

# SMART Early Years



## Activities Booklet

## Introduction

Welcome to the SMART suite of trainings. We hope that these trainings will be a value add to your trauma responsive practice in your educational setting.

This Activities Booklet for Early Years accompanies the SMART Foundation Early Years and SMART Responses Early Years training that you are attending and is to be used by you in your practice.

We hope that this resource will support you in the wonderful work you are doing with your little ones... babies, toddlers and young children. Throughout this booklet, the term *young children* will be used to differentiate from the Primary School and High School versions of this booklet. The aim of this booklet is to provide activities and responses for babies through to approximately six years of age.

Throughout the booklet, you will find a vast range of response ideas for you to use with your young children, and details of some of the activities your trainer may use in the session. The activities in this booklet are designed for Day-care Providers, Early Childhood Educators, and Teachers, as well as caregivers.

For SMART Early Years Train the Trainers, you may like to use some of these activities when you deliver your sessions.

For each section you will find connections to the SMART PRACTICE Framework, as well as SMART Early Years Discussion Papers. You are encouraged to use the Personal Reflection spaces in the booklet to add your reflections and ideas.

There are links to ACF Activity Sheets referenced throughout the booklet and at the end of the booklet, you will find links to further ACF resources.

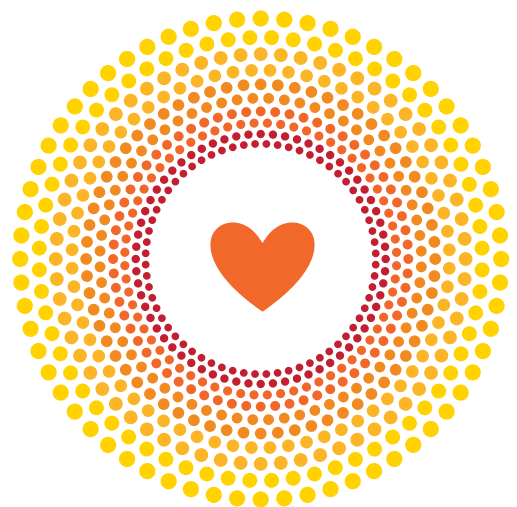
Please do not copy or distribute this book to others. Your trainer will be referencing material in this booklet, so please ensure you have an electronic or hard copy available when you attend your training.

**All the very best with the important work you are doing to support young children in education settings throughout South Australia.**

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# 1

CHAPTER

## Brain Development

# Neuronal Connections



## SMART PRACTICE Focus:

Predictable



## Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 1: Understanding brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 2: Trauma in the early years



## Transforming Neuronal Connections:

Building and strengthening

Predictable, repeated activities that supports relational connection & attunement

### BABIES

- Cuddles, holding close, rocking, delighting in the baby
- Emotional responses of connection - smiling, cooing
- Playing games - clapping games, Peek-a-boo
- Sensory experiences
- Sharing tactile songs – “Round and round the garden like a teddy bear”, “This little piggy”

### TODDLERS

- Hugs, sitting on your lap, delighting in the toddler
- Emotional responses of connection – co-regulation/support
- Enjoying books together
- Playing games – dancing on your feet
- Sensory experiences
- Singing songs with actions

### PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Physical activities – indoor and outdoor activities (fine & gross motor)
- Reading books
- Rhyme, rhythm & repetition (stories, songs, games)
- Playing games – hide & seek, “We are going on a bear hunt”
- Sensory play

### SUPPORTING A “NEURONALLY STRONG” ENVIRONMENT

- Provide predictable, consistent routines
- Provide lots of opportunities for repeated experiences - physical, emotional and sensory
- Model supportive relational connections.



## Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

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What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

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## Activity – making neuronal connections

In your group throw one ball of wool to each other zig zagging across the table, holding onto an end so it forms a cobweb of wool.

As you throw the ball of wool you need to identify a traumatic experience a child you care for might experience.

Once everyone in your group has had a turn think about how each time the child has this trauma experience the template (web of wool) is strengthening. Pull the wool tight.

Identify how the child in the centre of this web feels:

- About themselves
- About relationships
- About the world around them

Now using the second ball of wool, do the same but this time identify one thing you could do to nurture a child.

Keep throwing the ball of wool around the group, until everyone has had a turn. Each time the child has a repeated nurturing experience the template is strengthened, pull the wool tight.

Now identify how the child in the centre of this web feels:

- About themselves
- About relationships
- About the world around them



# Brainstem



**SMART PRACTICE Focus:**  
Predictable and Calming



## Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 1: Understanding brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 2: Trauma in the early years

Discussion Paper 3: Mindful educators, Mindful kids, Peaceful environments



**Key ages of development:** In utero to 8 months of age



## Transforming the brainstem:

Safe containment and deep pressure

### BABIES

- Safe cuddles
- Wrap, swaddle and rock baby, especially as they are about to go to sleep or are upset
- Provide “tummy time” for deep pressure
- Massage and gentle, safe touch

### TODDLERS

- Safe hugs
- Holding and rocking
- Provide a weighted toy/teddy to hold

### PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Teach self-hugs
- Provide ‘get away’ spaces for just one child, one bean bag in the book corner, single space tents/teepees, one cushion in a quiet place
- Allow child to carry heavy items – invite the young child to help you...can they carry some books or move an item?
- Provide a weighted toy/teddy to hold



## Transforming the brainstem:

Rhythmic and repetitive for regulation

### BABIES

- Use rocking and swaying to regulate
- Sing songs or read stories with lots of repetition
- Provide predictability and consistency in the routines, in carers.

## TODDLERS

- Repetitive rhyming songs with actions
- Use swings or hammocks
- Have structure and consistent routines throughout their day – a young child’s brain loves routine.

## PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Play music in room (60 – 80 bpm)
- Engage in rhythmic physical activities - jump, march, walk and dance together
- Hand Clapping Games \* (see resources)



## Transforming the brainstem:

### Sensory needs and soothing

#### BABIES

- Use rocking and swaying to regulate
- Use soothing activities – i.e., music to calm
- Provide the baby’s preferred soother
- Provide toys with a variety of textures, sounds, etc.

#### TODDLERS

- Provide a variety of textured activities; playdough, water, cold, hard, soft, etc.
- Ensure the environment is sensory stimulating; sight, smell, hear, taste, feel
- Safe spaces for play, quiet time

#### PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Provide calming areas, quiet areas, containing areas, and soft materials or toys for children to hold
- Ensure each child’s preferred sensory needs are met
- Use essential oils in a diffuser, in playdough, goop, water, etc.



## Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

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What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

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# Brainstem Session Activities



## Rhythmic sounds: stories, songs, rhymes & music

- Brown Bear, Brown Bear
- I Went Walking
- Time for Bed...
- Pat-a-Cake
- See-Saw
- Twinkle, Twinkle...
- Row, row, row your Boat...



## Rhythmic movement

- Walking, marching
- Rocking, swaying
- Swinging, hanging
- Jumping, hopping



## Rhythmic touch

- Massage
- Hair brushing
- Patting

**INFANT MASSAGE** - legs and back (traumatised infants may display touch aversion - need to be gently introduced to experiences of nurturing, loving touch)



## Pat-a-Cake

*Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake baker's man  
Bake me a cake as fast as you can!  
Roll it, Pat it  
And mark it with a "B" for baby and me!*

*For baby and me  
For baby and me!  
Pat it and mark it with a "B"  
Put it in the oven for baby and me!*

1. For the first 2 lines of the song, each player claps their own hands together, then uses one hand to clap the other player's alternate hand.
2. The third line of the song is acted out, as though you and your child are each actively baking a cake.
3. For the "roll it" portion of the third line, make fists with both hands and bicycle your arms one over the other, like you are rolling a blanket - or dough!
4. For the "pat it" portion of the third line, you and your child can use a flat hand to make a patting motion - pretending to smash down a ball of cake mix.
5. The fourth line is a tricky one for pre-readers. Each player draws an invisible "B" in the air with their index finger.
6. While the final line is being sung, each player first acts out opening and placing an item in the oven, then brings their arms in to rock a pretend baby.

For more Hand Clapping Games – check out this resource at:  
<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/resources/>

# Cerebellum



**SMART PRACTICE Focus:**  
Predictable and Calming



## Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 1: Understanding brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 2: Trauma in the early years

Discussion Paper 3: Mindful educators, Mindful kids, Peaceful environments



**Key ages of development:** In utero to 2 – 3 years of age



## Transforming the cerebellum:

Movement and balance

### BABIES

- Provide stretches and massage
- Allow lots of time for balance and movement activities – tummy time, rolling, sitting up, crawling, walking

### TODDLERS

- Play games and sing songs together that include movement – i.e., “row, row, your boat”
- See “Brainstem” for more ideas
- See “Aligning the spine” activities for more ideas

### PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Provide lots of opportunities – to move and balance
- Allow time for stretching – try doing some Kids Yoga activities together
- Create a fun “obstacle course” together – include things to climb through, under and over, things to balance on, jump on or over.



## Building a “rhythmic/balance-connecting” environment

- Bring rhythm and balance into the environment – have regular movement breaks
- Have “rhythmic, containing and balance supportive furniture” for regulation
- Design routines with a sense of rhythm, positive emotion, fun and relational attunement



## Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

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What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do immediately... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do in the future... \_\_\_\_\_

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# Cerebellum Session Activities



## Kinder Kids Yoga At Cardinia Life



<https://cardinaleisure.com.au/kinder-kids-yoga-at-cardinia-life/>



## Baby crawling activities Obstacle course - Up the ramp



<https://www.mamabearu.com/crawling-activities>

# Amygdala



## SMART PRACTICE Focus:

Responsive, Attuned and Connecting



## Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 1: Understanding brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 2: Trauma in the early years



**Key ages of development:** In utero and “online” at birth



## Transforming the Amygdala:

Emotions and social cues

### BABIES

- Reflect back the baby’s emotions - i.e., cooing, smiling, and regulate emotions as needed
- Play games such as “peek a boo” and show a different face each time – i.e., smiling, laughing, surprise

### TODDLERS

- Reflect back the toddlers’ emotions - i.e., smiling, laughing, frustration and regulate emotions as needed
- Provide opportunities to experience and understand emotions in others – “Oh look, Tommy is crying. I wonder whether he is tired/sad?”

### PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Provide feelings cards/tools to help young child to identify emotions
- Build emotional literacy by modelling different facial expressions and emotions and providing language for the young child – i.e., show a surprised face, and say “I am feeling surprised!”



## Transforming the Amygdala:

The alarm system

### BABIES, TODDLERS AND PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Support the baby – reassure and calm, stay present
- Minimise possible triggers – i.e., loud noise, bright light, strong smells
- Use brainstem activities – safe containment to provide a felt sense of safety
- Use simple language “I am here” “You are safe”



## Building an “amygdala-connecting” environment

- Stay calm, stay present and with the young child. Reassure
- Provide opportunities to experience and understand emotions in others – through safe relationships, role modelling and game playing
- Understand their story and acknowledge their learning needs and successes.
- Ensure re-entry to the room is a safe and positive transition – have familiar faces ready to welcome the child back into the space.



## Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

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What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do immediately... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do in the future... \_\_\_\_\_

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# Amygdala Session Activities



Oh, What a feeling...

Building emotional literacy in young children



Relaxed



Happy



Sad



Grumpy



Worried

You can show and model feeling faces with a child as young as 3 years old.

