



RINGWOOD HEIGHTS
Primary School

Making Space for Learning

Ringwood Heights PS

March 21st 2023



Australian
Childhood
Foundation



**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.**



**Australian
Childhood
Foundation**

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

**THE WURUNDJERI
PEOPLE OF THE
KULIN NATION**

RINGWOOD HEIGHTS
Primary School



An overview of the Australian Childhood Foundation

We are a Force for Childhood, making an impact in Australia for nearly 40 years



We Help Children Heal

On their own, children do not recover from the devastating impact of abuse, neglect and family violence. They need specialised support to heal. We provide therapeutic services to children.



We Keep Children Safe

We build the ability and confidence of individuals and organisations to protect children. We provide parents with education and support to help them raise happy, safe and loved children.



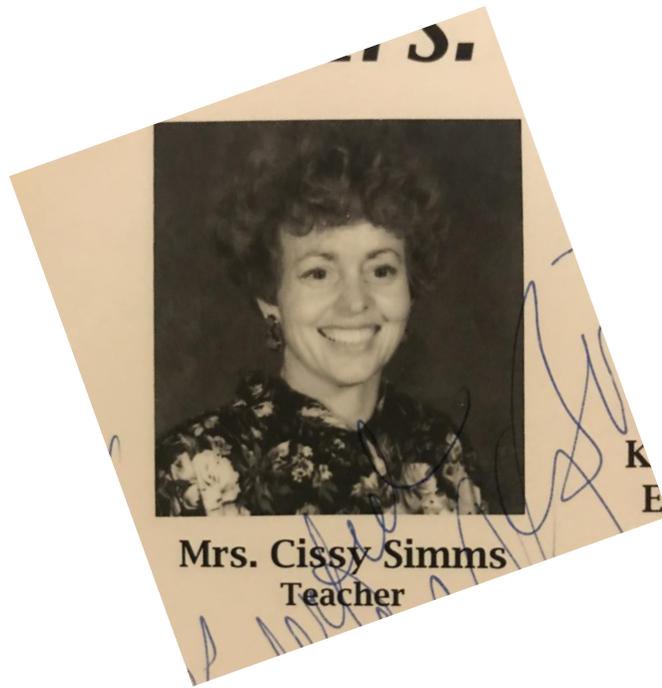
We Stand Up for Children

We advocate for changes to laws and policies that help to make all children safer. We work to strengthen community attitudes that prioritise the rights of children to love and safe relationships.



We Create Understanding for Children

We educate and support adults who look after and work with children to be better able to understand and respond to their needs.



Consider a teacher who taught you, and had a positive influence on you... What do you remember about them? How did they make you feel?

Please take care of you today....

- Your emotional safety is important to us
- This training may evoke strong emotions and memories
- Please let someone know
- Take a break
- Your colleagues are here to support you.





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

Ringwood Heights Primary School Values

- *Values*

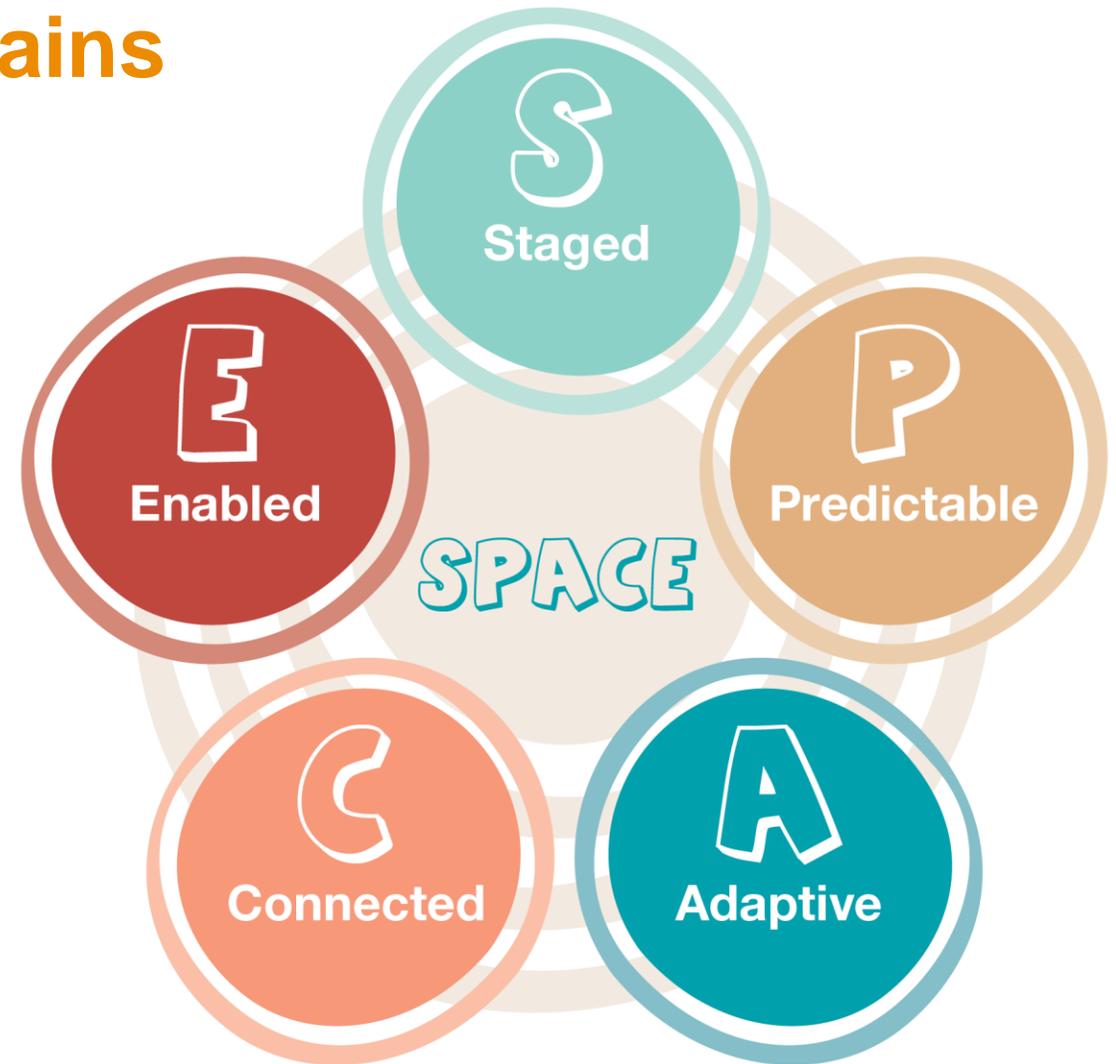
- Our school values were created after extensive consultation with all students, staff and other community members.
 - They reflect elements of our school that we value highly and strive towards:
 - Respect
 - Teamwork
 - Creativity
 - Friendship
 - Responsibility

What is Making SPACE for Learning?



Introducing SPACE- Five Domains

- SPACE is the central acronym of the program.
- It includes five areas to help educators and school staff better understand and support the social and emotional well being of children in the classroom.



Audit – Celebration and Reflection Tool

Making SPACE for Learning - Site Audit Tool

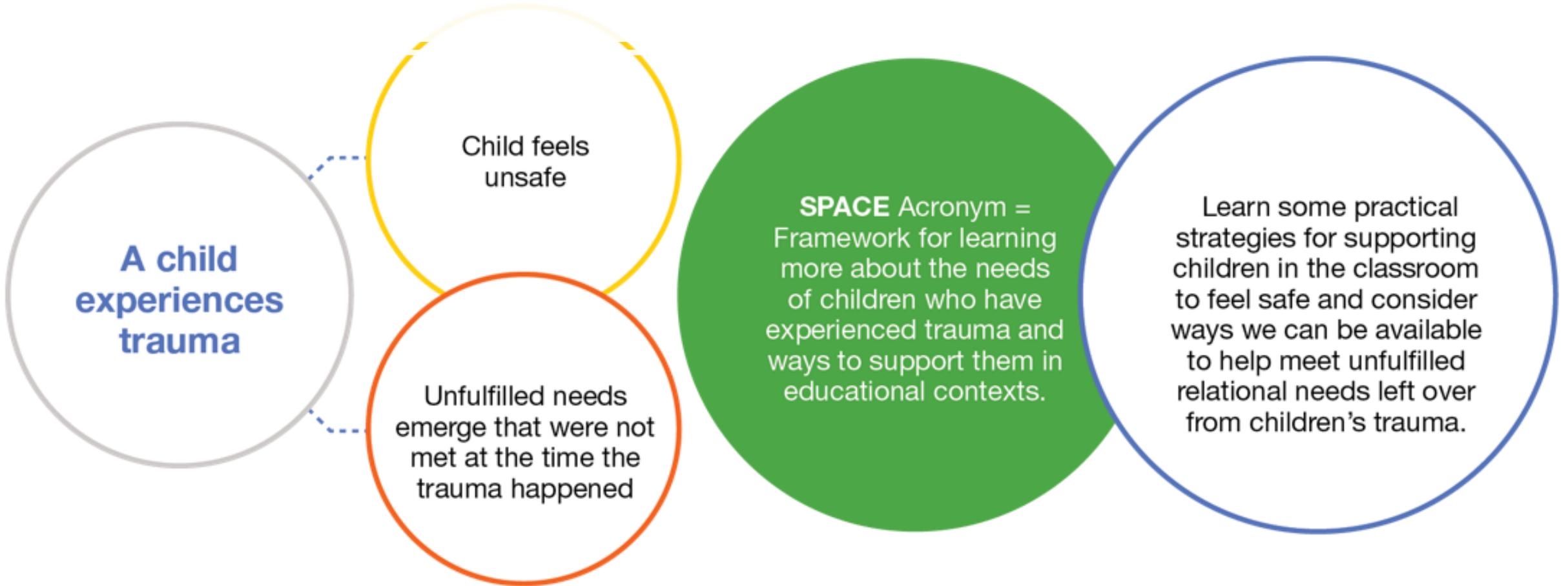
This audit tool can be used to evaluate the policies and initiatives of a school that resource and equip different levels of the school structure to undertake trauma informed practice. In the following table, list strategies, policies or other processes currently undertaken that support children and young people who have been impacted by trauma.

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

SPACE helps us to understand the needs of our students



How does SPACE fit?



What happened for the Child

A Response Framework for Understanding and Relating with the Child in educational contexts

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 <i>My brain grows upwards step by step</i>
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>I feel better when I know what is coming next.</i>
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 <i>There are things I need to grow up healthy and strong.</i>
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 and in the community can be a source of stress when children have found them hard or unsafe in the past. Relationships with safe and consistent adults and peers form the foundation for change.	Children need to feel like they are connected. <i>I need to feel like I am connected.</i>
		Children need to feel safe and know about what makes a safe connection. <i>I need to feel safe.</i> <i>I need safe connections in my life.</i>
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>I grow stronger as I learn more about what makes me, me.</i>

SPACE element	Translated into needs statements
Staged	<p>Children’s brains need support to grow and learn</p> <p>My brain grows upwards step by step</p>
Predictable	<p>Children need to know what they can count on</p> <p>I feel better when I know what is coming next.</p>
Adaptive	<p>Children need support to grow up healthy and strong</p> <p>There are things I need to grow up healthy and strong.</p>
Connected	<p>Children need to feel like they are connected.</p> <p>I need to feel like I am connected.</p>
	<p>Children need to feel safe and know about what makes a safe connection.</p> <p>I need to feel safe.</p> <p>I need safe connections in my life.</p>
Enabled	<p>Children need to know more about what makes them who they are.</p> <p>I grow stronger as I learn more about what makes me, me.</p>

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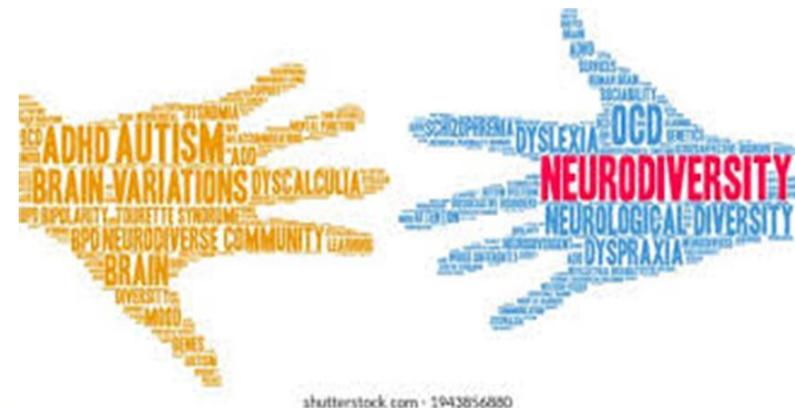
Neurodiversity, Disability and trauma...



