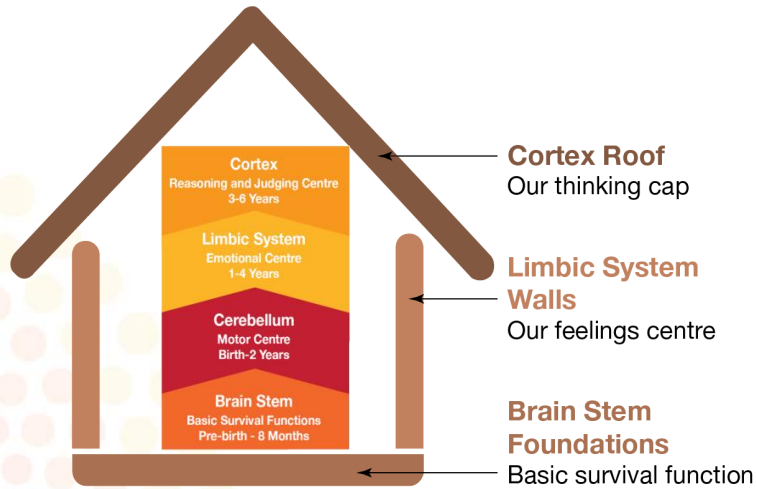
Children's and young people's brains need support to grow and learn

My brain grows upwards step by step

I need you to help me regulate me step by step...this helps me to feel safe



Staged- A brain development metaphor - My Brain House



Predictable

Children and young people need to know what and who they can count on

I feel better when I know what is coming next

I need predictable people and routines in my day...this helps me feel safe

Creating Safety - Routine and Predictability

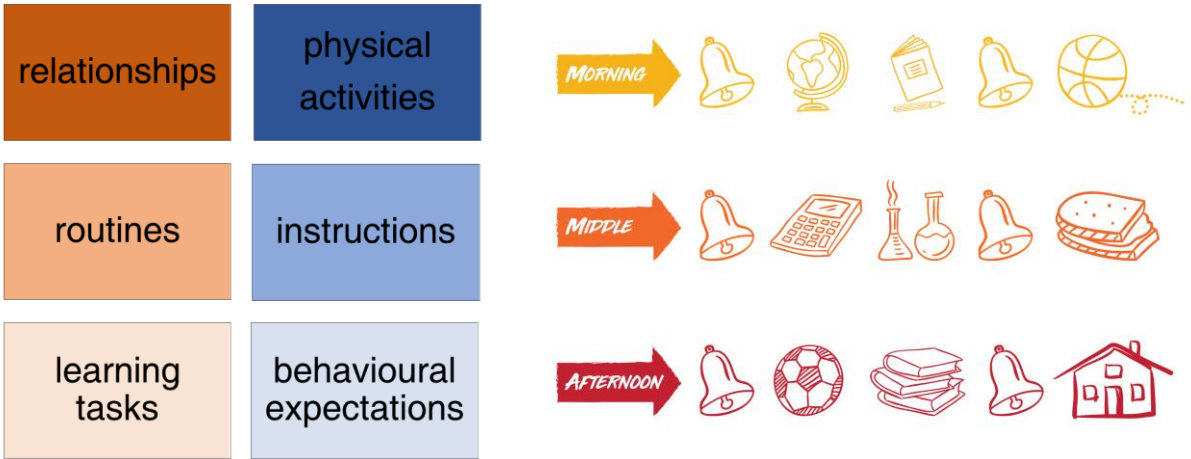


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Predictable You

“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

Hiam Ginott



Adaptive

Children and young people need support to grow up healthy and strong

There are things I need to grow up healthy and strong.

I need both familiarity and adaptability in my **routines each day**...this helps me to feel safe

Behaviour

- What is the behaviour telling me?
- What does this student need?

Rather than asking “What’s wrong with you, ask, what do you need from me?...”





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Connected

Students need to feel like they are connected.

I need to know how to feel safe and know about what makes a safe connection.

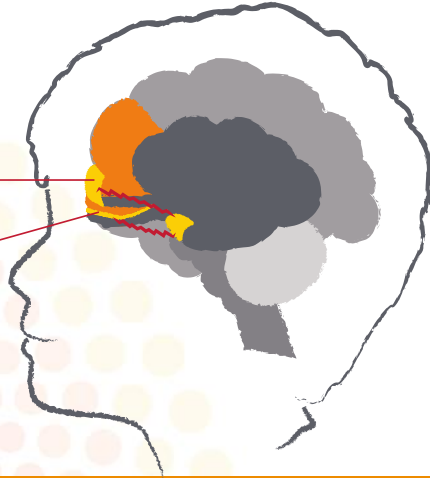
I need to feel like I am connected to **myself and others around me....**this makes me feel safe

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Connection – using co-regulation

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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Group Activity – Connection



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Enabled

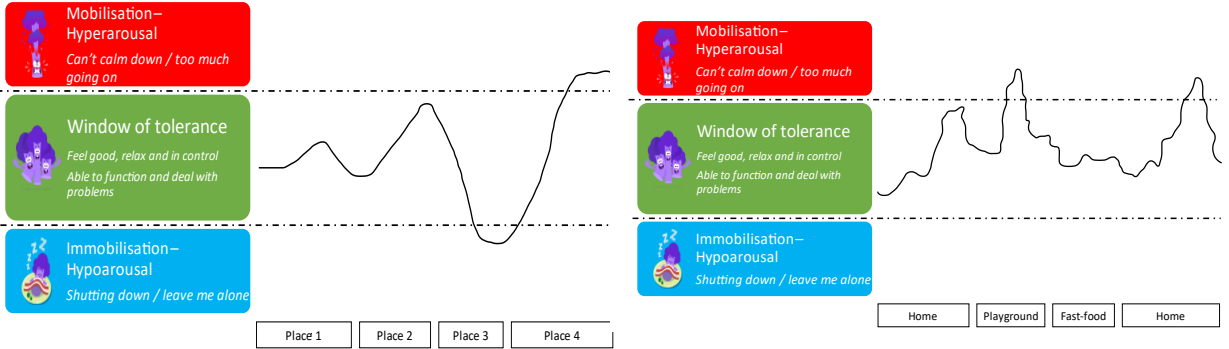
Children need to know more about what makes them who they are.

I grow stronger as I learn more about what makes me, me.

I need to know and learn more about who I am and why.

I need to feel like I am **enabled and able...**this makes me feel safe

Mapping movement – a teacher’s example



An example from a 2022 Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma DfE SA student currently using this strategy with her students to map out their movement



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Holding hope

What are your hopes for your students?

What are your hopes for your school?



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Thank you for your participation...



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Further Resources:

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/making-space-learning-resources/>

Any questions?

Carolyn Grace
cgrace@childhood.org.au



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