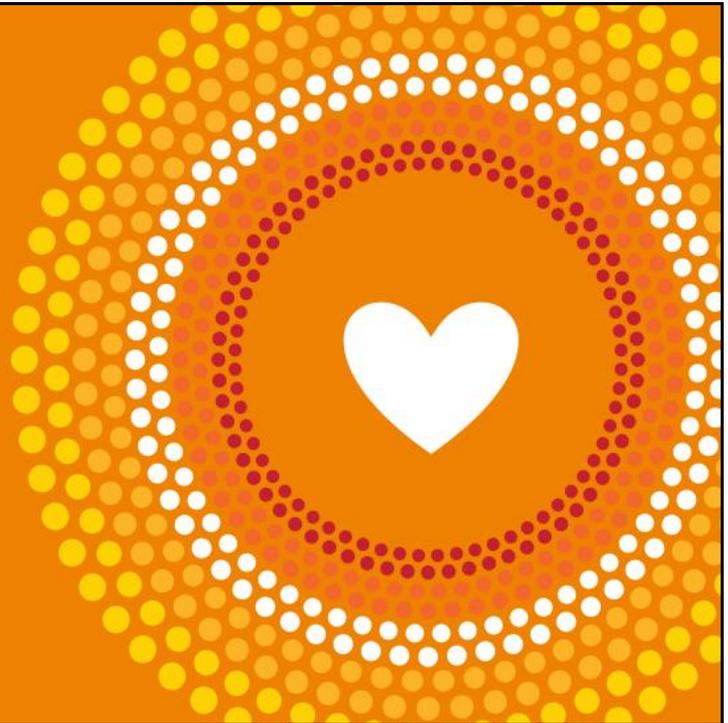


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The window of tolerance: cultivating “with-it-ness”

Presenters:
Brendan Bailey & Carolyn Grace



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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.



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Outline of our session

- Reviewing “with-it-ness”
- Regulation – Understanding the Window of Tolerance
- Regulating our students’ and our own responses



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Reviewing “with-it-ness”



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Reviewing “with-it-ness”

- Webster’s dictionary defines it as **“the quality or state of being aware of and responsive to what is happening around one.”**
- “With-it-ness” is about being present in the moment and having a heightened sense of awareness.

When we are “with-it”, we are open and receptive to what is happening around us, and the ability to communicate this to our student.

Yussif, 2022



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It’s been said...

“Teachers with expert ‘with-it-ness’ have ‘eyes in the back of their heads’”

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“I heard she has eyes in the back of her head, but I suspect more likely it’s some combination of Google Glass and a smartwatch.”

Image source: pinterest



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Reflective Activity – Reading the room

- How do you “read the room”?
- What are your tricks for noticing, for example, when a student is escalating or disengaging?
- How do you know when they are beginning to engage again?



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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

Strategy - A school example

What is the 5 Senses Walk? (BSEM, 2020)

A 5 senses walk is where a student and adult walk together and the student is prompted to:

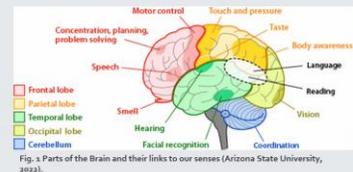
- Listen to what they can hear
- Identify what they can see
- Find items to touch/feel
- Tune into what they can smell
- Find items to taste (where appropriate!)



Usually, the walk is conducted in an outdoor environment and lasts anywhere between 5-10 minutes.

Healing goals using the 5 Senses Walk

- De-escalation
- Tuning into self (self-awareness)
- Relational – completing the walk (or elements of) with students
- Using the healing benefits of exercise and nature (Wilson, 1984)
- Develops Interoceptive awareness (Hooven and Price, 2018)



An example from a 2022 Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma DfE SA student currently using this strategy with his students



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Regulation – Understanding the Window of Tolerance



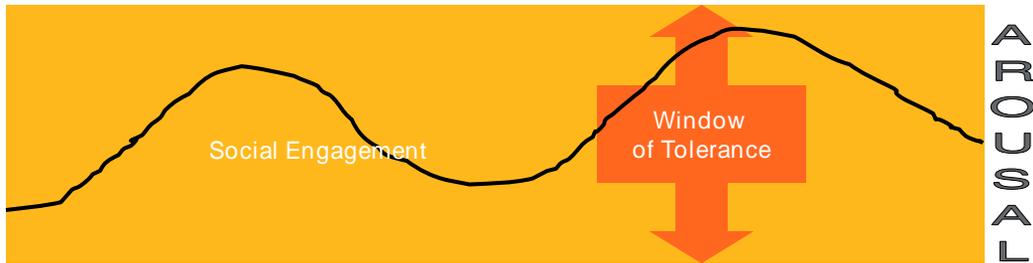
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Regulated Arousal