Diverse Learning needs

Diverse learning needs may appear in various presentations in students

- Learning difficulties
- Memory problems
- Impulsiveness and impaired judgement
- Limited attention span
- Difficulty relating actions and consequences
- Difficulty following instructions and generalizing information
- Difficulty with abstract thinking
- Slow cognitive processes
- Difficulty with social relationships

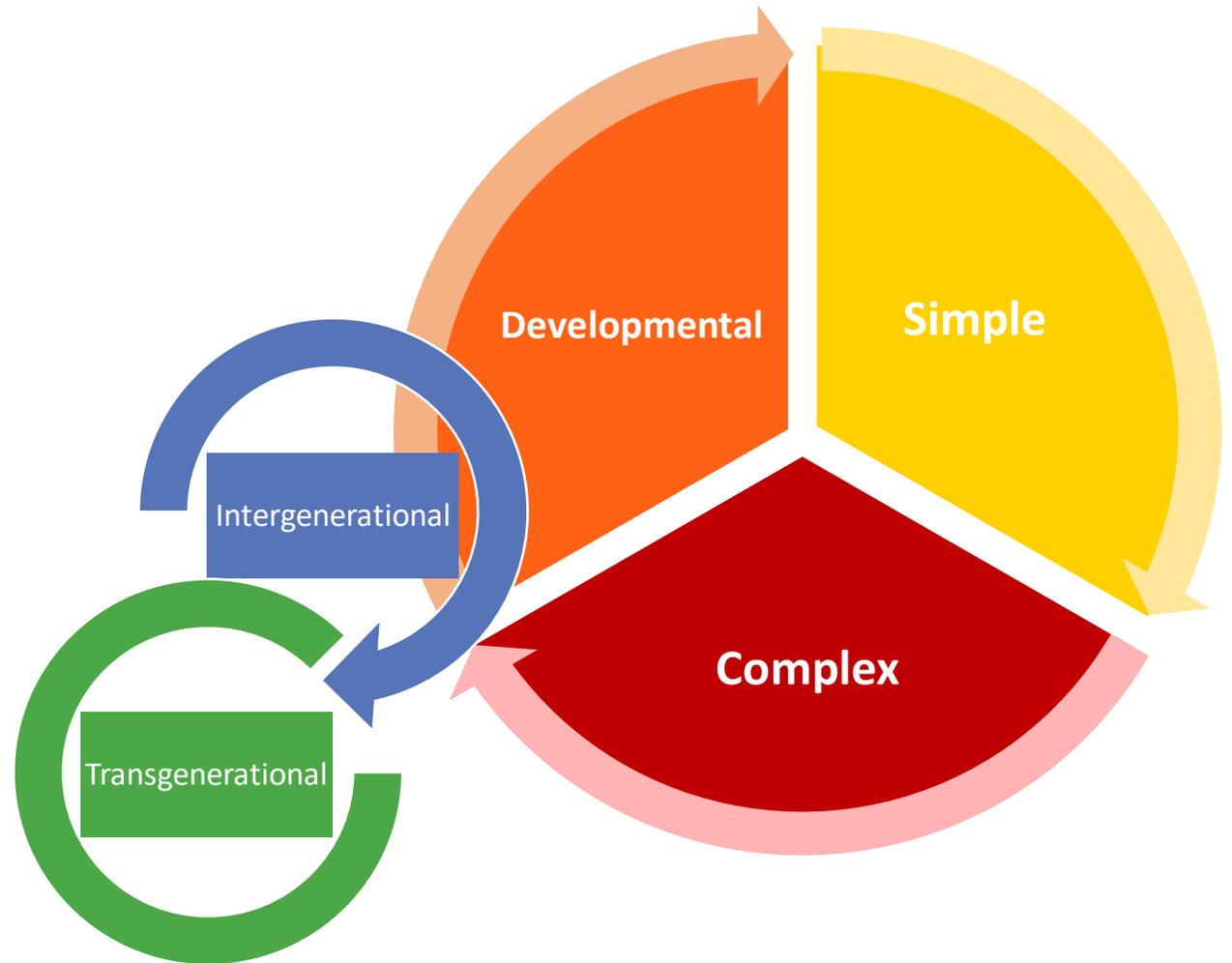


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Defining trauma

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



Developmental Trauma

- Refers to the period of time the brain is undergoing significant development; in utero through to late adolescence. Exposure to trauma during this time can alter the brain's architecture.
- Usually relational in nature – the trauma happens in relationship (through abuse, neglect, domestic violence, toxic stress etc) and therefore is healed in relationship.



What is FASD?

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome affects babies in utero whose mothers have used alcohol whilst pregnant.

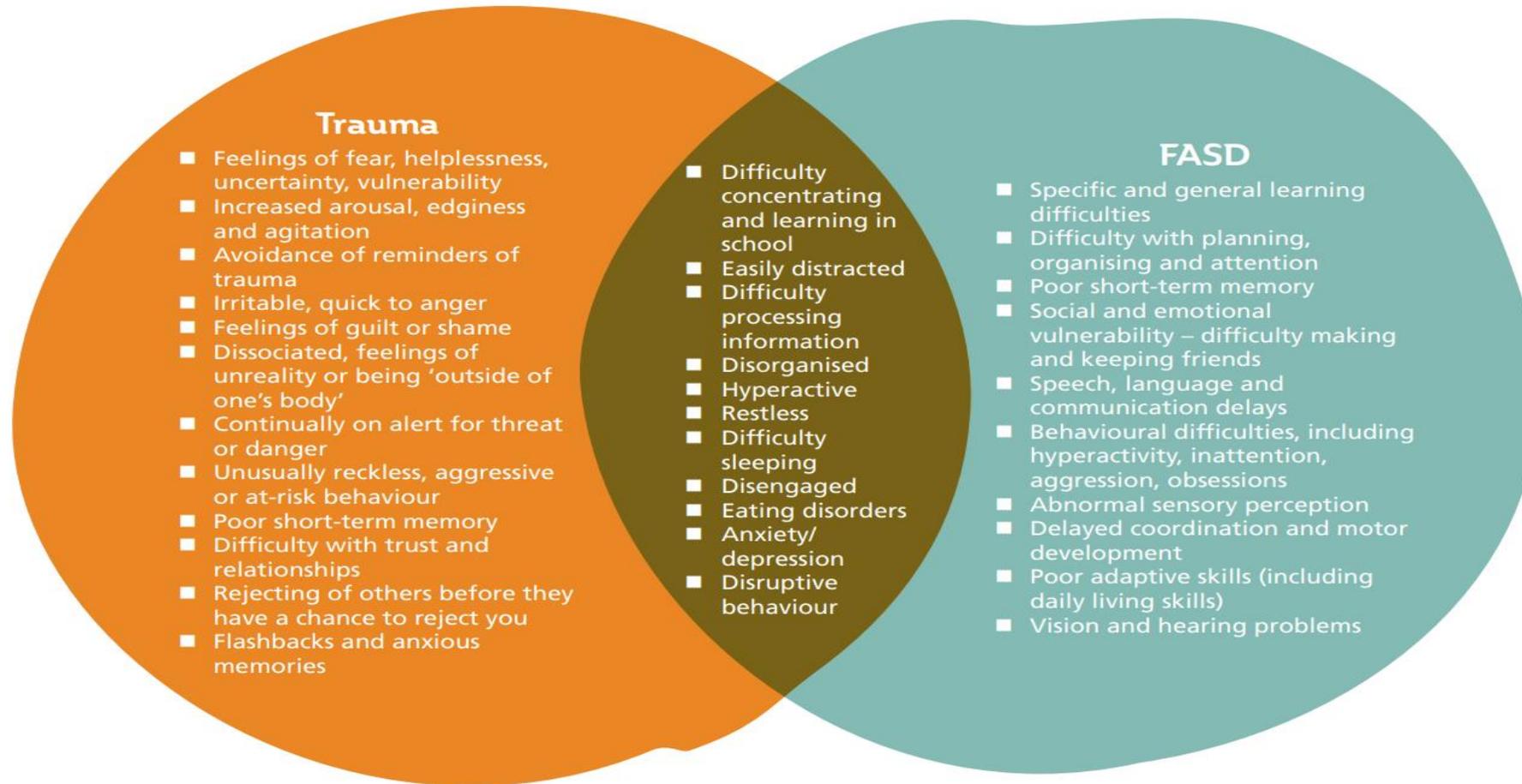
This significantly affects the brain development of the baby.

FASD is a lifelong disability.

Individuals with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living, and need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential.



Figure 3: Symptoms of trauma and FASD and areas of overlap



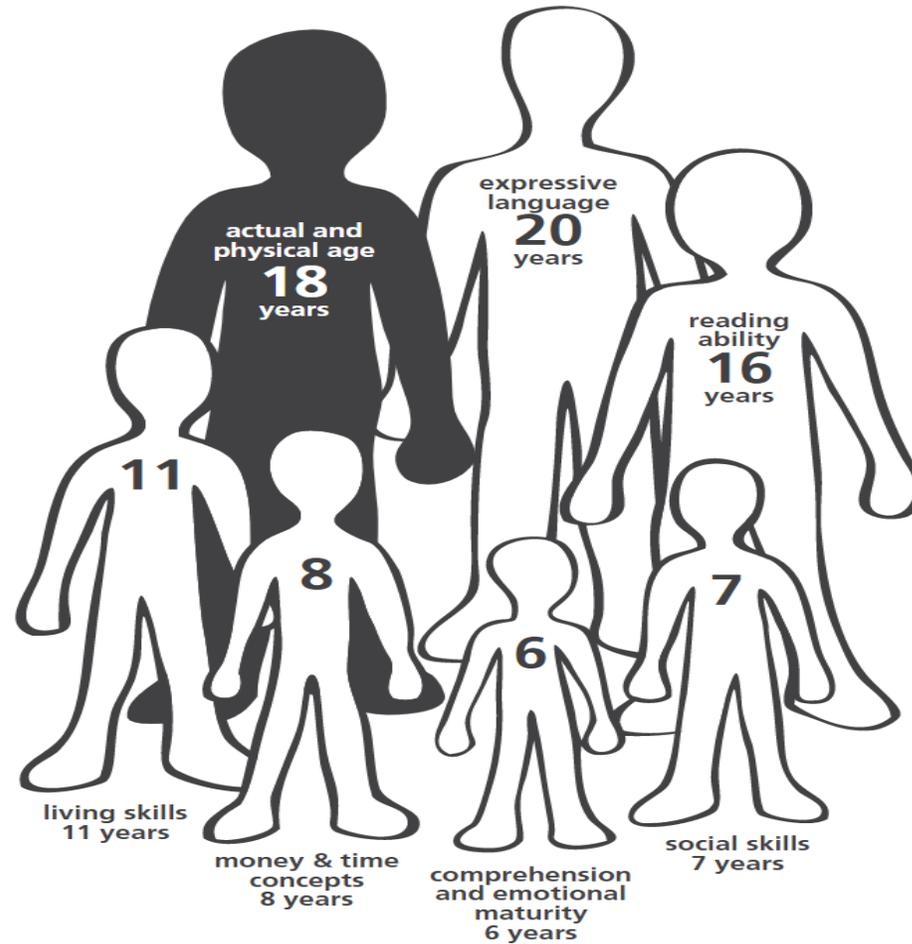
Trauma and FASD

Source: Adapted from National Child Traumatic Stress Network, *Is it ADHD or child traumatic stress? A guide for clinicians*, NCTSN, Los Angeles, 2016, p. 5, www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/is_it_adhd_or_child_traumatic_stress.pdf.