This could be using emotion/feeling cards, books, posters, etc.

You could also use a mirror with you and the child standing in front of the mirror so you can see both your own and each others faces. Make different faces to represent different feelings and help the child guess what feeling it is or ask the child to demonstrate a feeling by making the face. Helping the child to label the feeling will help to build emotional literacy.



Sometimes I Feel

By Pia Jones



Feeling Books

By Five Mile Press



# Hippocampus



**SMART PRACTICE Focus:**  
Responsive and Translating



## Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 1: Understanding brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 2: Trauma in the early years



**Key ages of development:** 18 months – 4 years



## Transforming the Hippocampus:

### BABIES

- In babies this is offline, but remember they have their sensory memory online, so provide lots of sensory memory opportunities – See “brainstem and “diencephalon” strategies
- Talk to the baby about what you are doing or what they are doing. Even though they may not remember, hearing and sensing the rhythm in your voice provides a sense of safety and security
- Practice activities over and over, such as singing songs, – repetition is important

### TODDLERS

- Talk to the toddler about what you are doing or they are doing. Even though they may not remember, hearing and sensing the rhythm in your voice provides a sense of safety and security
- Use rhythmic & repetitive activities to remind and review, i.e., singing the ‘hand washing’ song

### PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Remember pre-schoolers may not remember, so use single simple instructions or questions when doing tasks. Have visual reminders around room to assist.
- Break down activities into manageable tasks, working with and supporting them
- Play memory games – to strengthen memory retention & recall





## Building a “memory-connecting” environment

- Provide lots of opportunities for young children to embed their learning. Do this through practicing and reviewing activities
- Assist young children by breaking down instructions into manageable tasks
- Use short explanations, rather than lengthy ones
- Remember their memory will be impacted when stressed – connect and regulate first



## Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

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What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do immediately... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do in the future... \_\_\_\_\_

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# Hippocampus Session Activities



## Photo memory album

Create a photo album with the child, with photos of their family members and educators. Regularly bring out the album and sit together to look at the photos.

If the child is very young you could point to the photo and say “this is a picture of Nanna” or “this is a picture of me, Larissa, at day-care”.

If the child is older, you could ask the child “Who is this?” You may need to help them if they can’t remember.

Ask them, “what do you do when you are with.....?” And repeat back.... “So, this is Nanna, and when you are with Nanna you read books together”

This will build a strong relational memory and connection for the child.



## Grocery List Game SUITABLE FOR AGES 4 – 6

There are several variations of the grocery list game that improve memory function. This group game involves forming a circle, with the first person starting the game with, “I went to the shop and bought...” Each subsequent person adds an item to the end of the sentence, and the object of the game is to remember all items in correct order.

This quick and easy game is great to play if you do not have any board games, cards, or other items handy. The Grocery List Game tests your ability to recall and properly order lists. The game builds connections and expands your brain’s ability to remember, improving your memory over time.



## Grocery Store Scavenger Hunt

This grocery store **scavenger hunt worksheet** is perfect for toddlers and pre-schoolers, as there are many options. Younger children can look for items of a certain colour or a specific list.

<https://www.funwithmama.com/grocery-store-scavenger-hunt-template/>

# Diencephalon



**SMART PRACTICE Focus:**  
Responsive and Translating



## Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 1: Understanding brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 2: Trauma in the early years



**Key ages of development:** In utero to 3 years of age



## Transforming the Diencephalon:

Sensory awareness and soothing

### BABIES

- See all activities for Brainstem and Cerebellum
- Provide gentle safe touch and massage
- Regulate the sensory environment of rooms in which babies play and sleep – check, is it too cold, warm, loud, quiet?
- Engage in outside activities –smelling flowers, touching different textures, water play, sand play

### TODDLERS

- See all activities for Brainstem and Cerebellum
- Engage toddler in activities that provide sensory connection – cuddling a soft toy, snuggling to sleep with an item that has the smell of a caregiver
- Engage in outside activities –smelling flowers, touching different textures, looking up at the sky, water play, sand play

### PRE-SCHOOLERS

- See all activities for Brainstem and Cerebellum
- Provide art and craft activities – painting, drawing, colouring, doodling – combine this with listening to music
- Regulate the sensory environment of rooms in which young children play and rest in – is it too cold, warm, loud, quiet, overstimulating, under stimulating?
- Engage in outside activities – nature walks, smelling flowers, touching different textures, looking up at the sky, water play, sand play



## Building a “sensory-connecting” environment

- Conduct a sensory audit – i.e., is it too hot or too cold, too noisy?
- Provide calm, positive sensory experiences and calming items (age-appropriate options)
- Provide regular and predictable brain and body breaks, that include movement, rhythm and breath-based activities – especially consider using these to regulate and calm during transition times



## Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

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What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do immediately... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do in the future... \_\_\_\_\_

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# Diencephalon Session Activities



## My Sensory Hand SUITABLE FOR AGES 4 – 6 YEARS OF AGE

Working with the child together trace around their hand on a piece of paper and label each finger with each of the five senses.

Talk with the child and together think of their favourite thing/s associated with each of the senses i.e., taste – chocolate, smell – flowers, etc.

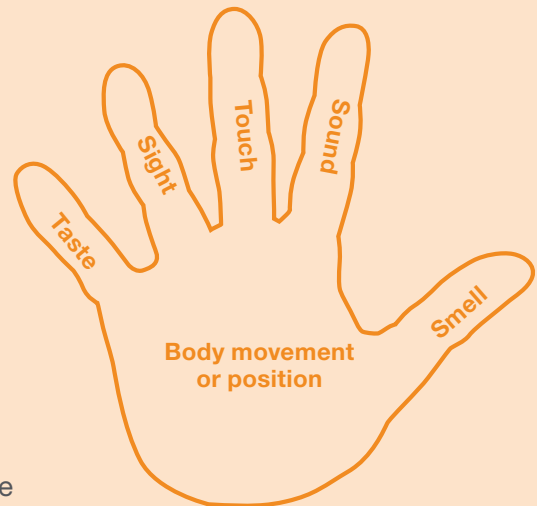
Write or draw for the child a symbol of their favourite thing associated with each sense on the associated finger. The child could draw their own representation.

Working with the child to look at their real hand and remind them of their favourite things. Can you play a game of treasure hunt and find their favourite things?

When the child is dysregulated remind the child or provide the child with the item/s that provide the soothing they require.

**This activity can be found at:**

<https://australianchildhoodfoundation.crackerhq.com/pvl/9b20e31a6fa3c43f414af2fcb00f1a52/share/v1/d72fdca7-2789-49a6-b126-a7add19e3a84>



## Baby Massage

Baby massage can be as simple as a quick foot massage when changing a baby's nappy. It is important to help babies to feel comfortable with safe touch so that we can soothe them by holding, rocking, swaddling, etc.

Babies who are touch averse can be hard to soothe. Take it slowly.

<https://www.mamanatural.com/baby-massage/>



## Children's Comforters

Toddlers (and many other children) feel comforted by a favourite toy or object. It is the sensory effect that helps the child feel safe in different environments.

Support children to use these comforters when necessary.



# Cortex



**SMART PRACTICE Focus:**  
Translating and Involving



## Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 1: Understanding brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 2: Trauma in the early years



**Key ages of development:** 2 years – 6 years



## Transforming the Cortex:

Connecting the cortex

### BABIES

- In babies this is not developed yet, but playing lots of fun physical activities with babies supports development in all areas
- Talking to babies supports all areas of development

### TODDLERS

- In toddlers this is not developed yet, engaging in conversations and challenging activities supports all areas of development
- Provide problem solving activities like puzzles

### PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Pre-schoolers are starting their cortical development.
- Play thinking and choice games, i.e., Connect Four, Go Fish
- Provide problem solving activities like challenging puzzles
- Break down problems and tasks into “chunks” and scaffold tasks. Be curious together – “I wonder what we could do to fix this....?”



## Building a “cognitive-connecting” environment

- Help create environments where children can be involved in the decision-making about a range of issues and to co-design their learning.
- Help the child build their sense of identity through self-narrative activities – help them build a picture of their life, this could be a drawing with the educators writing in the child’s words.



## Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

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What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do immediately... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do in the future... \_\_\_\_\_

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# Cortex Session Activities



## Would You Rather Activity

**SUITABLE FOR AGES 4 – 6**

There are lots of versions of this activity available on the internet. You can also write your own questions, making them age and developmentally appropriate

For example:

*A pre-schooler – “Would you rather have a “bunny” or a “doggy” as a pet?”*

For this activity, ask the young child to stand and to choose whether they agree with or relate to the first option or the second option.

You can always get the child to jump to their left or right or raise their left or right hand to choose which option they would like.

This is a great brain and body break activity... and builds their sense of identity of who they are and what they prefer.



## Do This Do That

**SUITABLE FOR AGES 4 – 6**

This activity is based on the “Simon Says” game, but a shortened version.

The educator explains to the children that each time they say, “do this” and they do an action, the children are to copy and “do” that action (i.e., put hands on head, or clap)

If the educator says, “do that”, and does an action, the children are **not** to “do” that action”.



## Language

**SUITABLE FOR AGES 1-2 YEARS**

Simply talking with a toddler is a wonderful way to build attention, working memory, and self-control. As toddlers get older, pointing out and talking about interesting objects or events can help them learn to focus their attention on something the adult has identified. As babies learn language, they also develop their memory of what is said, eventually mapping words to objects and actions. Conversations in any language besides English are also helpful. It has been found that bilingual children of many ages have better cortical function skills than monolingual children, so experience using an additional language is an important skill.





## Head shoulders knees and toes

**SUITABLE FOR AGES 2 - 4**

*Head, shoulders, knees, and toes, knees and toes.*

*Head, shoulders, knees, and toes, knees and toes.*

*And eyes and ears and mouth and nose.*

*Head, shoulders, knees, and toes, knees and toes.*

Ask children to stand and put their hands on their head, then on their shoulders, then on their knees, then on their toes, then on their eyes, then on their ears, then on their mouth and then on their nose. Once they can do this sing the song and do the actions.

This supports body part knowledge and physical skills



## This little piggy

**SUITABLE FOR AGES 0 - 2**

*This little piggy went to market,*

*This little piggy stayed home,*

*This little piggy had roast beef,*

*This little piggy had none.*

*This little piggy went ...*

*Wee, wee, wee, all the way home!*

Holding the baby or toddlers foot wiggle each toe in turn from the big toe to the little toe.

This repetitive type action song supports physical and language development.



## Movement

**SUITABLE FOR AGES 2-3 YEARS**

Games that require active inhibition, like freeze dance (musical statues), although don't expect children to "freeze" without a few reminders. Also effective are song games that require children to start and stop, or slow down and speed up, such as Jack in the Box; Popcorn; Ring Around the Rosie; or Motorboat, Motorboat.



## Joining up the stars in the sky

**SUITABLE FOR AGES 4 YEARS AND ABOVE**

**Purpose:** This activity encourages connection and synchronicity. It is useful as a bonding activity for children and their parent/carer.

**Who might use this activity:** This activity is best pitched at children aged 4 years and above, along with their parent/carer.