Fight or Flight hyper-vigilant, action-orientated, impulsive, emotionally flooded, reactive, defensive, self-destructive

Freeze Physically immobilized, frozen, tense musculature



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

Image source: ©ACF2021

Ogden, Minton, Pain 2006



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Dys-regulated Arousal

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

Freeze Physically immobilized, frozen, tense musculature



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

Image source: ©ACF2021

Ogden, Minton, Pain 2006



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Overshooting your Window of Tolerance:

- Upset and hyped up
- Angry and agitated
- Frustrated
- Heart beating fast
- Tense and can't think clearly
- Unable to regulate your emotions

Within your Window of Tolerance:

- Feeling safe, calm and peaceful
- Happy and able to think clearly
- Ready to learn
- Settled and content
- Mindful and able to regulate your emotions

Undershooting your Window of Tolerance:

- Sad and tired
- Unmotivated with no energy
- Feel empty and withdrawn
- Don't want to listen, talk or play
- Can't think about learning

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

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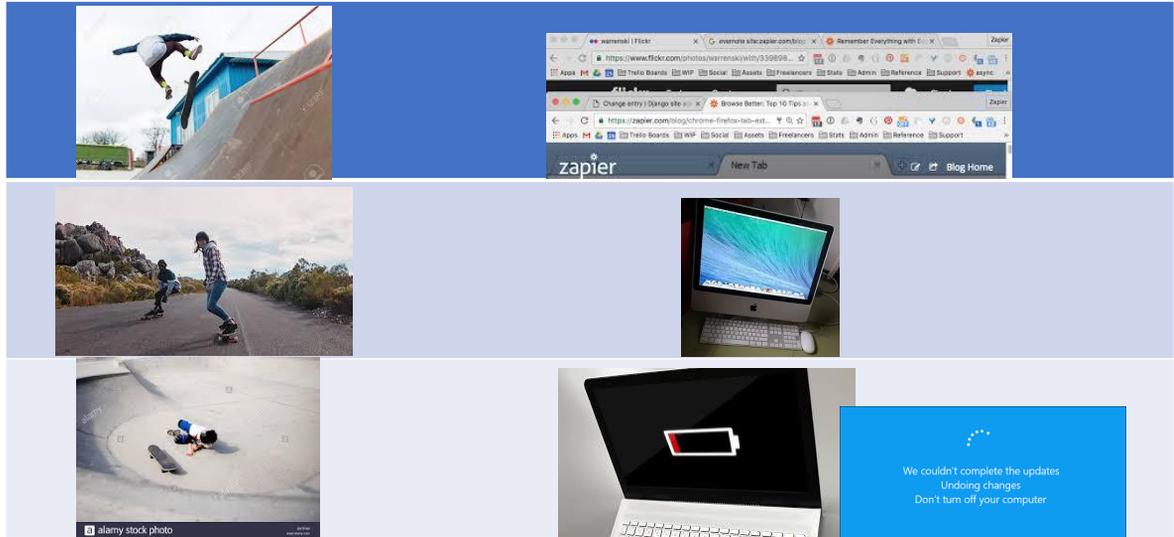
A SA Kindergarten example

<p>Hyperarousal</p> <p>Fight Flight Active Freeze</p>	
<p>Social engagement</p> <p>When we feel and are safe we will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play well - Engage well with others and our environment - Think well and make decisions 	
<p>Hypoarousal</p> <p>Feigned death Flop Collapse</p>	

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Other examples



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Strategy - My Line of the Day

Example of 'Line of My Day' exercise



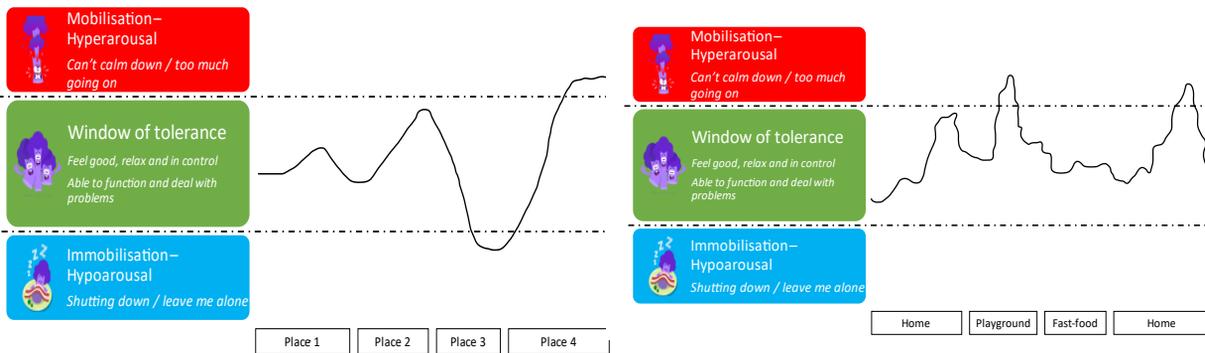
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Mapping movement – a teacher’s example