Image taken from Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and complex trauma: A resource for educators, 2018 Published by Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre

Figure 6: The developmental age and ability of an 18-year-old with FASD

This diagram shows how a child's chronological age and developmental age can vary dramatically at any one time.



Source: Jodee Kulp
<http://www.betterendings.org>



Trauma affects

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



How do I know what is trauma related and what is disability or neurodivergence related?

- Sometimes you just won't know for sure!
- Chicken and egg conundrum: Various research indicates children and young people with disabilities and neurodivergence are more vulnerable to experiencing trauma and those identified as experiencing trauma often have diagnosed learning difficulties, sensitivities, and disabilities.
- Due to research into epigenetics, we also know that what life experiences mum has had can influence the development of her unborn child.
- Misdiagnosis can occur if not all factors are taken into consideration.

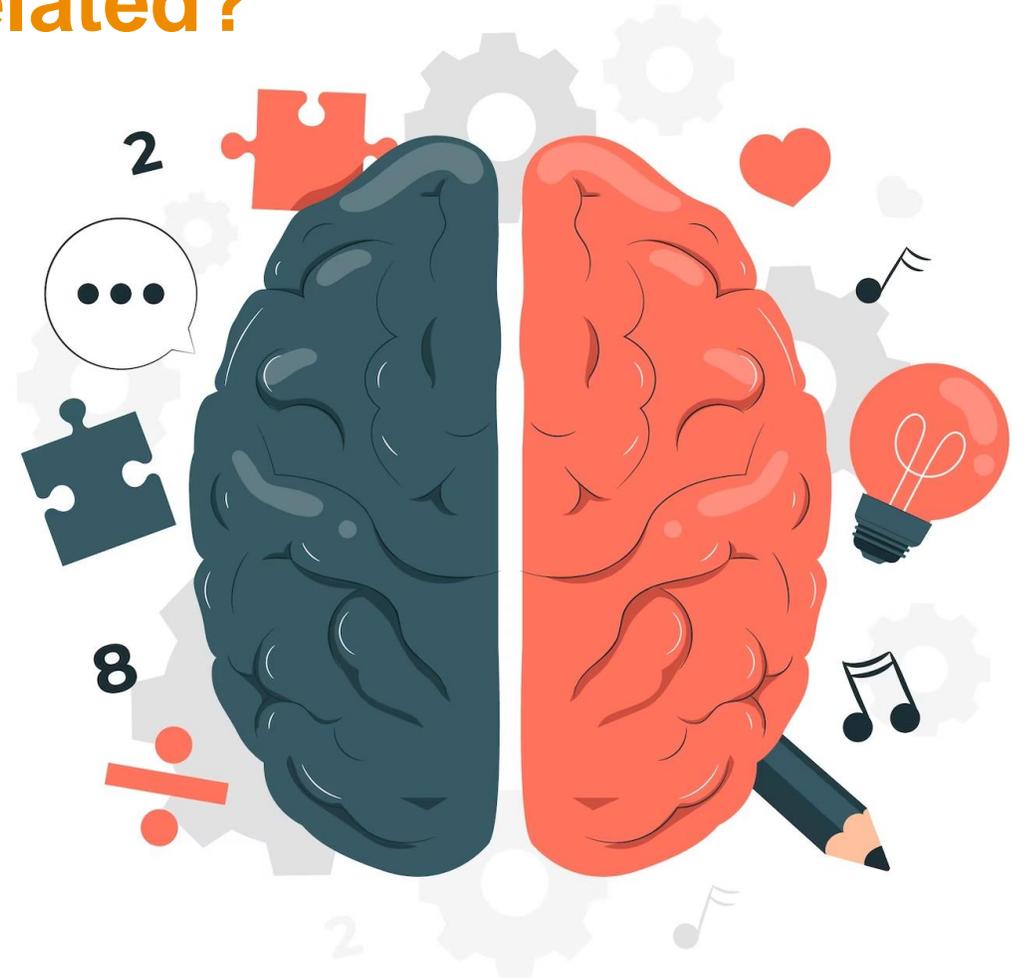


Photo credit: freepik.com

Neurodiversity, Disability and Trauma

What might you have noticed?

Look for a change in behaviour.... From what is usual....

Has there been an increase or decrease?

Has there been an increase or decrease in intensity or frequency?

This may indicate that the student is not safe or does not feel safe...

Can you/how can you link trauma informed practice to your Disability Reform work?



- <https://www.vic.gov.au/disability-inclusion%E2%80%93education-in-practice>

Best Practice Approaches for all children...

And for those with trauma and/ or disability...

Build felt sense of safety

Build unique profile of **needs** and work to meet them

Honour their voice, strengths, differences, culture, their life journey so far

Work to **translate behaviour** into meaning and adapt responses accordingly

Routine and predictability

Meet the child/ young person where they are at, not where they 'should' be

Coregulate

Provide opportunities to **make meaning** of their life story

Build necessary skill sets

Build safe stable relationships

Implement **additional supports** where needed such as learning supports

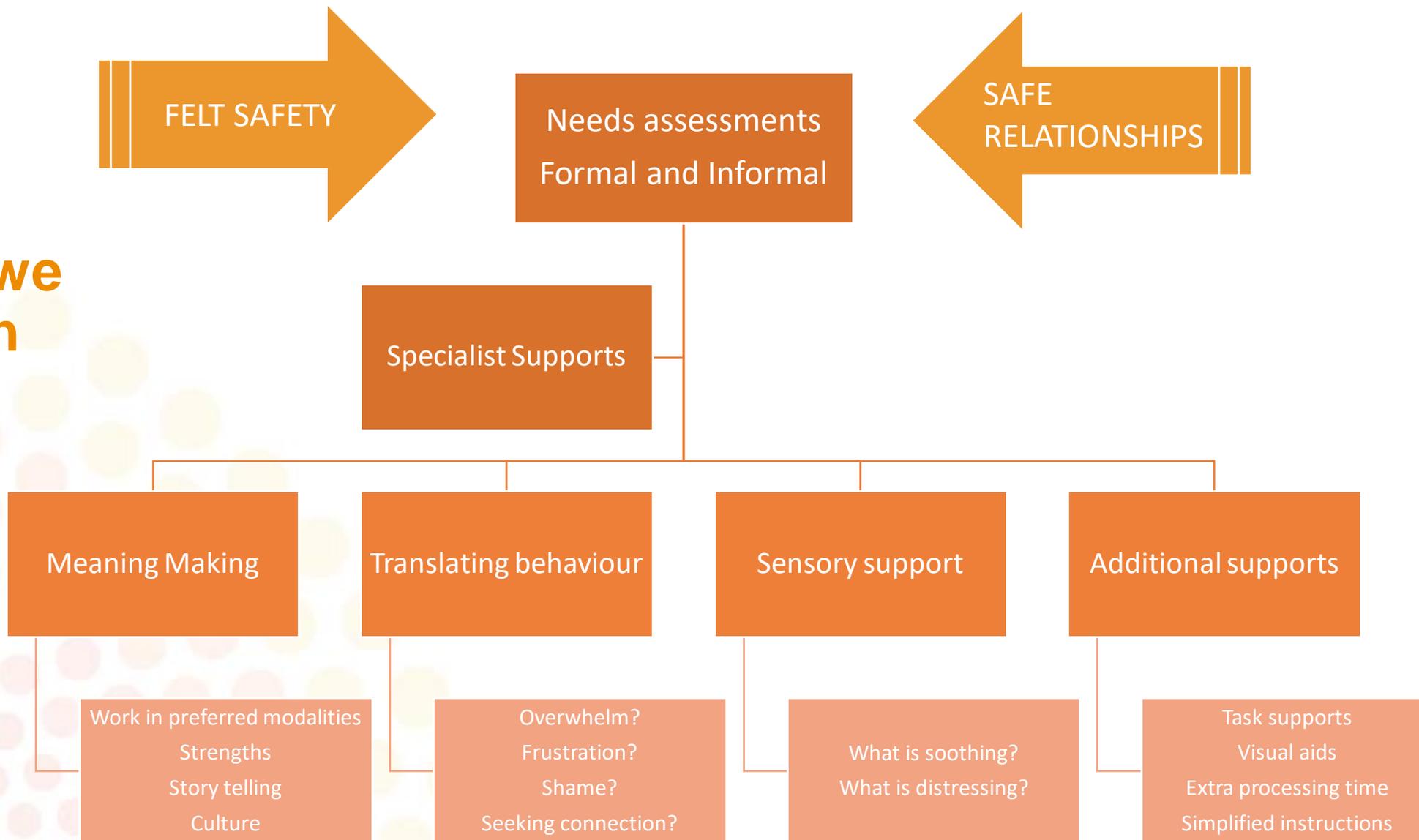
Build emotional literacy

Implement **sensory support** where needed

Bring playfulness



How do we approach this?



External Brain

The cognitive impairments in children with disability or trauma can cause them to have poor memory, lack of impulse control, poor judgment, and difficulty with 'cause and effect' reasoning.

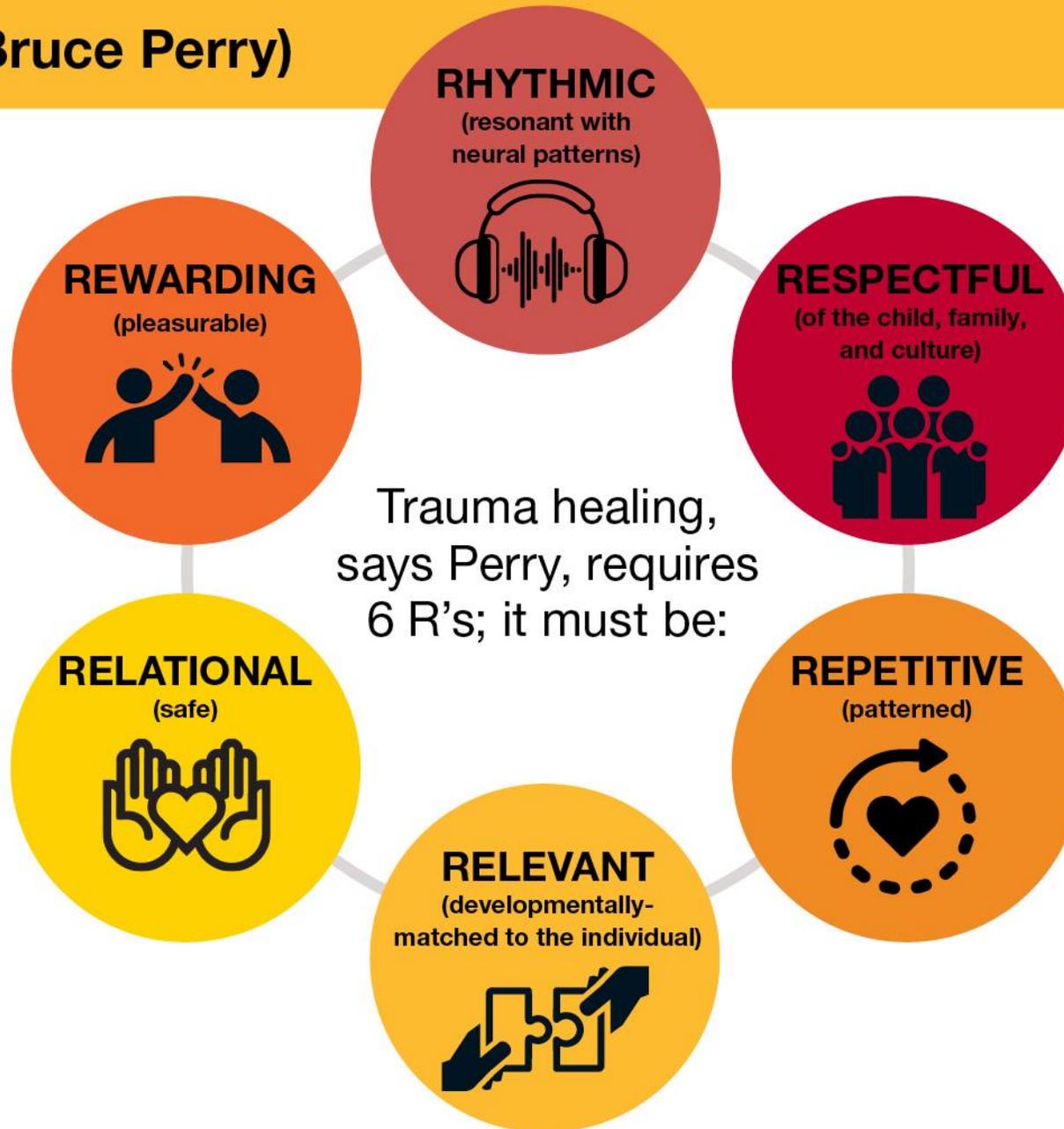
Neurodivergent children may have significant strengths in some areas and challenges in others.