### What you will need:

- You will need a room that can be made dark
- 2 torches
- Option- bean bag/s or comfy couch to lounge on
- Option- cellophane to tape over the torches to make the torch lights different colours

### What you might say and do:

1. Orient the child and adult to the torches and talk about how today they are going to be stars in the sky. With older children, you could talk about how the stars in the sky have long been used by many groups of people across history as guides or maps to navigate by. Suggest that today we get to make our own star map with each other by shining torches up onto the ceiling.
2. Move furniture in the room if you need to, to work out the most comfy place/s for the child and grown up to be in the room together to shine their lights. You might like to offer a bean bag or 2, but it's up to the child and the parent/carer to find their place in the room.
3. Negotiate who will turn the room light off and check that it's ok to be together in the room with the big light off and torches on.
4. Invite the child to make stars appear on the ceiling by switching their torch on and off-like a twinkling star. Invite the grown-up to copy the rhythm of the child's twinkling star. The child and grown up can take turns to create different twinkle rhythms (slow, fast, dancing, skipping) and the other's challenge is to copy or match the twinkling light.

### Things to enquire about and make observations about together

- As the child and grown-up share in the torch light dance of matching their experiences, the worker could ask them to describe how the rhythms are different and feeling words that best describe them.
- The child and grown-up could explore how at other times they are in sync with each other- in moments of fun, safety, calm. What does that feel like to be in sync?
- You might like to give the torches to the child and grown-up to take with them and use together at home. This activity could be a good one to repeat together at bedtime.

This resource can be found at: <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/resources/>

## Left and Right Hemisphere and the Corpus Callosum



### SMART PRACTICE Focus:

Involving, Connecting, and Engaging



### Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 1: Understanding brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 2: Trauma in the early years

Discussion Paper 3: Mindful educators, Mindful kids, Peaceful environments



### Key ages of development:

Right: 0-2 years, Left: 2-4 years, Right: 4-6 years,



### Building Right & Left Hemisphere connection

- Any activity that enables you to cross the midline, e.g., cup games, hokey pokey, clapping chants, mirroring games and physical activities



### Building the Right Hemisphere

- Use attunement activities
- Use relational-based activities
- Practice mutual smiling, laughing
- Play mirroring games based on facial expressions
- Model appropriate gestures and proximity



### Building the Left Hemisphere

- Provide language and logic activities
- Play strategy games
- Incorporate cognitive processes into calming or stimulating activities
- Count when doing breathing activities



## Activities for transforming:

Strengthening the corpus callosum and integrating the hemispheres

### EMOTIONALLY

- Attune into the young child's facial expressions & body language and notice how they may be feeling
- Provide language: *"I notice that you are/have... (i.e., tears in your eyes, you are yawning...)"*
- Be curious *"I wonder if you are feeling..."*
- Use emotion cards/worksheets for older children
- See "Amygdala" for more ideas

### PHYSICALLY

- Have activities that cross the "imaginary midline" in the body – touching opposite toes, clapping hand games
- Doing physical activities – see "Brainstem" and "Cerebellum" for more activities
- Play games and sing songs such as "The "Hokey Pokey", "Row, row, row your boat"



## Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

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What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do immediately... \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I do in the future... \_\_\_\_\_

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# Hemispheres Session Activities



## Crossing the midline activity

**AGES: 4 YEARS AND ABOVE**

*Waddley Archer, Waddley Archer  
Doodley-doo, Doodley-doo*

*Waddley Archer, Waddley Archer  
Doodley-doo, Doodley-doo*

*It's just a simple song and there's nothing to it  
All you have to do is doodley-do it*

*I like the rest but the part I like best  
Is Doodley, Doodley, Doodley, Doodley, Doodley, Doodley, Doo – YEAH!!*

Source: <https://youtube/Waddley Archer- VCOP Kids>

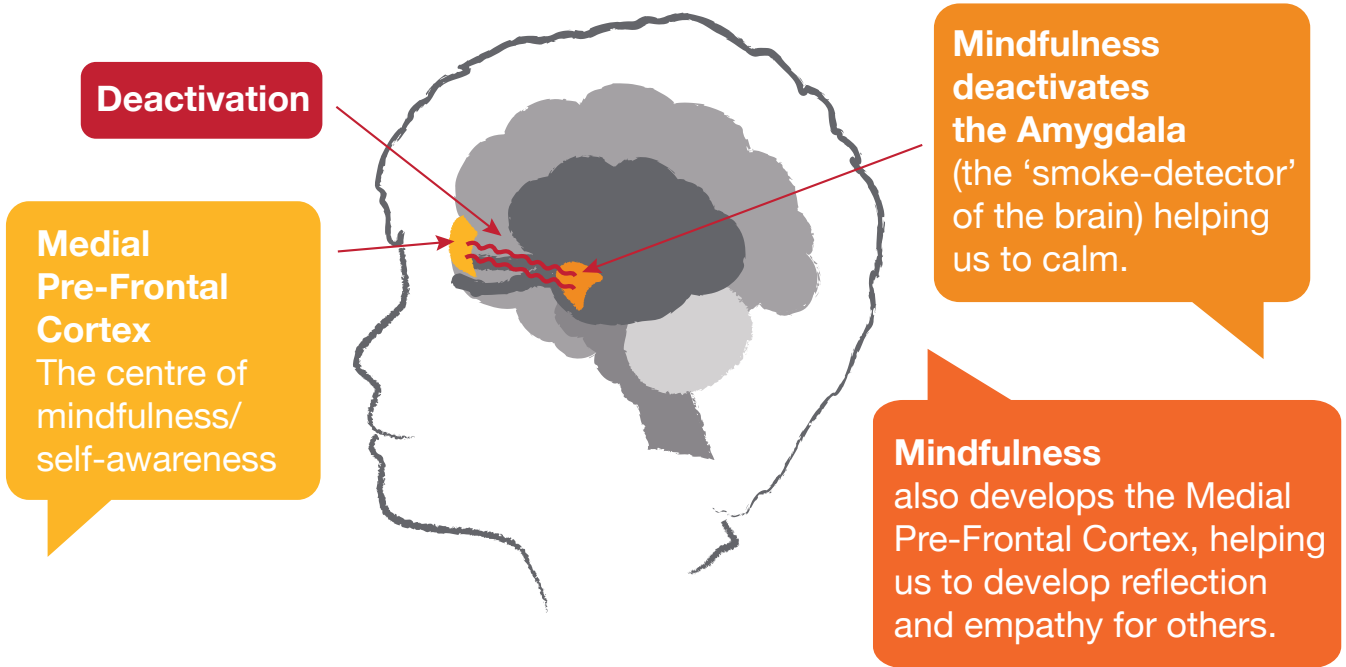


## Word Activity

Fun activity to do with colleagues – read out the colour not the word

**YELLOW BLUE ORANGE**  
**BLACK RED GREEN**  
**PURPLE YELLOW RED**  
**ORANGE GREEN BLACK**  
**BLUE RED PURPLE**  
**GREEN BLUE ORANGE**

# Mindfulness



## Personal Reflections:

Do you currently incorporate mindfulness into your program?

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What does this look like? \_\_\_\_\_

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If not, what could you do now that you know the value of mindfulness?

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# Mindfulness Session Activities



## 10 Breaths

When something wonderful touches you, savour the experience by offering it 10 full breaths. By paying close attention to special moments, we come to see that opportunities for happiness present themselves many times each day.

**Give your 10 breaths to anything that seems wonderful to you**

- Something beautiful from Nature
  - A special moment with your child/partner/friend
  - A piece of music
  - Eating something delicious
  - A work of art
1. Stop whatever you are doing
  2. Close your eyes, place a hand on your belly and take 3 deep breaths to calm yourself.
  3. Open your eyes and focus on your special object/person/experience
  4. Stay focused on whatever has caught your attention as you ‘count with your body’, 10 slow breaths, by pressing and releasing in turn, each finger resting on your belly.
  5. If you are still entranced by your special moment, repeat the 10 breaths practice.



## Stop...Pause...Play

When we can relate to our children with mindful awareness we activate a part of the brain (the medial pre-frontal cortex) which allows our defensive systems to switch off, putting us in a more relaxed state and allowing us to think and act more rationally and to step outside our own experience so that we can be **more present to our children’s needs**.

This is an exercise that we will practice every week or use any time you need to take time out to calm down before you respond to whatever is going on.

### STOP

- Stop what you are doing.
- Make sure your feet are placed firmly on the ground.

### PAUSE

- Focus on your breath.
- Breathe in slowly, right down into your belly, then exhale completely.
- Take 5 more slow breaths, being aware of each breath in and each breath out.
- Smile and enjoy standing like this for a moment. Feel your body relax.
- Reflect. Ask yourself “What do I need?” and “What does my child need?”

### PLAY

Respond to your child with new understanding.





## Breathing Relaxation Exercises

### 1. ABDOMINAL BREATHING

Place one hand over your heart and the other over your abdomen. Breathe normally, noticing the rise and fall of your chest and abdomen. Continue this practice for about 10 breaths.

### 2. 1,2,3.....SIGH!

Count slowly 1...2...3 (either aloud or silently) as you breathe in. Then give a long sigh as you breathe out. Repeat this several times until you feel yourself calming down.

### 3. SNAKE BREATHING

Breathe in normally. Then with a long breath out, make a SSSSSSSSS sound like a snake.

### 4. BEE BREATHING

Breathe in normally. Then make a humming or buzzing sound like a bee as you exhale an extended breath out.

### 5. FEATHER BREATHING

Hold a soft feather in one hand and raise that hand as you breathe in. Let go of the feather and breathe out slowly as you watch the feather float to the ground. Try to make your breath out last until the feather reaches the ground.



## Mindfulness Bottle

Make your own Mindfulness Bottle. It can support you to be mindful and calm down when you or your children are overwhelmed with big feelings.

### BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- An empty and clean transparent bottle
- Sparkles or glitter in three or four colors (the tinier the better)
- Glycerin
- Liquid soap

Fill three quarters of the bottle with warm water (not hot, just warm!). Add four drops of liquid soap. Fill the bottle almost to the top with glycerin. Put on the lid and shake the bottle and dissolve soap and glycerin in the water until you have a smooth liquid.

Now the water represents your calm state of mind. Add each color of glitter being mindful about one of your feelings. Put the lid back on and your mindfulness bottle is ready.

When you shake the bottle, similar to when we are touched by big feelings, the water gets unclear and the different colors move in all directions and are inseparable and each unrecognisable from the other. As time goes and we are looking at the bottle (and breathing mindfully) the water gets more and more clear and sparkles/glitter settles down to the bottom.

You can use this bottle as a common tool at home with your family members. Anybody who needs to be mindful about their feelings and needs help to manage their big feelings can use the bottle!





# 2

CHAPTER

## Working with the Window of Tolerance

# Working within the Window of Tolerance



**SMART PRACTICE Focus:**  
All elements



## Discussion Papers

Discussion Paper 3: Mindful educators, Mindful children, Peaceful environments  
Discussion Paper 4: Polyvagal theory and Window of Tolerance

### Fight or Flight

Hyper-vigilant, action-orientated, impulsive, reactive, self-destructive



**Mobilisation**



### Submit

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



**Immobilisation**

# Remaining in the Window of Tolerance

**THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES ASSIST A YOUNG CHILD TO REMAIN WITHIN THEIR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE.**

All activities are best done in a safe and attuned co-regulatory relationship with a care-giver or educator.

- Engaging the senses activities
- Aligning the spine activities
- Breath based activities
- Grounding Activities
- Movement Activities
- Use of self and the environment: Please see the document “Creating safety – using and supporting the social engagement system”.