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



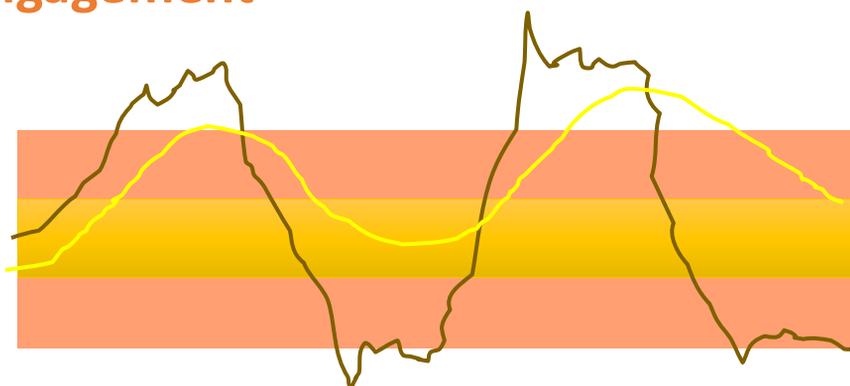
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Recognition of your own Window of Tolerance/Engagement

Student's movement in their WOT

Educators movement in their WOT



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Just for fun!

REFOCUS FORM
~~REDO~~

Name: Harold H.
 Grade: 1.c
 Teacher: Ms. Conet Rude

I engaged in unacceptable behavior
 by: making copies of dog man comic in office.

My behavior caused other students and teachers to:
break out

How will my behavior change in the future? be more quiet when making copies of dog man comic in office.

I am ready to re-join the classroom. Yes No

Why? too busy making dog man comic

Student signature: Harold H.

DRAWING  HOW MANY TIMES DO WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THIS???



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Brain break – roll a brain break



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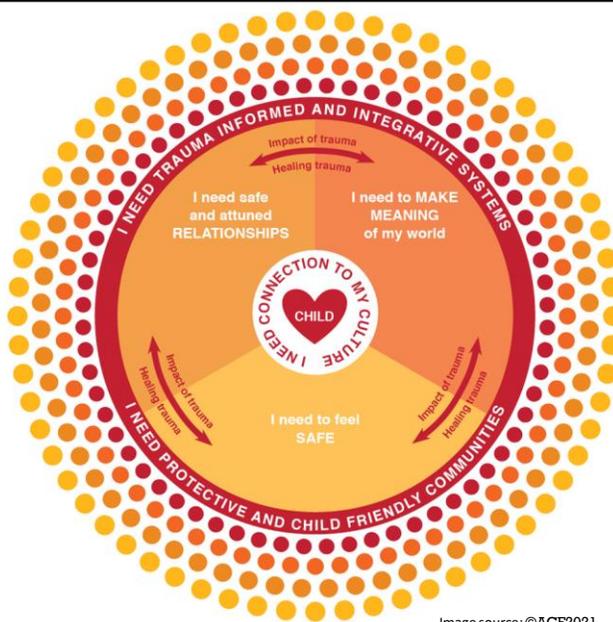
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Regulating our students' and our own responses



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ACF's Framework for responding



What is your framework for responding to behaviours?

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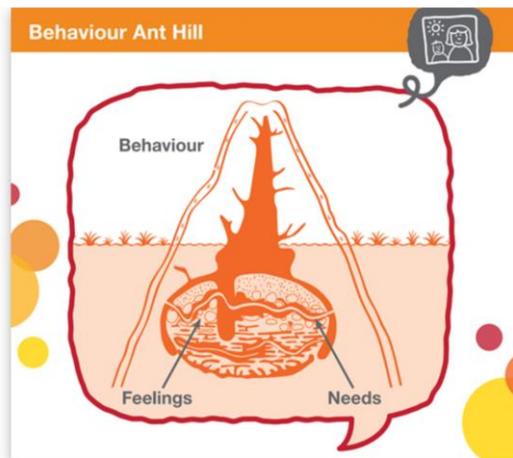
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Reflective Activity – Questions to ask....