This means they need individualised support from others to manage functions they struggle with.

Your children or young people may need you and other trusted adults to act as their External Brain.



The 6 R's (Bruce Perry)



A helpful thought process for planning....

What is the task or expectation the child is expected to do (and failing at/"refusing" to do)?

What does the brain— anyone's brain— have to be able to do in order to successfully complete that task or meet that expectation?

What do you know about how your child's brain functions in those areas? Do they have those skills?

Make adaptations to met the child where they are at and build from there.

Learning about our Brain



What shapes our brain?

Early experiences shape the architecture of our brain

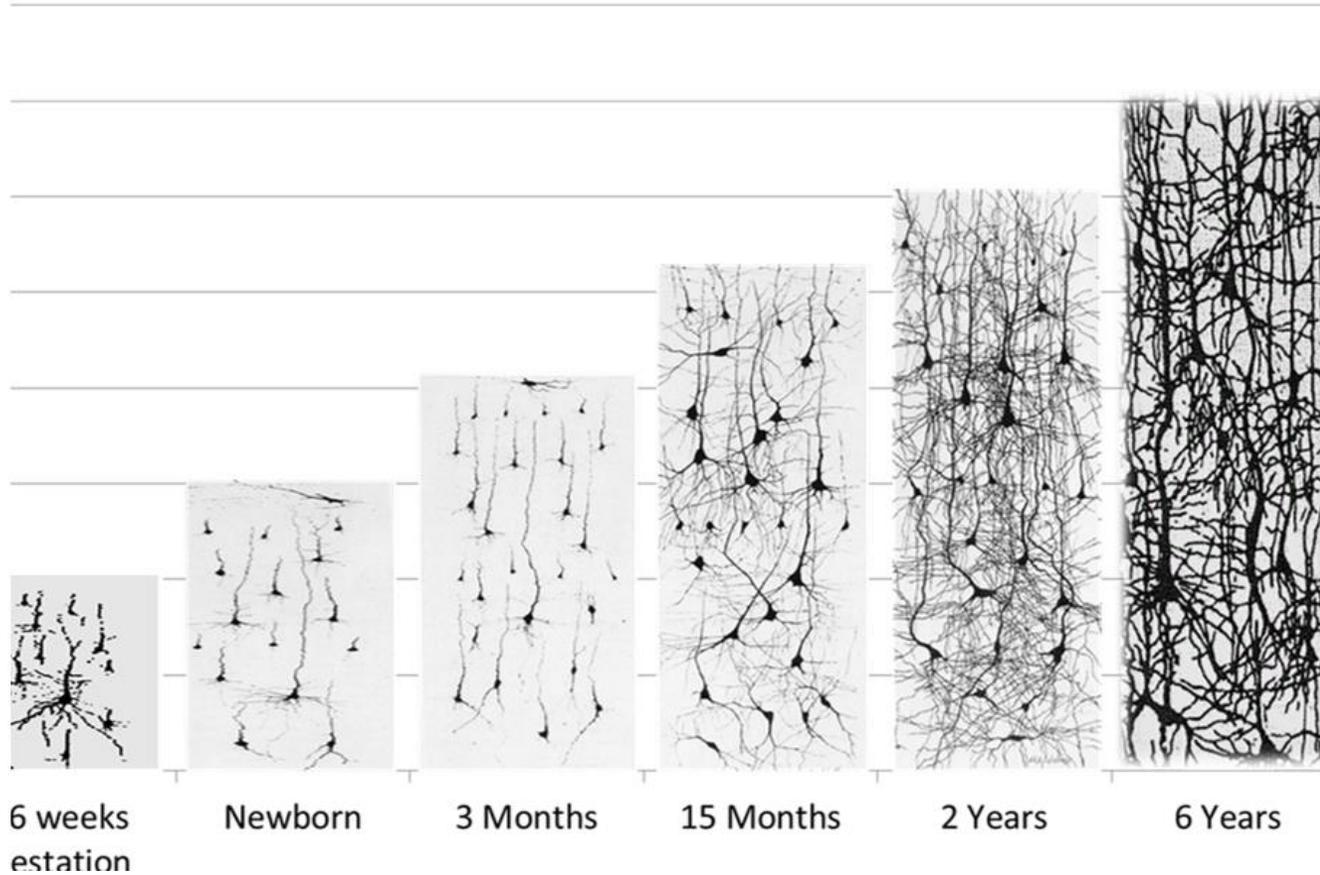
Threat and Neglect → Survival



Safety and Connection → Integration

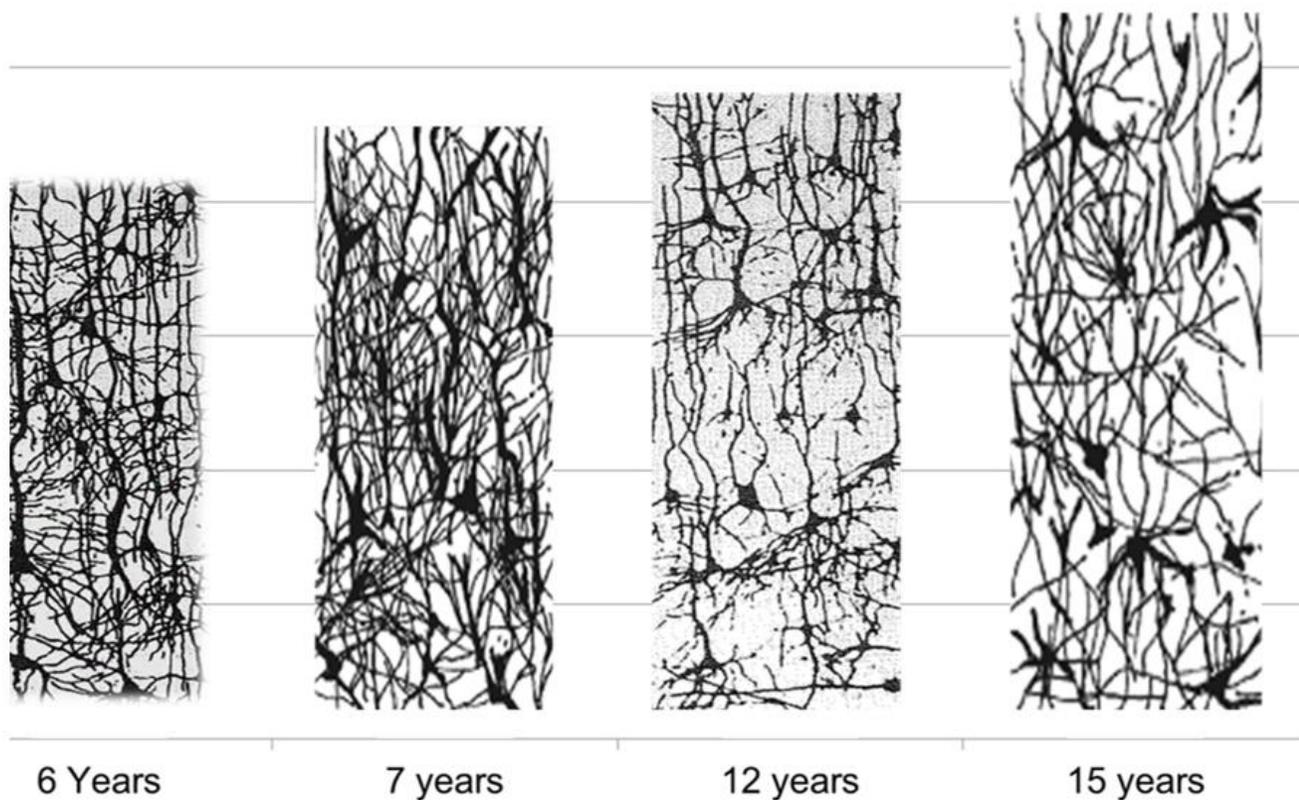


Neuronal development



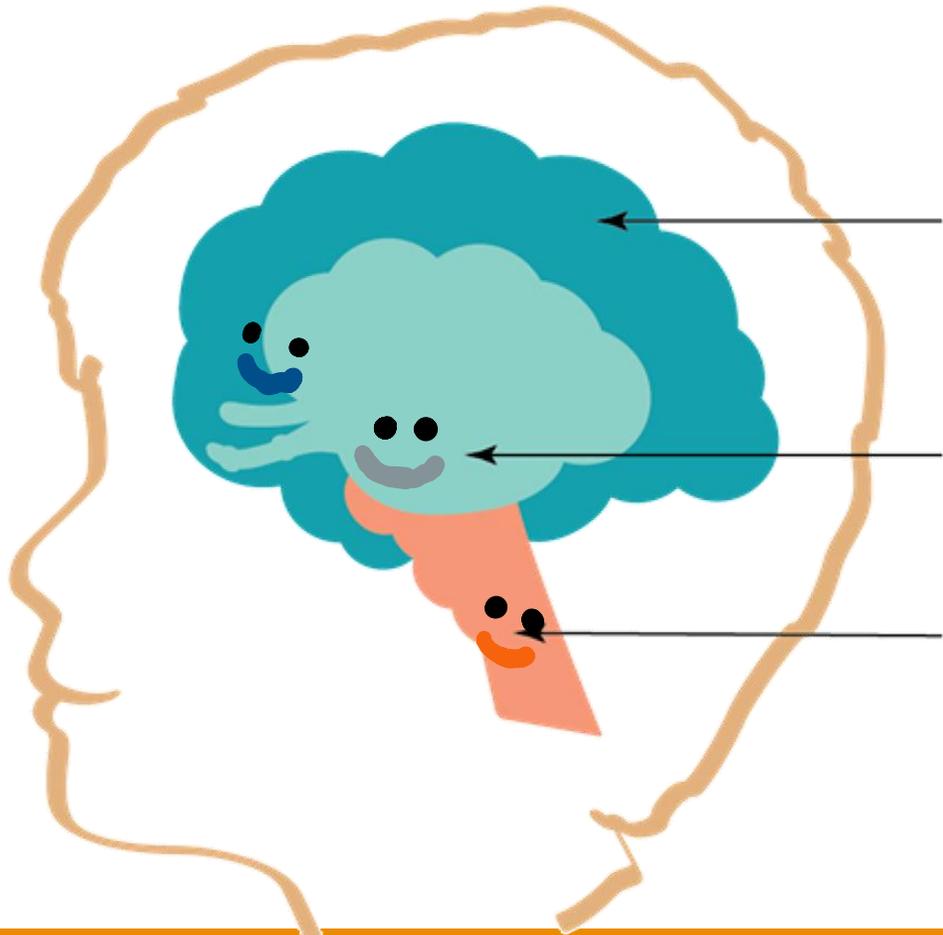
- Rapid growth occurs from birth to 6 years
- **Critical period** of development
- Healthy neuronal development occurs through **relationships, regulation, repetition**

Neuronal development



- Early years – period of **rapid growth**
- Followed by onset of puberty in which **synaptic pruning and formation of new neurons** occurs.