**You can find the worksheet in the Activity and Resource Documents section of the booklet**

A kindergarten in SA talked to the children about ‘Tigger energy’, ‘Pooh energy’ and ‘Eeyore energy’



## Working with MOBILISED responses - Fight

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE

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

### 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



## Working with 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



## Working with MOBILISED responses - Active 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

- 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



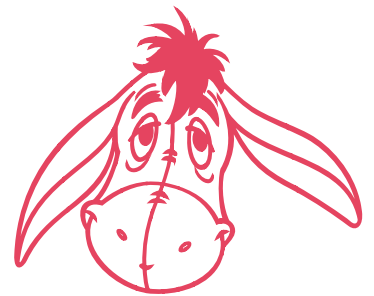
## Working with IMMOBILISED responses - Submit

### 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



## Maintaining Social Engagement

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE

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

### SUPPORTIVE RESPONSES

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



## Supportive Responses



### Mobilisation

Tigger runs on high

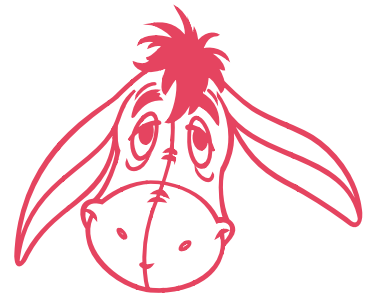
- Rhythm
- Containing
- Grounding



### Immobilisation

Eeyore runs on low

- Orientation to space
- Orientation to senses
- Engaging the spine



### Social Engagement

Pooh is just right or at least not too worried

- Prosody
- Breathing



The 'Alert Program' says "If your body is like a car engine, sometimes it runs on high, sometimes it runs on low and sometimes it runs just right".

Alert program including games and songs [www.alertprogram.com](http://www.alertprogram.com)



### Personal Reflections:

What I am already doing... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I would like to do... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Taming Tigger

- Hugs - 'When I hold my teddy it feels like someone is hugging me.'
- Hand on heart & hand on belly
- Sitting back- to-back with another
- Body sock
- Pushing against wall/pillows
- Pillow sandwich
- Weighted blankets/wheat bag/toys
- Contained spaces
- Screaming down plug hole
- Punching pillow
- Going for a run, running up and down stairs
- Activities such as karate, taekwondo, etc.
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation/'the noodle'
- Bedtime rituals that lower arousal



## Arousing Eeyore

- point to something green/plastic/soft.....
- encourage the child to look up and out rather than down - hang an interesting object at height in the space
- name objects in the room out loud
- open a window
- move outside if you're inside and inside if you're outside
- take shoes off and feel feet on the floor
- notice and name

### 5-4-3-2-1 MINDFULNESS

#### List...

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





## Arousing Eeyore

- cool face washer or a moistened wipe
- blinking hard/squeezing toes
- hug a pillow/toy
- cool drink/suck ice
- scratch & sniff stickers
- sand/water/mud play/shaving cream



**WHEN THE SPINE IS ALIGNED THERE IS NO COLLAPSE OR COMPRESSION.**

**You could:**

- move like you have a long tail
- tick tock like a clock until you find your centre
- zip yourself up or pull yourself up with an imaginary string
- walk with a toy/book balanced on your head
- grow yourself from a seed to a tall tree



## Social engagement Pooch

### ENGAGING MUSCLES FROM HEART TO HEAD

For children who have experienced relational trauma, 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
  - Bee and Snake breathing
  - 1, 2, 3, sigh
  - Falling feathers/scarves/leaves
  - Blowing a pin wheel
  - Smelling flowers
  - Blowing bubbles
  - Blowing up balloons





## Promoting safety using prosody (sing-song voice)

High frequency voice with lots of modulation



Brain detects intonation and feeds back to nervous system



Neural tone of inner ear muscles adjust to dampen background sounds (low frequency 'predator' sounds)



Vagal regulation of the heart



♥ CALM ♥





# Arousal & Regulation Session Activities



## Jump like a frog or kangaroo

**SUITABLE FOR 3 – 6-YEAR-OLDS**

**PURPOSE:** regulation and for arousing and alerting, connection and focus.

**ENGAGES:** brainstem, cerebellum, limbic area, cortex, medial pre-frontal cortex

This activity is a great transition activity or one where the intention is to provide stimulation or alertness. It is a great one to also keep a young child within their Window of Tolerance, by providing focus and concentration.

Working with the young child together pretend to be a frog or kangaroo or any other imaginary animal that jumps. Choose how you might jump – big jumps, small jumps...and where you might jump. For frog jumping, perhaps you can make cut out lily pads from paper, for the frogs to jump on.



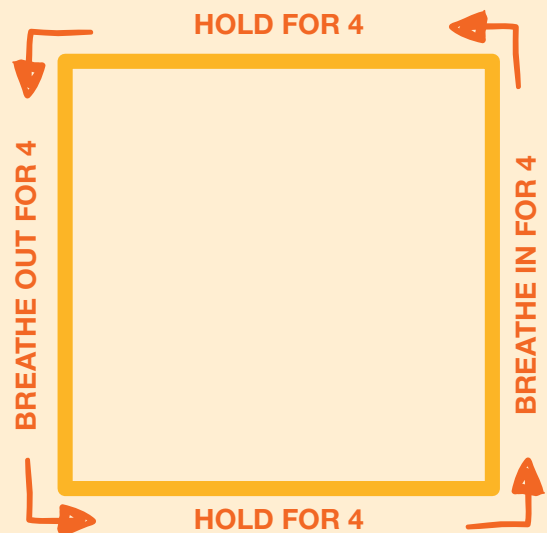
## Shape Breathing

**SUITABLE FOR 4 – 6-YEAR-OLDS**

**PURPOSE:** breathe-based, regulation and for slowing and calming

**ENGAGES:** brainstem, cerebellum, limbic area, cortex, medial pre-frontal cortex

This activity is mainly aimed at a 4 – 6-year-old. At this age, they may be learning the names for different shapes, so it is a great one to use. Helping our young children to slow their breathing and breathing in and out consistently will help keep them within the Window of Tolerance. See the adjacent shape example and follow the instructions with a young child. Start at one corner and trace your finger around the shape. As the child grows, they can trace themselves or draw the shape in the air as they breathe.





## Making sense of experience

The goal of this activity is to map out an individual young child's arousal over a time continuum. This could be over a day at the centre or pre-school, or over a week.

Using the document "Tracking a child's Own Window of Tolerance" (in the Handouts section), track the movement in and outside of the Window of Tolerance over your chosen time frame.

The purpose of the activity is for you to gain an understanding of how the young child is travelling throughout their day and to anticipate when they may be feeling, say, more anxious, worried or excited, or even tired and hungry. This can then assist to help you to understand what is happening for the young child and what they need the most at that time.

This can be used as an assessment or reflection tool to monitor their hyper arousal and hypo arousal, and when they are in their Window of Tolerance or overshooting or undershooting it.