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

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



Strategies to respond

1. Mobilisation

- Rhythm
- Containing
- Grounding

2. Immobilisation

- Orientation to space and senses
- Engaging the spine



Image source: ©ACF2021

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

Responding – assisting students remain within their Window of Tolerance

- Breath based
- Grounding
- Movement
- Use of self

Window of Tolerance Session Strategies and Activities



Breath-based activities

- Bee and Snake breathing
- Shape breathing – squares, trian-gles, stars
- Sighing activity (1 2 3: Sigh - then re-peat)
- Tracing around fingers – breathing in on the up tracing, breathing out on the down tracing
- Falling feathers or silk scarves or leaf
- Blowing a pin wheel
- Blowing bubbles/Bubble Tennis
- 3-dimensional breathing
- Blowing up balloons
- Breathing apps



Grounding Activities

- Name objects in the room out loud
- Open a window or door to let in fresh air
- Encourage the child to look up and out rather than down
- Move outside if you're inside and in-side if you're outside
- Hang an interesting object at height in the space
- Ask she/he the time
- Encourage students to take their shoes off and feel their feet on the floor
- Offer the student a cold drink
- Ask student to point to a particular item – something green, something square
- See – dis-orientation for more strategies
- Count how many things you can see in the room – ie circle shapes
- Tree Roots Grounding activity (see page 28)



Movement Activities

- Drink or splash face with cold water
- Fast paced/upbeat music
- Holding ice in hand or mouth
- Small strong scents
- Try being in a cool room
- Touch Rough or prickly textures
- Use light touch i.e. feather
- Try fast and/or jerky movements
- Aerobic exercise
- Use bright or flashing lights
- Practice stretches/yoga
- Eat sour or spicy foods/candy
- Go for a power walk
- Chew on crunchy food
- Try rubber band wrist snapping
- Spine alignment activities

Image source: ©ACF2021

Responding – The Use of Self

Creating safety – supporting the social engagement system	
 <p>Environment</p>	<p>A safe environment is paramount. Consider physical, emotional and cultural safety. Is the environment free from violence and abuse, responsive to physical and emotional needs and inclusive of cultural needs. Also ensure the environment considers the sensory needs of the child. Spaces that have too much stimulation - loud noises, bright lights, strong smells or too many pictures on the walls can be overwhelming for children experiencing trauma. Understanding the child's individual needs and providing enough sensory stimulation for growth but not too much so that the child is overwhelmed is the key. Remember safety is an individual experience. What seems safe for one person may not be for another.</p>
 <p>Proximity</p>	<p>Consider the child's need for closeness or space. Each child is different. Take into account the context, your relationship and the developmental age of the child. Being attuned to the child will help you to navigate what the child needs. If a child is dysregulated always remain within the line of sight of the child, unless your safety or the safety of others is at risk. Remember time is rather than time out. Any direct contact with the child should be initiated by the child.</p>
 <p>Eye contact</p>	<p>Eye contact is an important aspect of social engagement and enables feelings of connectedness and validation. Eye contact can be threatening though to a child who has experienced trauma as their social engagement system is usually on high alert. Consider ways to engage with the child using minimal eye contact. Chatting while driving along in the car, creating art or shooting hoops is a great way to engage the child in conversation and is less threatening than sitting face to face. Remember, each child is different so be guided by the child.</p>
 <p>Facial expressions</p>	<p>Children who have experienced trauma can often have trouble reading facial expressions and will often interpret expressions as anger or disappointment. Be aware of your facial expressions when engaging with the child. Aim for contingent facial expressions that look to mirror the child's inner experience - this conveys empathy and helps the child to understand themselves and feel heard. When the child is regulated, look for opportunities to assist the child to develop emotional literacy by using cards/games that match faces to feelings.</p>
 <p>Tone of voice</p>	<p>Prosody is the rhythm, pitch and tone of the voice, like when a mother alters her voice to soothe her baby. Tone of voice can have a powerful impact on a child's sense of safety. In situations where a child is dysregulated, consider the tone and pitch of your voice. A soft and gentle voice is more likely to deescalate an overwhelmed child.</p>
 <p>Posture and gestures</p>	<p>Consider your posture and gestures. How you approach the child will determine how safe or unsafe they may feel. If your posture is puffed up with your shoulders back, the child may read you as defensive and primed to fight. A posture that is strong, yet open and welcoming will help to calm the child. The child's implicit memory system may interpret certain postures or gestures as threatening, so stay attuned to the child and again be guided by them. Mirroring (what's staying within your window of tolerance) is also important. Mirroring can convey empathy and a sense of feeling heard and this will help with coregulation.</p>

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Thank you

Brendan Bailey & Carolyn Grace

Keep in touch

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