Important brain parts that help us in different ways



Thinking Part

I grow last. I am the thinking part of your brain. I am the part that helps you talk and understand things. I help you make good decisions and learn school work at school.

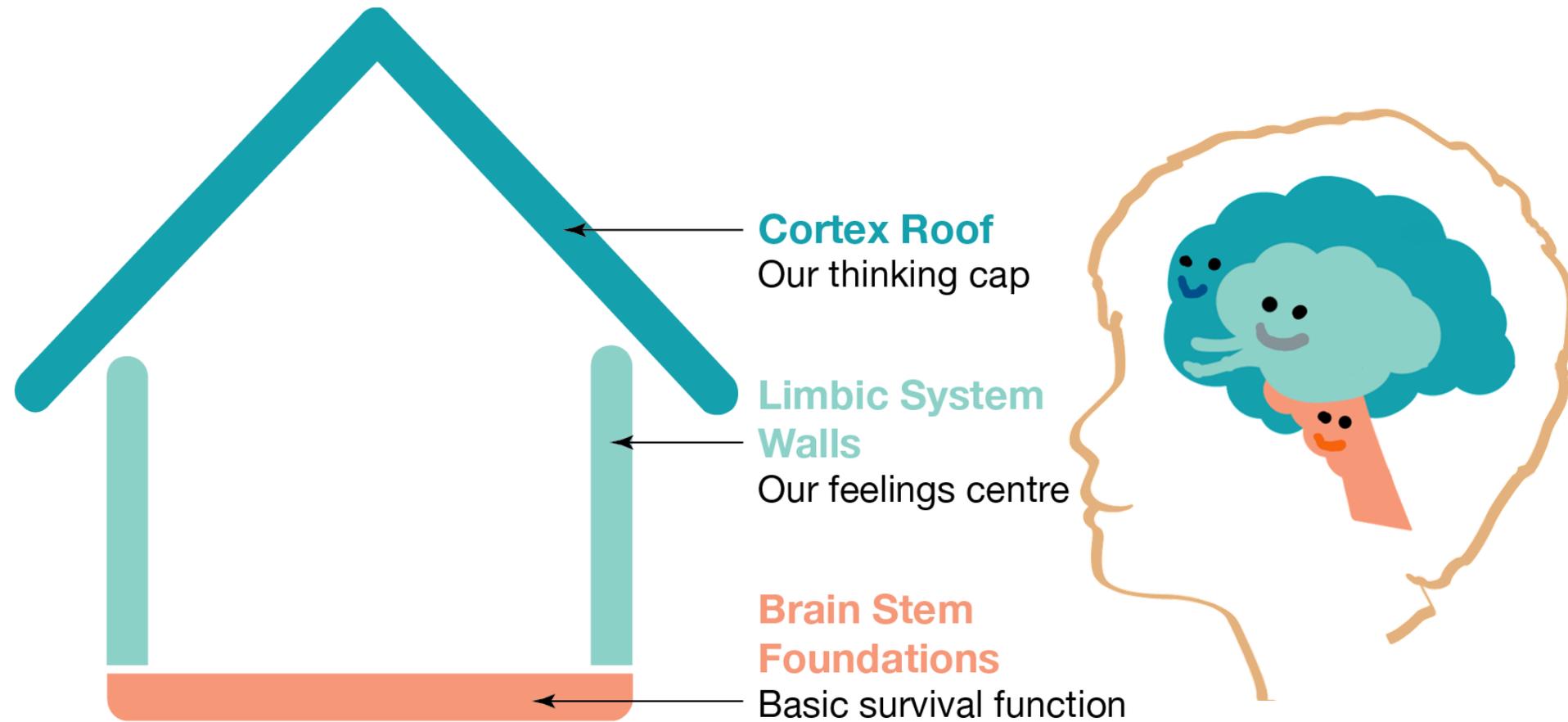
Feelings Spot

I grow second. I am a spot where your feelings live. If you get a fright when something happens it is me that tells you and helps you.

Keeping My Body Going Part

I grow first. I keep your body going. I am in charge of things like your breathing, heart rate, and temperature.

My Brain House



The Brain House Song

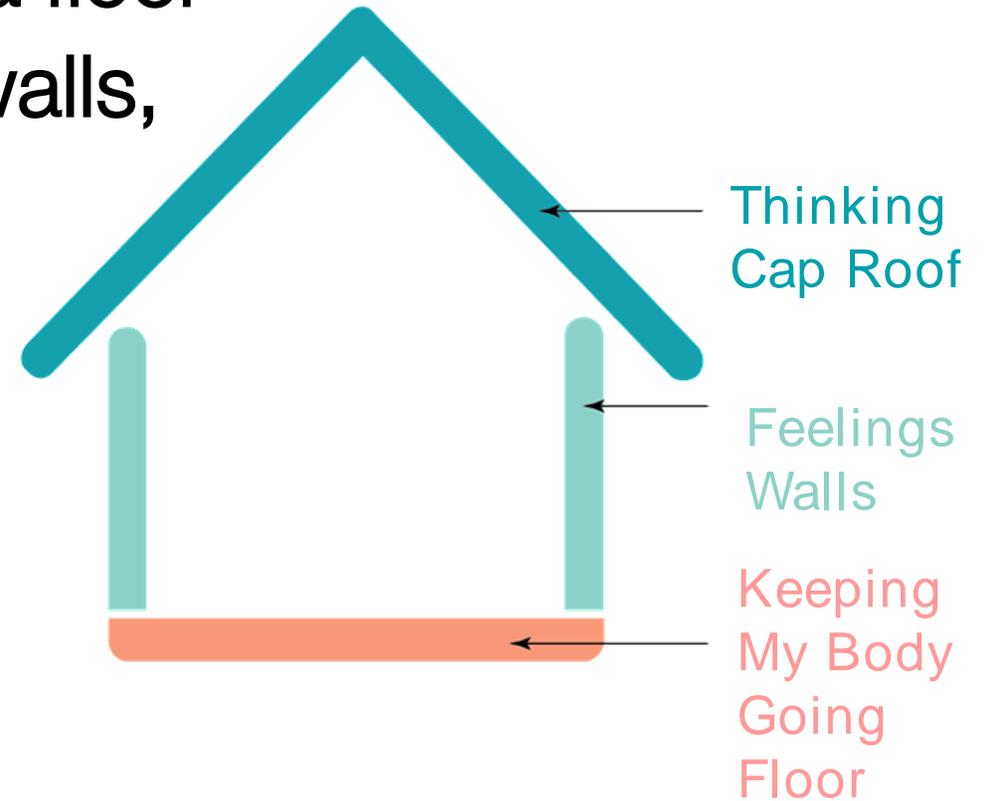
My house has a floor, has a floor, has a floor

My house has some walls, has some walls,
has some walls

My house has a roof.... has a roof...
has a roof....

My house is strong and tall strong
and tall.

My house is strong and tall



The Brain House Song

My house has a floor, has a floor, has a floor

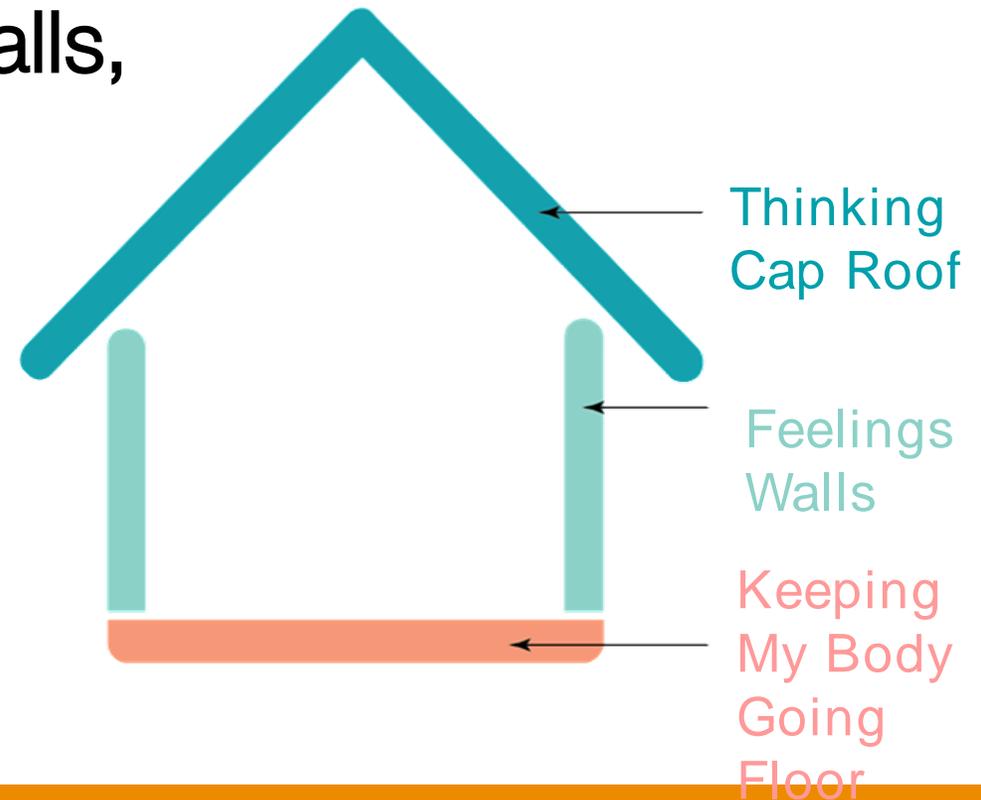
My house has some walls, has some walls,
has some walls

My house has a roof.... has a roof...
has a roof....

My house has fallen down, fallen down

My house has fallen down

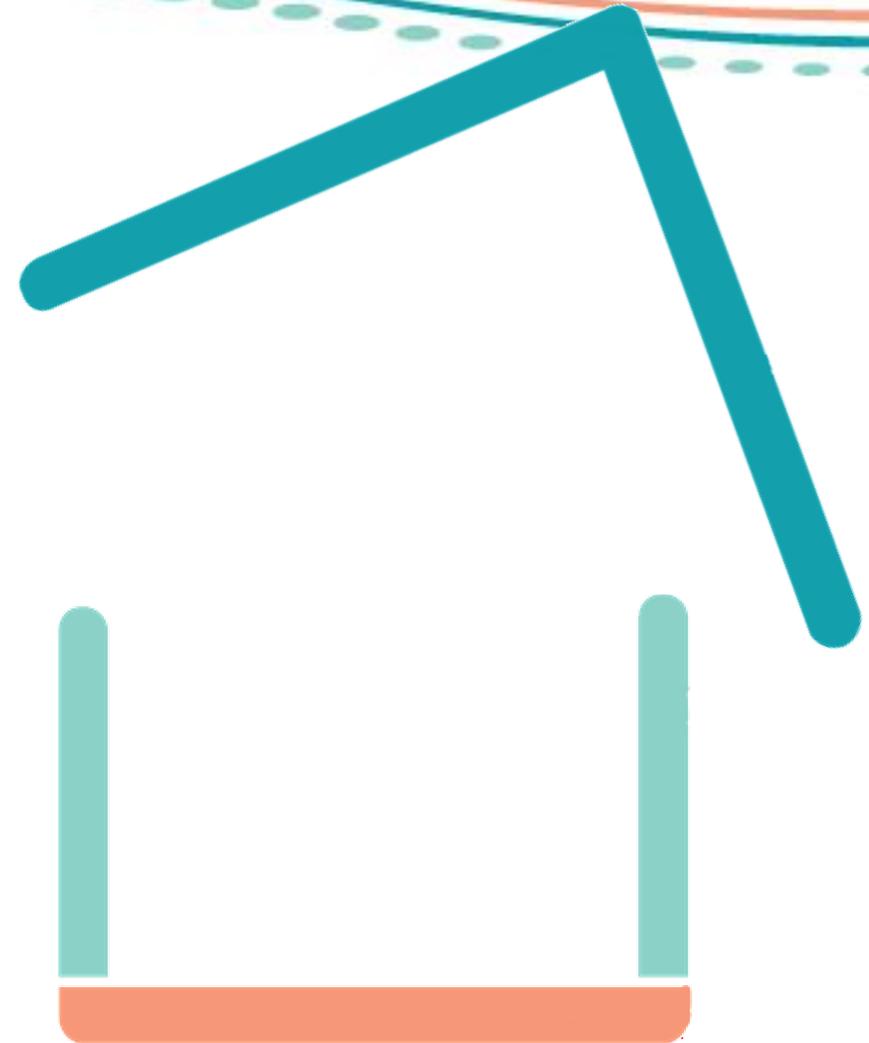
What can I do??