### LINE OF MY DAY ACTIVITY



**How would you draw your day with one continuous line?**

### THIS ACTIVITY CAN BE FOUND AT:

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/resources/>

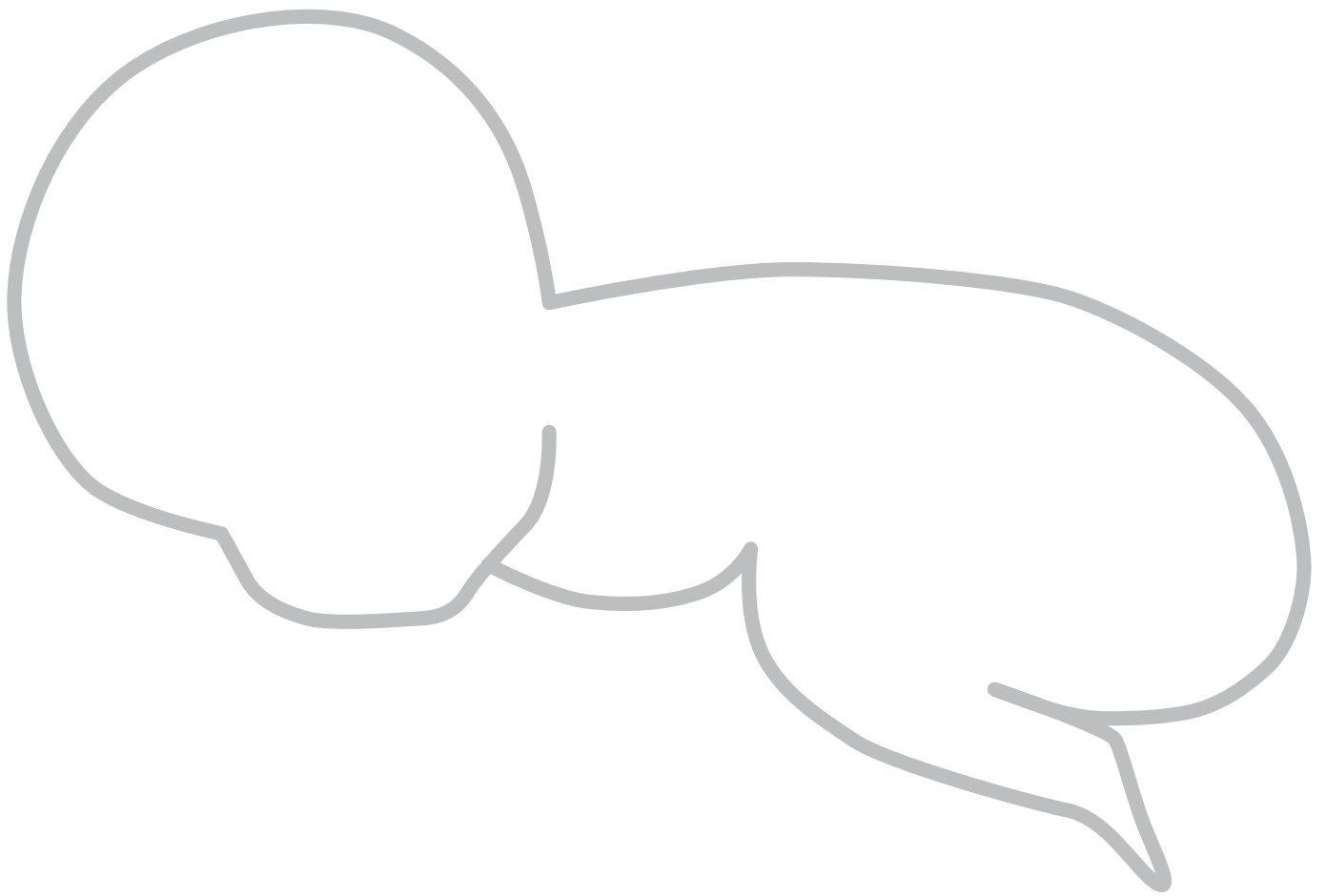


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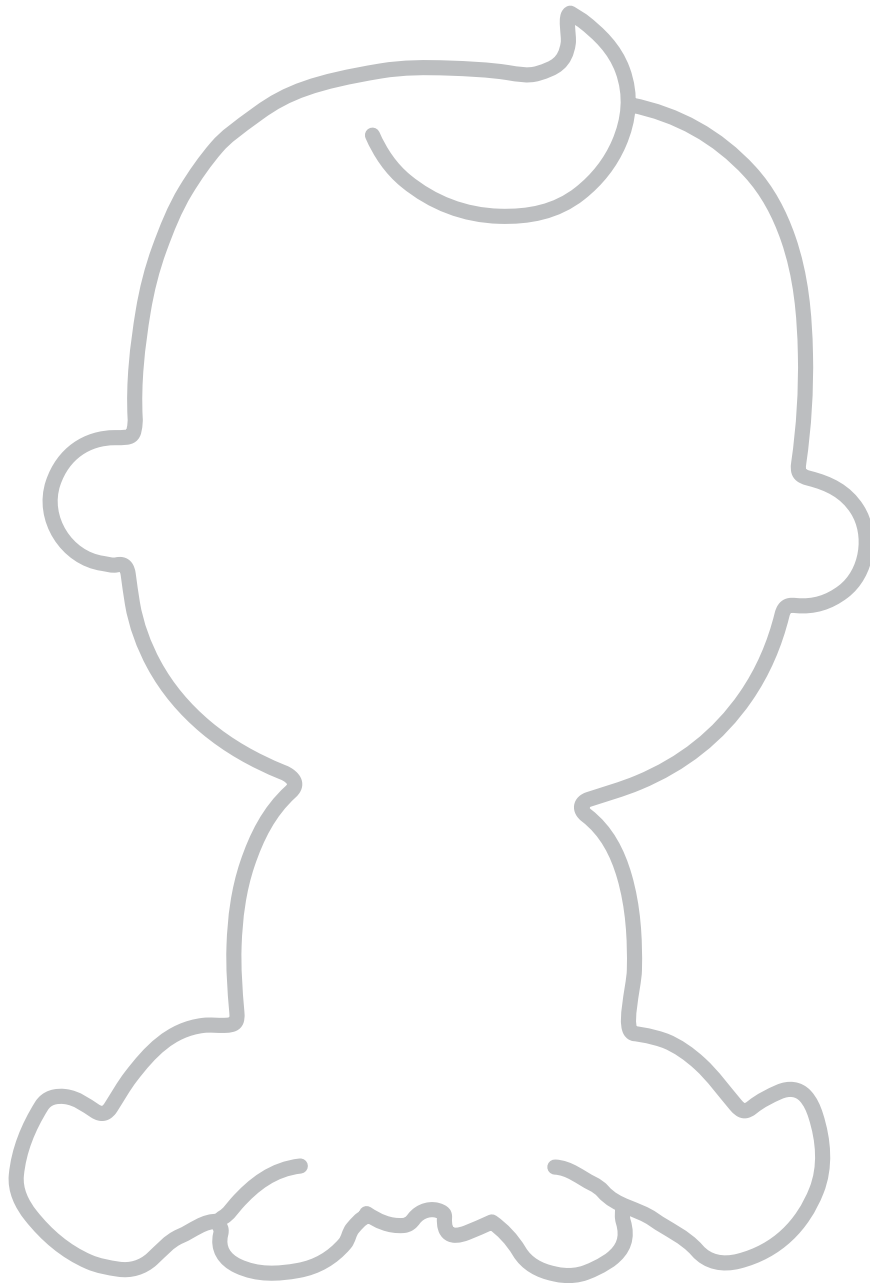
CHAPTER

Activity Training  
Handouts

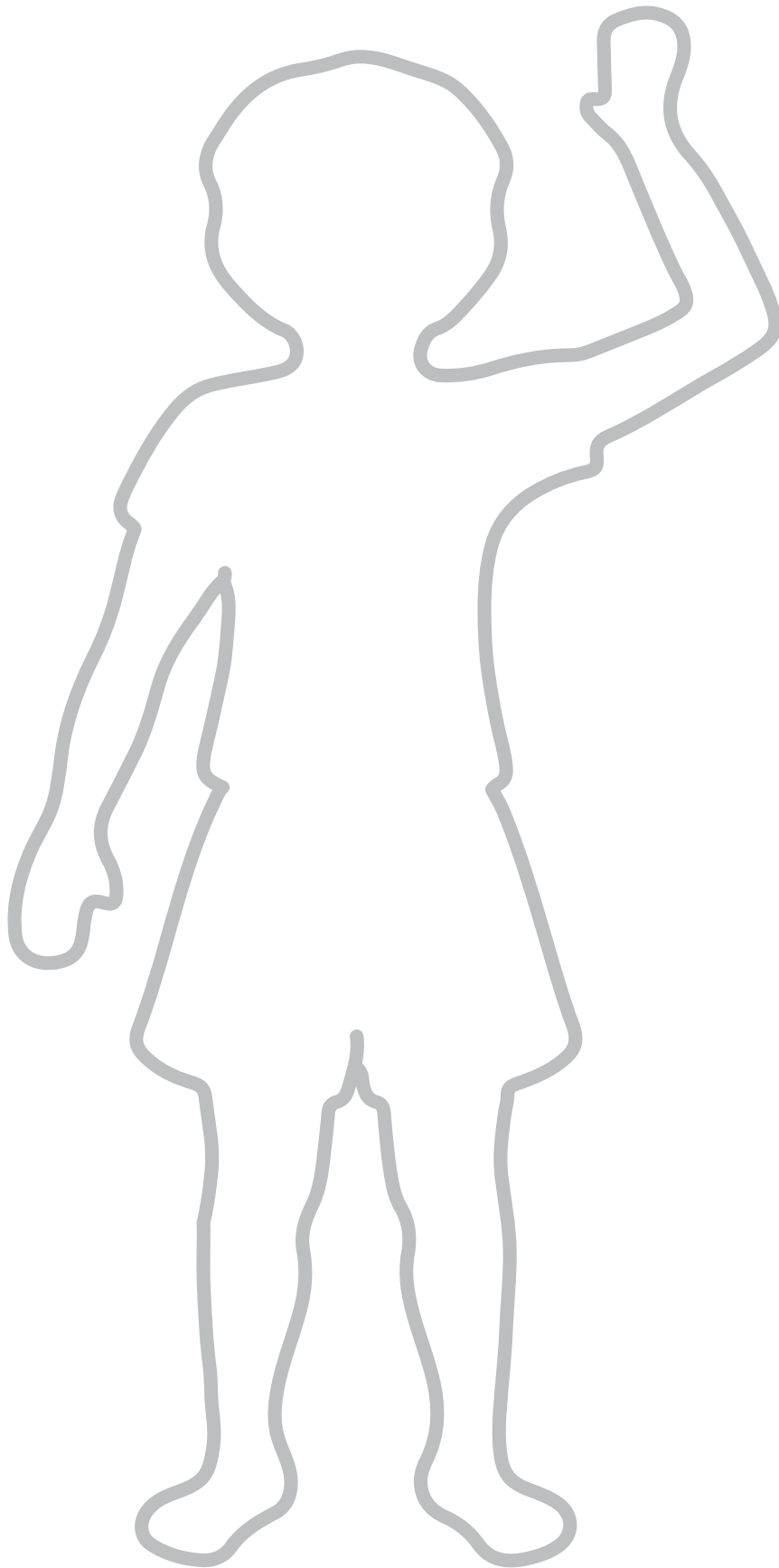
# Bringing a baby into the space



# Bringing a toddler into the space



# Bringing a child into the space



## Garden Yoga For Kids



### Pretend to be a tree

#### TREE POSE

Stand on one leg. Bend the other knee and place the sole of your foot on your inner thigh. Sway like a tree in the breeze. Now the other side.



### Pretend to be a frog

#### SQUAT POSE

Come down to a squat with your knees apart and arms between your knees. Touch your hands to the ground. Jump like a frog.



### Pretend to be a seed

#### CHILD'S POSE

Sit back on your heels and bring your forehead down to rest on the floor. Pretend to be a seed in the garden.



### Pretend to be a butterfly

#### COBBLER'S POSE

Sit on your buttocks with a tall spine. Bend your legs with the soles of your feet together. Flap your legs like the wings of a butterfly.



### Pretend to be a flower

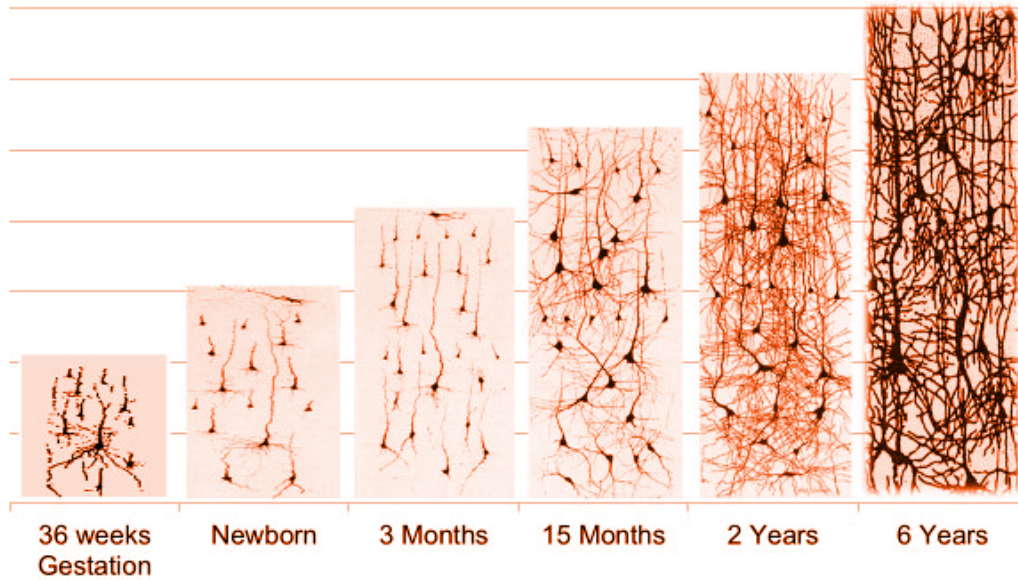
#### FLOWER POSE

Lift your bent legs, balancing on your sitting bones. Weave your arms under your legs, palms up. Pretend to be a flower in bloom.