Sometimes the Roof can come off

- If something hard happens our thinking cap roof can come off. It can blow off like in a storm.
- Our thinking cap roof does our thinking and talking and making good decisions. When our roof comes off we can lose our words, and not be able to make sense of what people around us are saying.
- It feels hard to think when our thinking cap comes off.

Can you think of a time when your thinking cap roof came off?



Sometimes the roof and the walls can come off

- If something really hard or bad happens our roof and walls might blow off or fall down and leave only our floor.
- Our floor is very strong and keeps us alive. It can't blow away or fall down.
- Our breathing and our heartbeat will keep us going even if the rest of our house falls down.
- Then we can re-build our house back up again.

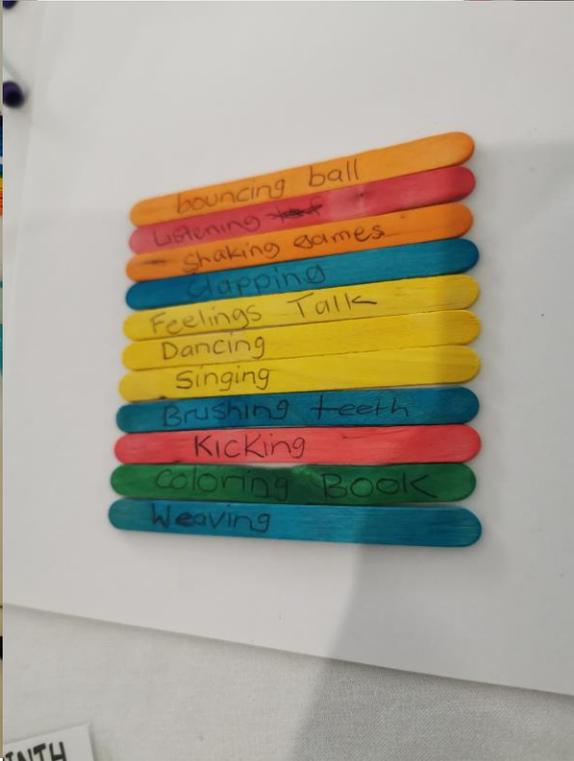
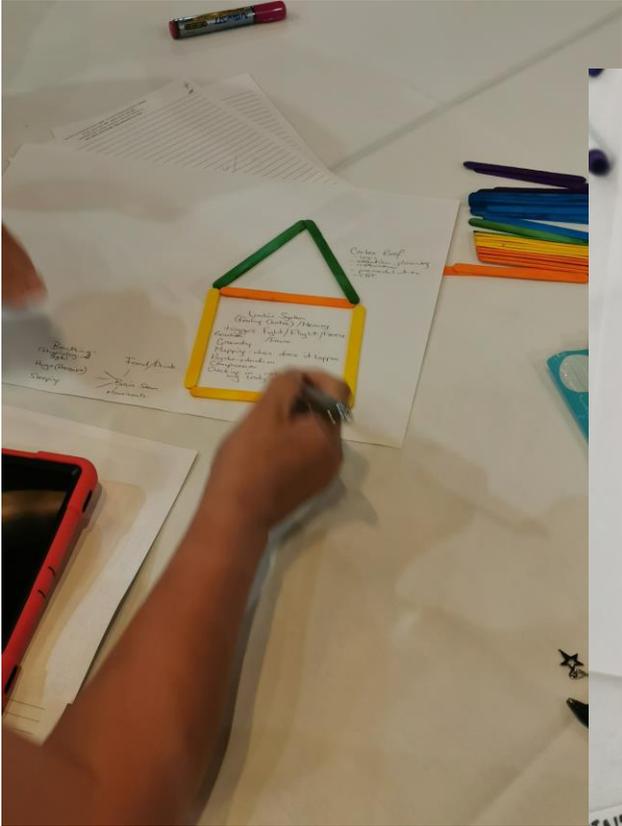
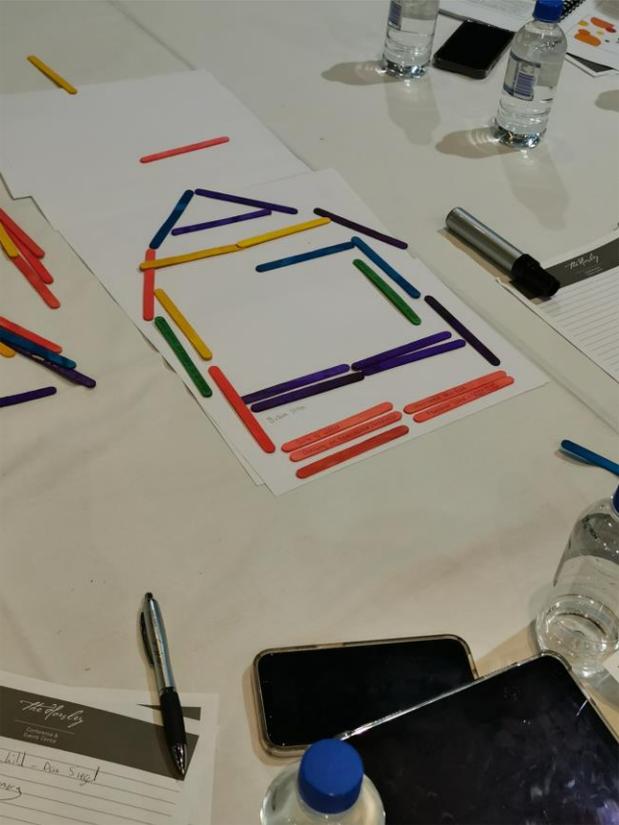


Making Our Brain House Stronger

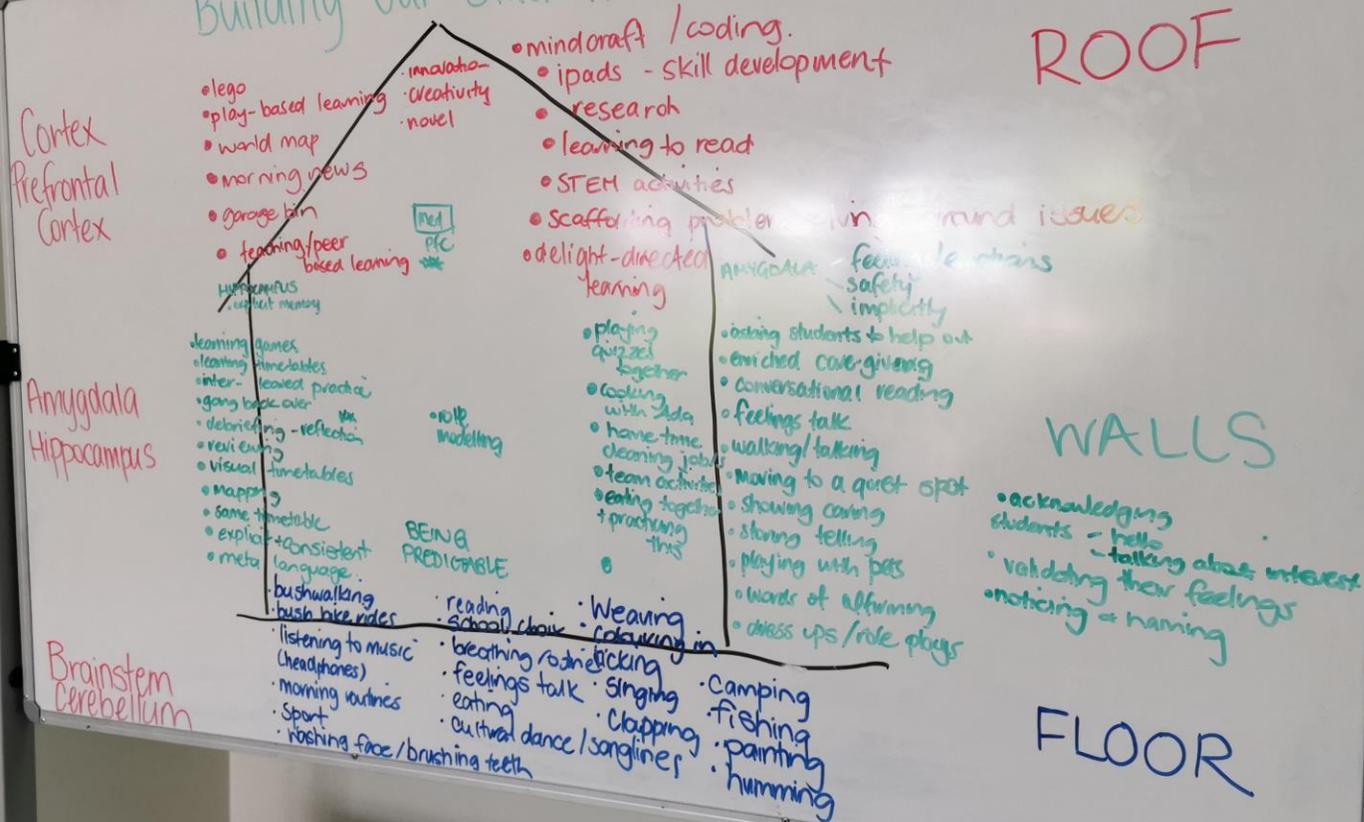
- We can learn some ways we can make our brain houses stronger.
- We can also learn some ways to make it easier to build our brain houses back up again if they fall down.



Building our student's brain houses....