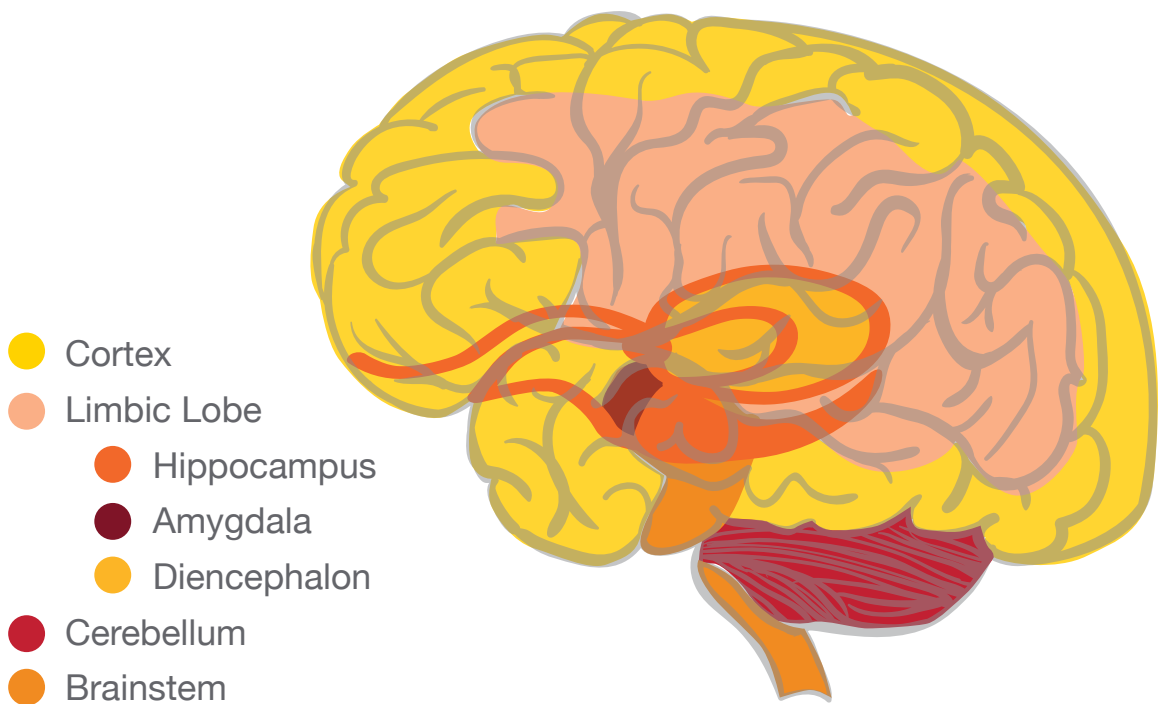


## Neural development in utero and the first six years.

Neural Circuit Formation in the Early Years

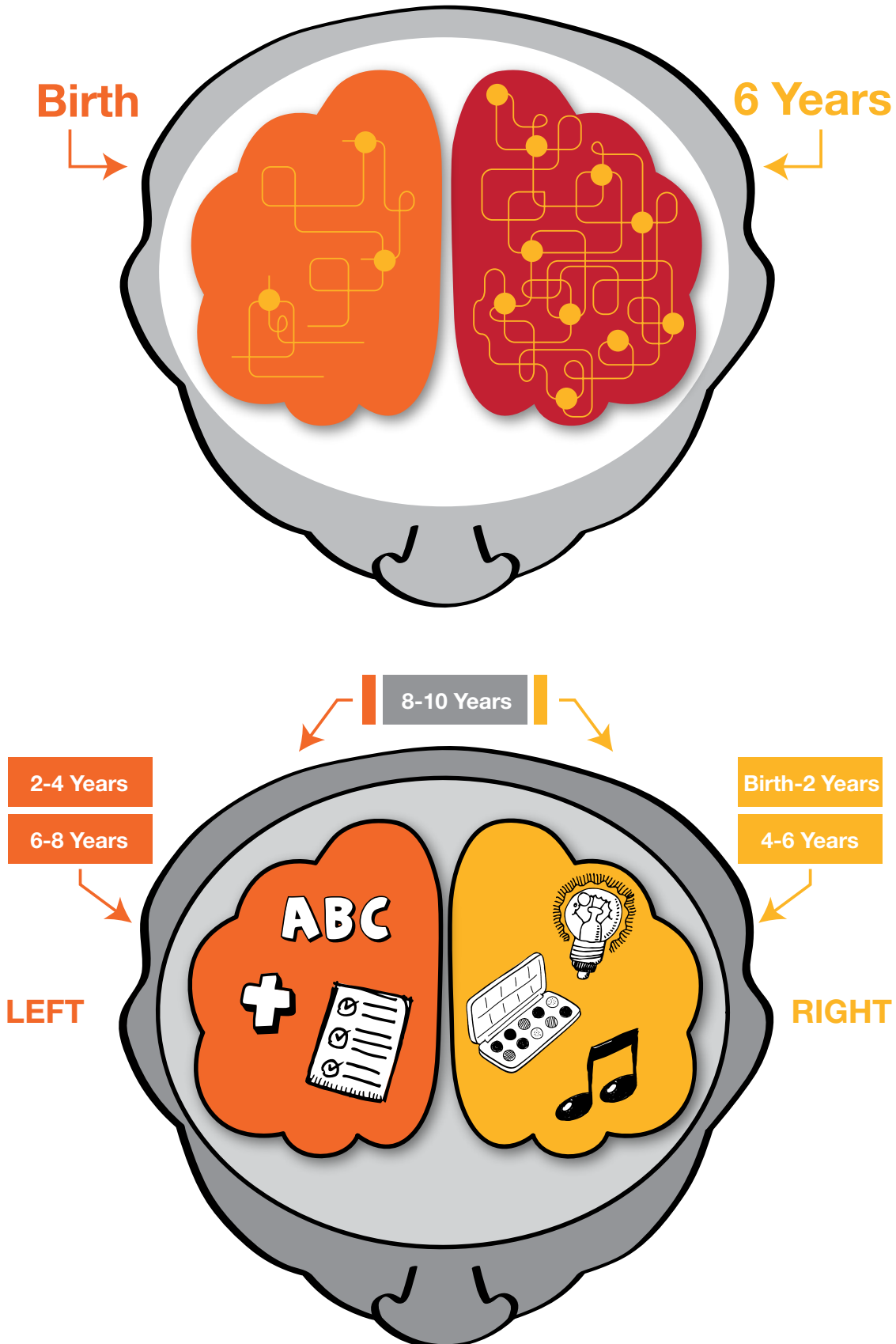


## Bottom-up brain development





# Left and right hemispheres



# Brain Food Fun for Kids

The following activities are suggested to enable parents and children to have fun together whilst also assisting brain development in their children through play.

## Babies and Toddlers



### Baby Aerobics:

These are fun to practice at nappy change time. With baby lying on the floor:

Hold baby's ankles and 'march' her legs-gently bending alternate knees up to her tummy as you sing:

*The Grand old Duke of York  
He had ten thousand men  
He marched them up to the top of the hill  
And he marched them down again.*

Hold baby's ankles as above but bend both knees together up to her tummy as you sing:

*Row, row, row your boat  
Gently down the stream  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily  
Life is but a dream.*

A variation for older babies with good head control: Hold your child firmly with both hands and raise him overhead as if he were a flying aeroplane. Look at him and smile as you sing:

*Fly, fly, fly your plane,  
Fly your plane up high.  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,  
High up in the sky!*

Hold one of baby's ankles with one hand and baby's opposite hand with your other hand. Gently cross and uncross baby's arm and leg over her tummy as you sing:

*Hot cross buns  
Hot cross buns  
One a penny, two a penny  
Hot cross buns.*

Pick up baby so that she is facing you. Hold baby firmly with your hands under her armpits and wrapped around her body. Lift baby up and down looking at her face as you say:

*Up, up in the air like this  
Down, down, for a great big kiss (kiss baby here)  
Up, up  
Down for a kiss (another kiss)  
You're my very special baby (give baby a cuddle here)*

## Babies and Toddlers



### Baby Aerobics:

For a young baby, practice this while he is lying on his back looking up at you. For a toddler, you could sit him on your knee with his back leaning against your chest. Hold both baby's hands and alternately stretch his arms wide open and bring them back to cross over his chest, as you sing or say:

*Open, shut them*

*Open, shut them*

*Lay them in your lap.*

*Open, shut them*

*Open, shut them*

*Give a little clap!* (clap baby's hands together here)

*Open, shut them*

*Open, shut them*

*Don't get in a muddle.*

*Open, shut them*

*Open, shut them*

*Give yourself a cuddle!* (wrap your arms around baby here)



### Clap and Bounce Knee Games:

With baby sitting or lying on your knee facing you, hold her hands and clap them together rhythmically in time to this rhyme:

*Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man*

*Bake me a cake as fast as you can*

*Pat it and prick it and mark it with B*

*And put in the oven for Baby and me!*

With baby sitting on your knee and facing away from you with baby's back resting against your chest, hold baby's legs around the ankles and cross her legs back and forth in time to this rhyme:

*Leg over leg*

*As the dog went to Dover*

*When he came to a stile,*

*JUMP, he went over!* (holding baby's thighs, lift him up towards you)

With baby sitting on your knee and facing away from you, hold baby's body under his arms as you bounce your knees up and down in time to the rhyme:

*Father and Mother and Uncle Tom,*

*Got up on a pony and rode along*

*Father fell off (lift baby off your knee to one side of your body)*

*And Mother fell off (lift baby off your knee to the other side of your body)*

*And Uncle Tom rode on, and on, and on (bounce faster and faster)*

## Babies and Toddlers



### Books to share together:

The soothing rhyme, rhythm and repetition of these stories can be calming for babies and parents too!

Campbell, R. (2010) **Dear Zoo**, Pan Macmillan

Martin, B. and Carle, E. (1997) **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**

Penguin Books Ltd

Holt, H., Martin, B. and Carle, E. (2007) **Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?**

Henry Holt and Company

Williams, S. and Vivs, J. (2005) **I Went Walking**, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Wise Brown, M. and Hurd, C. (2008). **Goodnight Moon 1 2 3: A Counting Book**,

HarperCollins

Fox, M and Dyer, J. (2005) **Time for Bed**, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Raffi, (1998) **Wheels on the Bus**, Random House Children's Books

Fox, M. and Horacek, J. (2004) **Where is the green sheep?** Harcourt

Rowe, J. (2001) **Whose Belly?** ABC Books

## Children 3-6 years



### Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Sit on the floor with you and your child facing each other. Stretch your legs out in front of your and hold your child's hands. Rock backwards and forwards together as you sing:

*Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream*

*Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily*

*Life is but a dream.*

OR

*If you see a crocodile*

*Don't forget to scream!*



### A Smooth Road

Sit on the floor with your legs together and stretched out in front of you. Sit your child on your lap facing you. Hold your child securely with both hands as you:

sway gently from side to side as you repeat 4 times

bounce a little faster as you repeat 4 times

bounce even faster as you repeat 4 times

*A smooth road*

*A bumpy road*

*A rough road!*

Then hold your child securely as you part your legs and lift, then lower him or her onto the floor, saying as you do so...

*A ditch!*

## Children 3-6 years



### Hand stack

Sitting at a table with your child on your knee, place one of your hands flat on the table in front of you both. Help your child to place one of her hands on top of yours then alternate the hand stack with one of your hands then one of hers..... You will each need to pull out a hand to place it on top of the stack when you've used both hands.



### Books to share together:

- Rosen, M. (2009) **We're Going on a Bear Hunt**. Walker Books.  
 Lloyd, S. (2003) **What Colour Are Your Knickers?** Gullane Children's Books.  
 Horáček, P. (2009) **Silly Suzy Goose**, Candlewick Press.  
 Dodd, L. (2010) **Hairy Maclary Series**, Penguin Group.  
 Crebbin, J. (2003) **Cows in the Kitchen**, Candlewick Press.  
 Dr. Seuss (2005) **Miniature library: ten classic tales from Dr. Seuss**, Collins Publishers.

## Children 6-8 years



Children at this age will be able to teach you clapping games they know but here are some more suggestions:



### Mary Mac:

Standing close together and facing each other chant this rhyme together as you do the actions: one action for each syllable of the rhyme.