Building our Student's Brain Houses

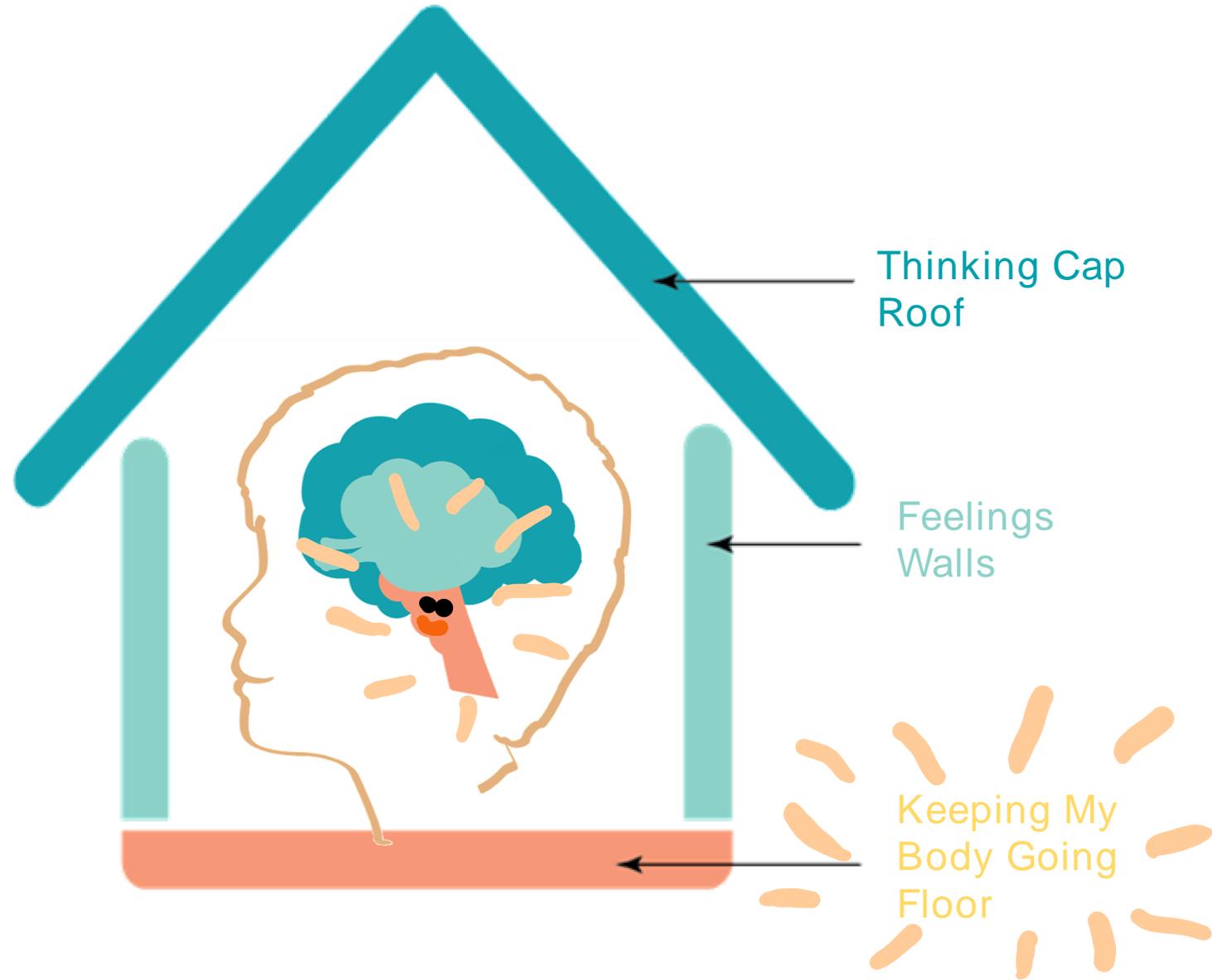
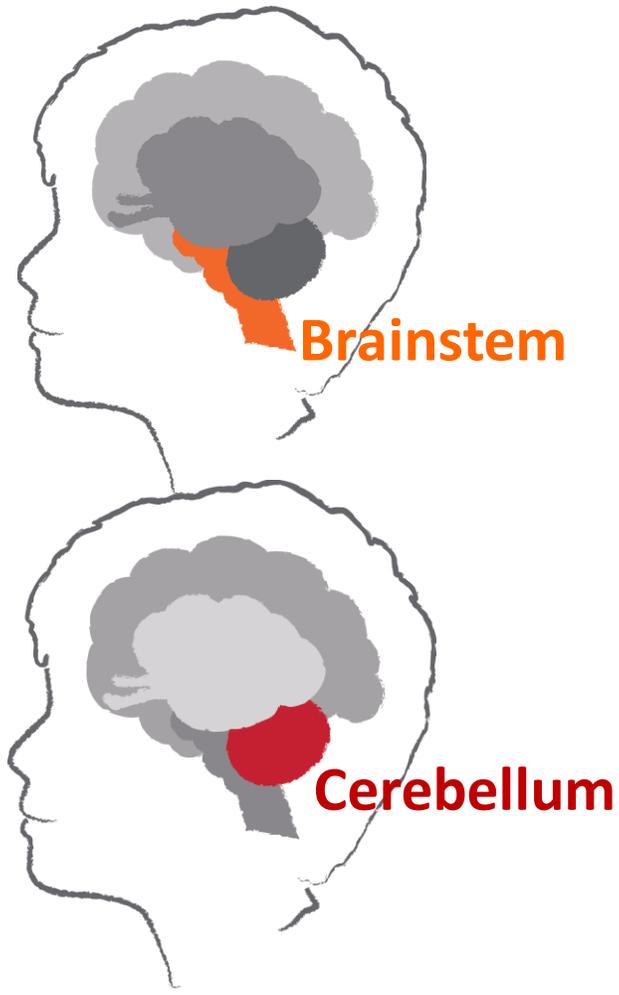


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Our Brain House Floor



'Keeping My Body Going'- Floor of My Brain House



Ways to Strengthen Our Brain House Floor- Rhythmic Activities

Our Brain House floor likes

tactile rhythmic, repetitive games, activities, and movements.

Practice these over and over again activities help it to get stronger.

Doing an activity just once will not make much of difference to this part of the brain, but doing an activity over and over will.

Ways to Strengthen Our Brain House Floor- Heads and Tails Activity

- dancing,
- swinging,
- listening to a familiar story,
- tapping your leg or foot,
- drumming,
- walking,
- running,
- brushing hair,
- bouncing a ball,
- humming,
- riding a bike,
- shooting hoops,
- jumping,
- skipping rope,
- repeated exercises,
- hammock swinging,
- kneading bread,
- digging,
- weaving,
- fishing- casting the rod,
- swimming strokes,
- ping pong,
- hand clapping games,
- listening to a song over and over, focusing on our breath going in and out.

Heads and Tails continue

- playing with clay or play dough,
 - painting,
 - drawing,
 - craft activities,
 - playing with sensory toys like fidget spinners or squishy balls,
 - snuggling with a soft blanket,
 - cuddling a soft toy,
 - colouring in,
 - building in the sand or mud,
- patting a pet or animal
 - sucking a cool drink or ice block,
 - sipping a warm drink.
 - listening to:
 - the sound of rain,
 - a loved one's voice, music,
 - a favourite story,
 - A bird song,
 - swaying trees,
 - animal noises,
 - the water flowing or running

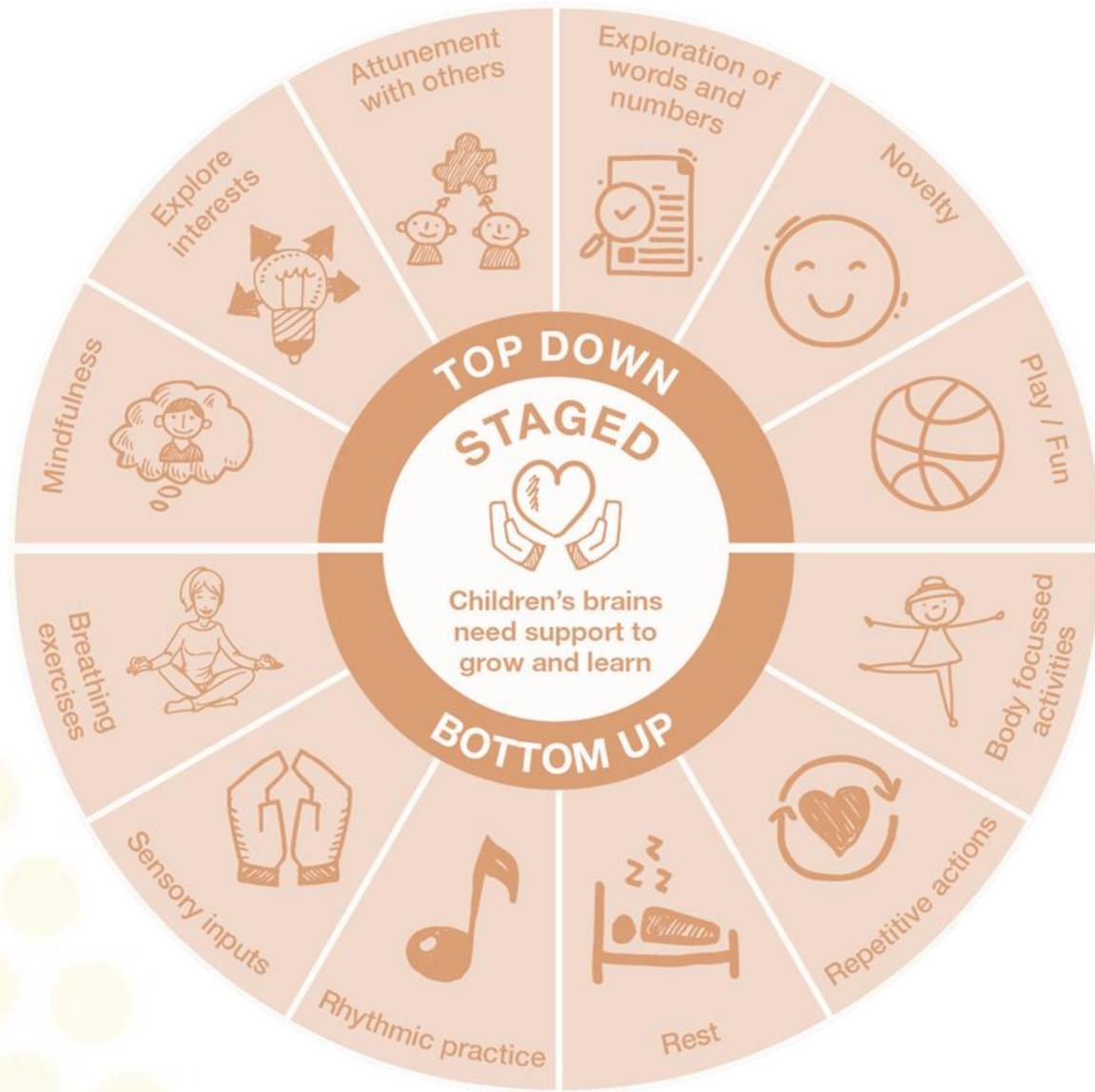
Building and strengthening Our Brain House Floor

How do we do this in the classroom and across the school?

One way is by having **STAGED** and **PREDICTABLE** responses



Staged



Staged

The brain develops sequentially – lower parts develop first

Sophisticated functions only emerge after basic functions are consolidated.

We should resource children in line with what their developing brain's need.

Taking a step-by-step approach to help our students is important.

Start with what the lower parts of the brain needs first



Children's brains need support to grow and learn

My brain grows upwards, step by step.

Staged – Bottom up - Rhythm

Finding our Rhythm

Many drumming traditions begin songs with a rhythm known as a drum call and response. Drum calls are short little rhythms that introduce the songs- like a signature. After there is the drum call, there is always a similarly short rhythmic response to this call made by other drummers. These two rhythms go together, you can't have one without the other. They are perfect companions.

What if we were to make up our own rhythmic call and response. Let's sit together and have a go at tapping out our own short rhythmic signatures that go together. We could do this on our own laps, or on a table-top for example. Then let's practice it so we don't forget. Before bed we can tap out our rhythm together, or when we get in the car, or as you leave for pre-school or school we can tap out our rhythm, or at home sitting on the couch together we can practice.

We can take our rhythm with us into times that feel hard. No-one else needs to know that we have our rhythm. We can hold hands and tap out our rhythm with our fingers into each other's palms. We can sit beside each other and tap out our rhythm on each other's backs. Even when you are on your own and feel like you need me there, tap out our rhythm and part of me will be there with you.



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.....
✂
This activity is about attunement and connection. It may be useful for parent/carers and children. It is designed to strengthen bonds between people in a non-verbal way and could be helpful when people are struggling to find their rhythm together.

Predictable



Predictable

- Uncertainty and unpredictability can disrupt emotional wellbeing and threaten social competence.
 - Strategies which promote stability and familiarity enhance social and emotional wellbeing.
-
- Changes to routines and uncertainty can be a source of stress for the student
 - Predictability in students' relationships and activities modulates their stress systems
 - This then promotes flexibility and adaptability



Students need to know what they can count on

I feel better when I know what is coming next.

What might predictability look like in practice?