<i>Mary Mac</i>	slap both hands on both your knees, clap hands, clap your hands on child's outstretched hands
<i>dressed in black.</i>	... as above
<i>Silver buttons</i>	hands slap on knees, clap your hands, clap your right hand with child's right hand, then clap left hands together
<i>down her back.</i>	... as first line
<i>She likes coffee.</i>	... as first line
<i>I like tea.</i>	... as first line
<i>She likes sitting</i>	on hands slap on knees, clap hands, right hands together, then left hands together
<i>Grandma's knee!</i>	... as first line

## Children 6-8 years



### Waddley Archer

*Waddley Archer, Waddley Archer*

*Doodley-doo, Doodley-doo*

*Waddley Archer, Waddley Archer*

*Doodley-doo, Doodley-doo*

*It's just a simple song and  
there's nothing to it*

*All you have to do is doodley-do it.*

*I like the rest but the part I like best is  
Doodley, doodley-doo!*

Move hands horizontally across one another,  
left hand on top, then right hand on top

Right thumb and forefinger hold nose while left thumb and forefinger hold right ear, then swap hands

Repeat as above

Repeat as above

Roll hands forward, then backwards

Roll hands forward then do the Doodley-doo nose holds

Horizontal hand crosses as above

Nose holds as above



### Books to share together:

Read together any books your child chooses and enjoys.



# Trauma and the brain

## HYPOTHALAMUS

Links the nervous system to the endocrine system via the pituitary gland. It synthesizes and secretes hormones to control body temperature, hunger, thirst, fatigues, sleep and circadian cycles.

## PREFRONTAL CORTEX

Responsible for executive functions such as judgement, reasoning and self awareness. Goes offline under stress impacting the ability to think and reason.

## AMYGDALA

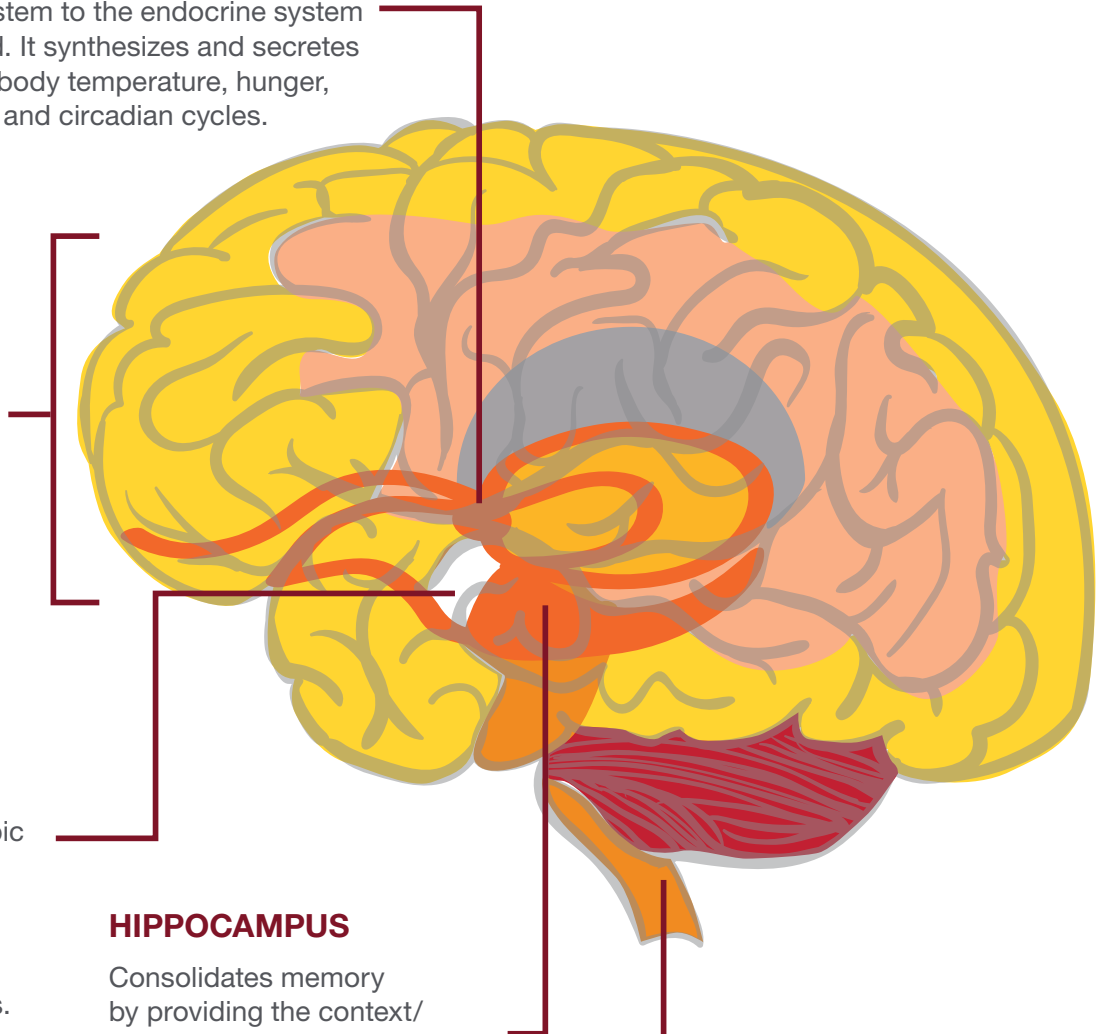
Survival response centre within the limbic lobe that becomes enlarged and more sensitive the more it is activated through responding to threats.

## HIPPOCAMPUS

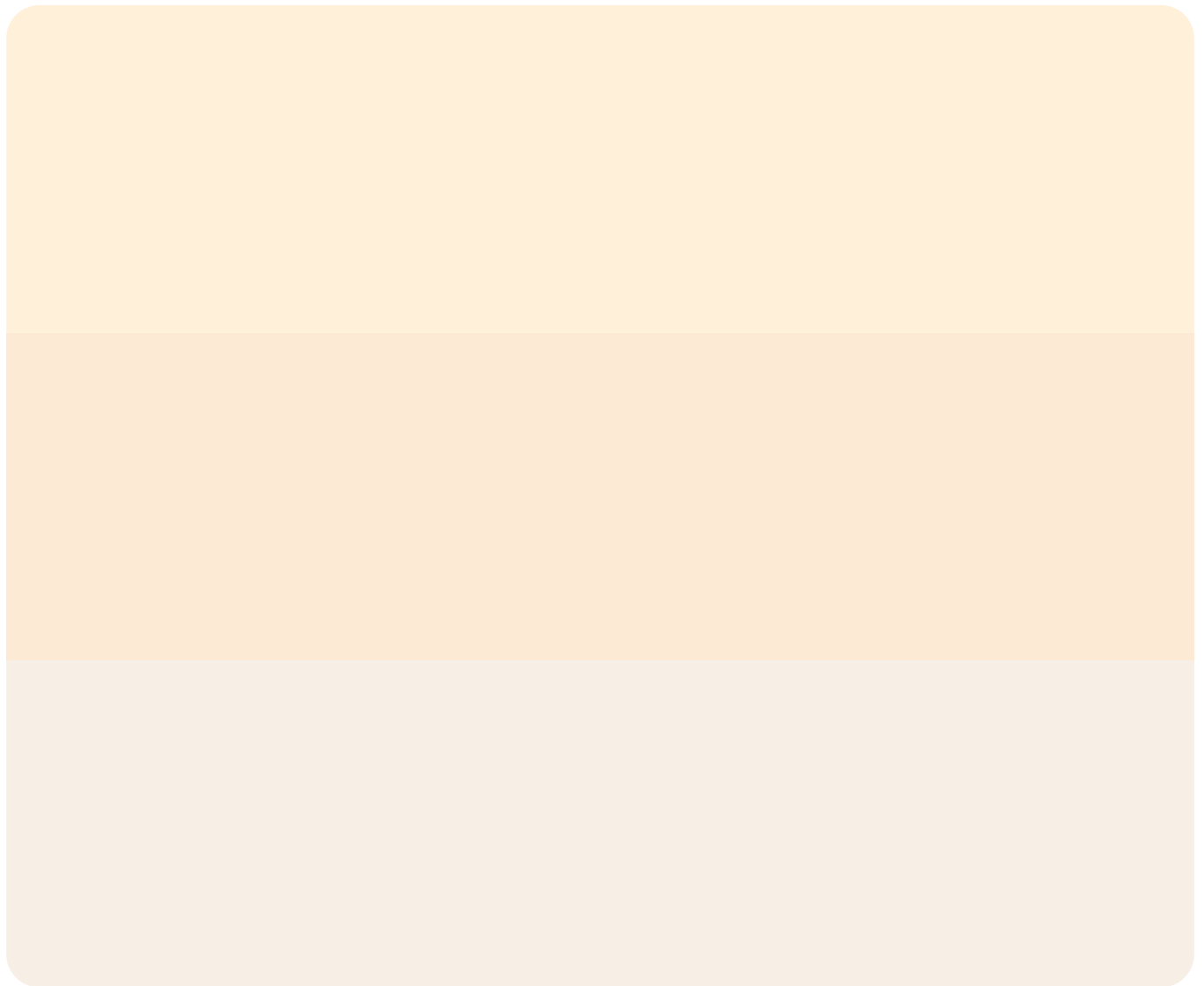
Consolidates memory by providing the context/ sequential data for episodic memories. Goes offline if trauma overwhelms and disrupts cortex.

## BRAINSTEM

Regulates heart rate, breathing, sleep cycles. Dysregulation occurs in these areas under stress - irregular, fast or slower heart rates, irregular breathing and sleep disturbances.



# Tracking the young child's own Window of Tolerance





## Creating safety – supporting the social engagement system

### Environment



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.

### Proximity



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 in rather than time out. Any direct contact with the child should be initiated by the child.

### Eye contact



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.

### Facial expressions



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.

### Tone of voice



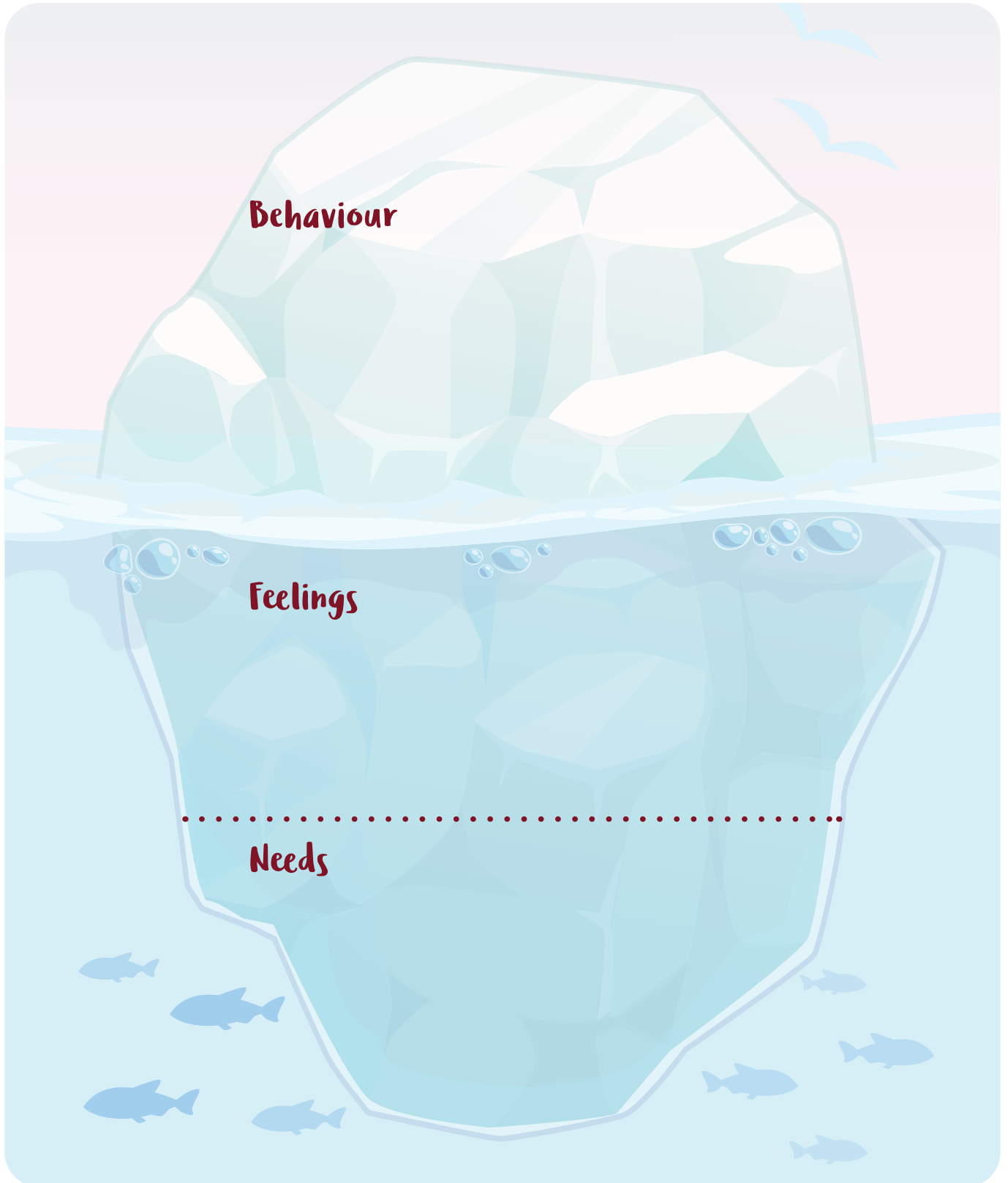
Prosody is the rhythm, pitch and tone of the voice, like when a mother alters her voice to soothe her baby. Tone of voice can have a powerful impact on a child's sense of safety. In situations where a child is dysregulated, consider the tone and pitch of your voice. A soft and gentle voice is more likely to deescalate an overwhelmed child.

### Posture and gestures



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 (whilst 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.

# Understanding what's beneath the behaviour



# Thoughts, feelings and behaviours

What are the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of the abused and neglected child?

## THOUGHTS

- 'It's my fault'
- 'I don't care'
- 'I deserve this'
- 'I'm unloved'
- 'Nobody wants me'
- 'I can't trust anybody'
- 'I'm not safe'
- 'I'm better off on my own'
- 'Will they hurt me?'
- 'I'm alone'
- 'Not sure where I fit'
- 'I hate myself'
- 'I'm stupid'
- 'I miss my family'
- 'I hate everybody'
- 'You're not safe'
- 'I never get what I want'
- 'The world owes me'
- 'I'm isolated'
- 'I'm to blame'
- 'Here we go again'
- 'You will leave me'
- 'I want to hurt myself'
- 'I have no control'
- 'It's only a matter of time'
- 'I want to go home'
- 'I'm not good enough'
- 'Who am I?'
- 'I'm different'
- 'I'm ashamed'
- 'I'm an outsider'
- 'I'm bad'
- 'What is the point?'



## FEELINGS

- |            |                |               |
|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Angry      | Complacent     | Useless       |
| Anxious    | Confused       | Worried       |
| Shame      | Unsafe         | Helpless      |
| Sad        | Lonely         | Unloved       |
| Terrified  | Empty          | Unsettled     |
| Depressed  | Alone          | Trapped       |
| Guilty     | Betrayed       | Numb          |
| Vulnerable | Frustrated     | Nervous       |
| Resentful  | Out of control | Suffocated    |
| Fear       | Concerned      | Tearful       |
| Worthless  | Hopeless       | Uncomfortable |

## BEHAVIOURS

- Screaming
- Absconding
- Defiant
- Biting
- Eating disorders
- Problem sexual behaviours
- Suicidal
- Destructive
- Substance abuse
- Extreme risk taking
- Trouble making friends
- Aggressive
- Self-harm
- Trouble trusting adults
- Violent
- Manipulative
- Controlling
- Property damage
- Oppositional
- Disruptive
- Depression
- Avoidance
- Poor hygiene
- Withdrawn
- Stealing
- Impulsive
- Hyperactive
- Parentified
- No boundaries
- Hyper-vigilant
- Defensive
- Socially awkward
- Hoarding
- Impatient
- Bullying
- Jealousy

# 4

## CHAPTER

### SMART PRACTICE documents

# PRACTICE involves being

P

Predictable

R

Responsive

A

Attuned

C

Connecting

T

Translating

I

Involving

C

Calming

E

Engaging



# A snapshot of PRACTICE Strategies



## Predictable

- Provide predictability in every part of the young child's day – lots of routines
- Plan and prepare schedules in advance – keep in mind transition times



## Responsive

- Recognise and reflect the meaning of the behaviour
- Repair after rupture – young children need lots of reparative experiences



## Attuned

- Acknowledge and reflect feelings and emotions
- Acknowledge body states – their little bodies are great communicators



## Connecting

- Create a story of what's happening for them – use sentence starters
- Create environments that are relationally safe and connected



## Translating

- Talk to the young child about their feelings and thoughts – be curious “I wonder...”
- Track these through the “Line of my Day” activity to build understanding



## Involving

- Include young children in a variety of relationship-connecting activities
- Inviting young children to engage in parallel play, rather than co-operative play



## Calming

- Connect young children with individual calming tools
- Create environments that are and feel safe



## Engaging

- Explore opportunities to engage in relational connection, especially one on one.
- Explore their own narrative and story with them. Validate who they are.

# SMART PRACTICE Framework for Early Years



## Predictable

### IMPLEMENTATION

Create a predictable environment for the child where the same things happen in the same order.

Prepare the young child for what is coming up next.

Establish with the young child ways to manage transitions, this may include a particular educator or favourite toy to hold onto.

### THINK ABOUT

Young children starting to trust educators and the environment.

Young children starting to feel better about themselves.



## Responsive

### IMPLEMENTATION

Keeping the relationship as the focus of the response. This gives a message that the adults in their world want to stay connected with them.

Educators ask themselves what this behaviour might mean for the child in the context of their experiences. Useful questions to hold in mind are 'What are you trying to tell me?' and 'What do you need from me?'

Support the child to see when they have done well. This has the dual benefit of ensuring we maintain a strengths focused approach but also acknowledges that often children don't know when they are 'doing the right thing'.

### THINK ABOUT

Young children starting to experience relationships as affirming, consistent and helpful.

Young children responding positively to clear and consistent responses to help them feel safe.

Young children experiencing nurturing, safe and consistent responses and how this helps them to clarify that everyone is supportive of them and that their needs are responded to.



## Attuned

### IMPLEMENTATION

Reflect the child's emotional state to them by noting what their bodies are doing and what you can see happening for them. Examples might be: 'Ooh, your hands are looking like wiggly worms', 'I can see your legs seem to be having trouble staying still at the moment' or 'I see that your arms look like they have turned into heavy trees this morning. Is it hard to move?'

Build a story of the child's day with them and link their feelings into the story where necessary.

### THINK ABOUT

Young children's experiences of having their feelings acknowledged and validated by educators.

Supporting young children to enjoy experiences of positive feelings. These can be lost following experiences of trauma.



## Connecting

### IMPLEMENTATION

Each educator to identify ways to connect with the young child.

Explore ways for educators to purposefully be aware of and respond to the young child's feelings.

### THINK ABOUT

Supporting young children to develop trust in educators to co-regulate their big feelings.

Supporting young children to feel safe with all the early childhood educators in their world.



## Translating

### IMPLEMENTATION

Support young children to record stories about their day.

Involve young children in activities that support them to understand their feelings.

Provide opportunities for young children to follow the routine of the day.

### THINK ABOUT

Writing, drawing or talking about the child's day to build on their self-narrative.

Young children identifying positive qualities in themselves and feeling confident to engage with educators, other children and the early years environment.

Building on young children's abilities to remember tasks and routines through repetition.





## Involving

### IMPLEMENTATION

Providing an activity or activities that the child enjoys. You may need to play with them to start with.

Supporting young children to take part in activities with other children if and when they are ready, this may be in a parallel play situation.

Supporting young children to engage with educators to complete a task or help with a chore.

### THINK ABOUT

Young children starting to feel confident and competent in the early years space.

Supporting young children to increase their connection with educators and other children.



## Calming

### IMPLEMENTATION

For all adults supporting the child to develop calming responses that encourage a sense of calm in the child.

Develop a repertoire of calming activities for all children to experience.

Consider the physical environment of your room or centre. Is it calming? Incorporate all five of the sensory elements into the room to support a calm environment for all the children to experience every day.

Find ways to calm ourselves, we cannot support others when we are not calm ourselves.

### THINK ABOUT

The importance of being calm so that young children can experience the feeling of “calm”. Enabling children to attain a sense of peace and quiet in their bodies and minds.

Young children feeling more supported and connected when everyone is calm.

Young children being able to test and find out what works for them in feeling safe and experiencing calm.

How we can provide ourselves with calming techniques.



## Engaging

### IMPLEMENTATION

Support all educators to develop a connection with each child.

Modelling to children relational concepts such as trust, care and support.

Celebrating that every relational exchange with a child is an opportunity for learning about them as well as an opportunity for healing and repair.

### THINK ABOUT

All young children flourishing in an atmosphere of love, nurture, support and safety.

The benefits for everyone when children feel connected to the early childhood environment.



5  
CHAPTER

Recommended resources  
& reading material

## Resources



Further information, resources and activity ideas and worksheets can be found at:

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/centre-trauma-aware-responsive-education/>

These activities included in this booklet,

- Activity Booklet - An A to Z of connecting activities for families to share at home (Pre-schoolers)
- Line of My Day
- Hand Clapping Games
- My Sensory Hand

as well as other resources can be found at <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/resources/>



Sign up to ACF and you will be able to access even more resources including these helpful tools...

- Polyvagal Theory
- Unpacking and Responding to Behaviour
- Mindful Walking
- Volcano Head



Keep in touch with ACF and SMART

**ACF - Centre for Trauma Aware and Responsive Education**

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/centre-trauma-aware-responsive-education/>

**ACF - Training and resources**

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/professional-community-network/>

**SMART Online training** (register via Plink)

**SMART training** (register via Plink)

[www.childhood.org.au](http://www.childhood.org.au)



# Further Reading



## National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Education

The Australian Childhood Foundation, in collaboration with the Queensland University of Technology has developed a consolidated set of National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Schooling.  
<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/centre-trauma-aware-responsive-education/>



## Making Space for Learning: Trauma informed practice in schools

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/centre-trauma-aware-responsive-education/>



## Additional reading

Baylin, J. & Hughes, D.A. (2016). *The neurobiology of attachment-focused therapy*. New York: W.W Norton Company.

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Porges, S. W. (2015). Making the World Safe for our Children: Down-regulating Defence and Up-regulating Social Engagement to 'Optimise' the Human Experience. *Children Australia*, 40(02), 114-123.

Porges, S. (2012). *Understanding Polyvagal Theory: Emotion, Attachment and Self-Regulation* [Video file]. Psychotherapy Networker. Retrieved July 2, 2016, from Counselling and Therapy in Video: Volume III.

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