- For students
- For families
- For all staff
- Systemically

relationships

physical
activities

routines

instructions

learning
tasks

behavioural
expectations

Predictable



Hellos and Goodbyes



Introduction:

We know that children who have experienced trauma often thrive in environments that provide them with the security of routine and predictability. We also know that transitioning between activities or situations can be tricky. Marking transitions with clear signs and signals that are practiced regularly by all can be helpful.



Purpose:

The following signs have been developed for professionals to use with younger children in settings like schools, kinders, or other locations that involve children visiting a professional. They set out a range of connecting gestures that children and adults could share when a child arrives and again when they leave the setting. These signs take into account our world post COVID coming along, where children and the adults in their lives that they don't live with, will need to engage with each other without touch for health and safety reasons.



What to Do:

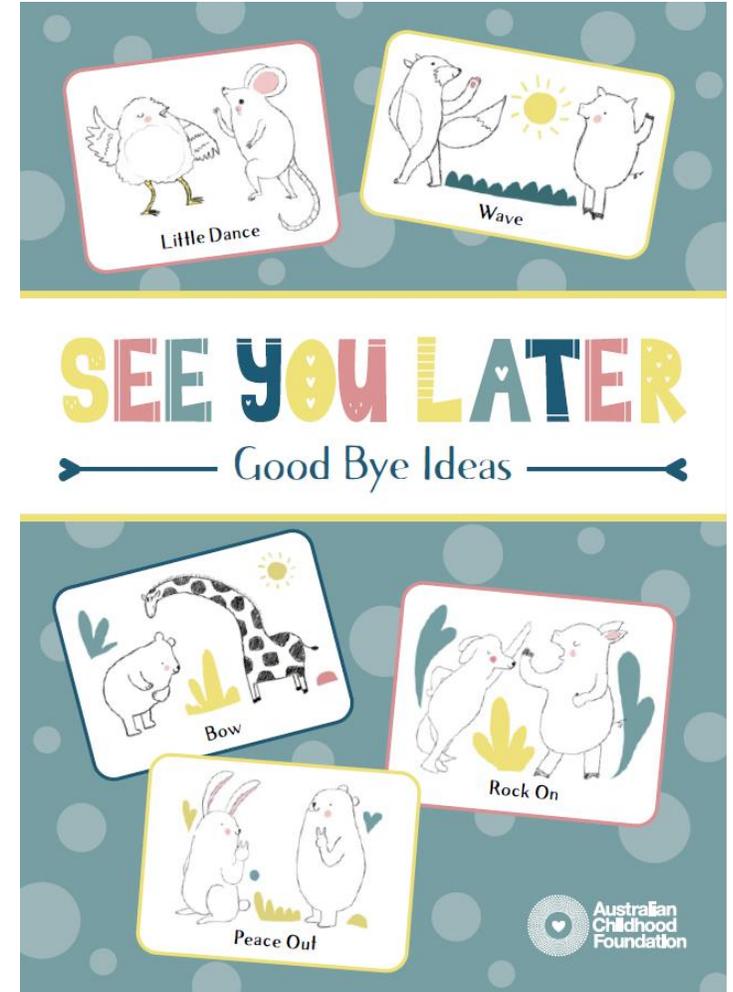
- Print out the signs and laminate them for longevity if you can.
- Affix the Welcome sign next to the entryway where you greet children. Stick the 'See you Later' sign next to the doorway the children leave from.
- Ensure the signs are stuck at an accessible level for the height of the children they are intended for.
- Encourage the child/ren you work with to point to one of the five suggestions that they prefer from the sign and greet each other with the gesture that the child points to. Be led by the child here.
- When it is time for the child to leave do a similar thing with the 'See you Later' sign. Encourage the child to point towards the goodbye gesture they prefer and do the action for each other.
- Repeating these rituals each time the child returns to the setting provides her/him with a transitional marker, with limited built in choice around what gesture they choose.



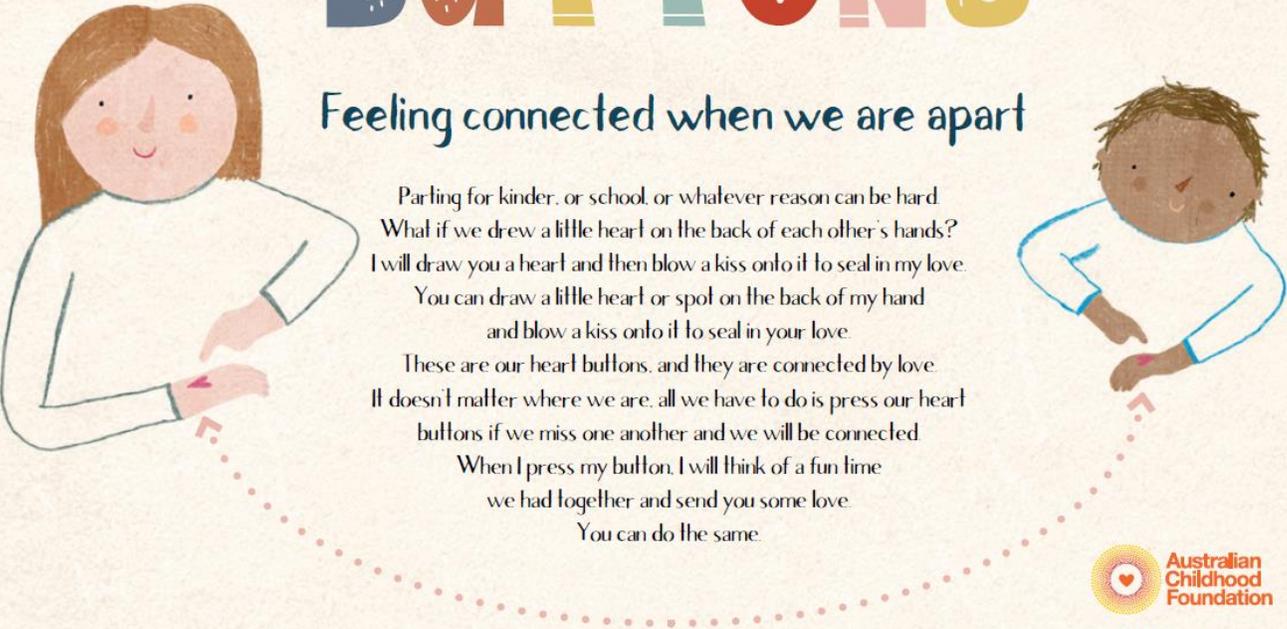
Extension:

Individual children you work with might prefer to develop their own signature greeting and goodbye gesture that you share together.

You might like to develop your own signs with the group of children you work with. Children could contribute ideas to gestures that they would like to share when they come and go from your setting.



Predictable: Reliable relationships



**HEART
BUTTONS**

Feeling connected when we are apart

Parting for kinder, or school, or whatever reason can be hard
What if we drew a little heart on the back of each other's hands?
I will draw you a heart and then blow a kiss onto it to seal in my love.
You can draw a little heart or spot on the back of my hand
and blow a kiss onto it to seal in your love.
These are our heart buttons, and they are connected by love.
It doesn't matter where we are, all we have to do is press our heart
buttons if we miss one another and we will be connected.
When I press my button, I will think of a fun time
we had together and send you some love.
You can do the same.

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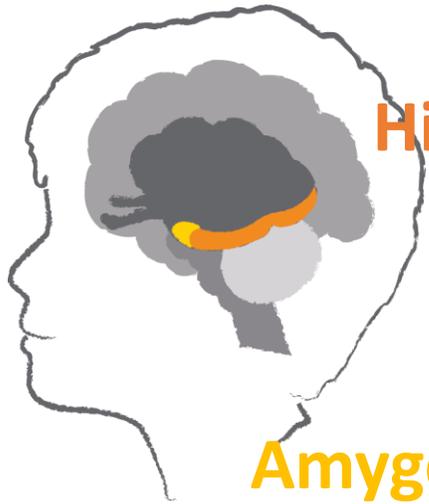
✂
This resource was designed as a connecting activity for children and their important person to ease separation anxiety and transitions. It is hoped that this activity might make physical parting feel easier with the knowledge that each will hold the other in mind until they can come back together.

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Our Brain House Feeling and Memory Walls

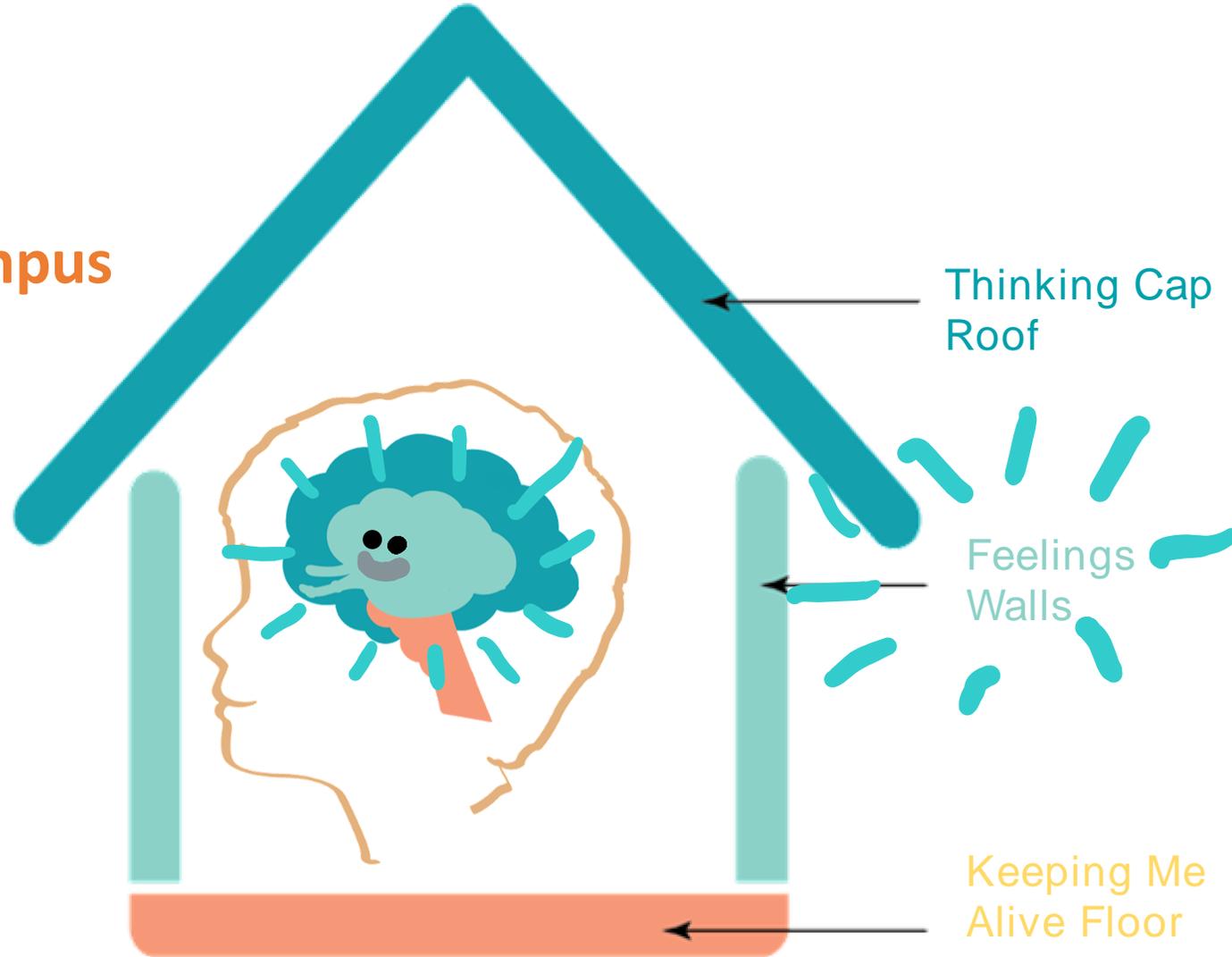


Feeling and Memory Walls of My Brain House



Hippocampus

Amygdala



Thumbs Up, In the Middle and Thumbs Down

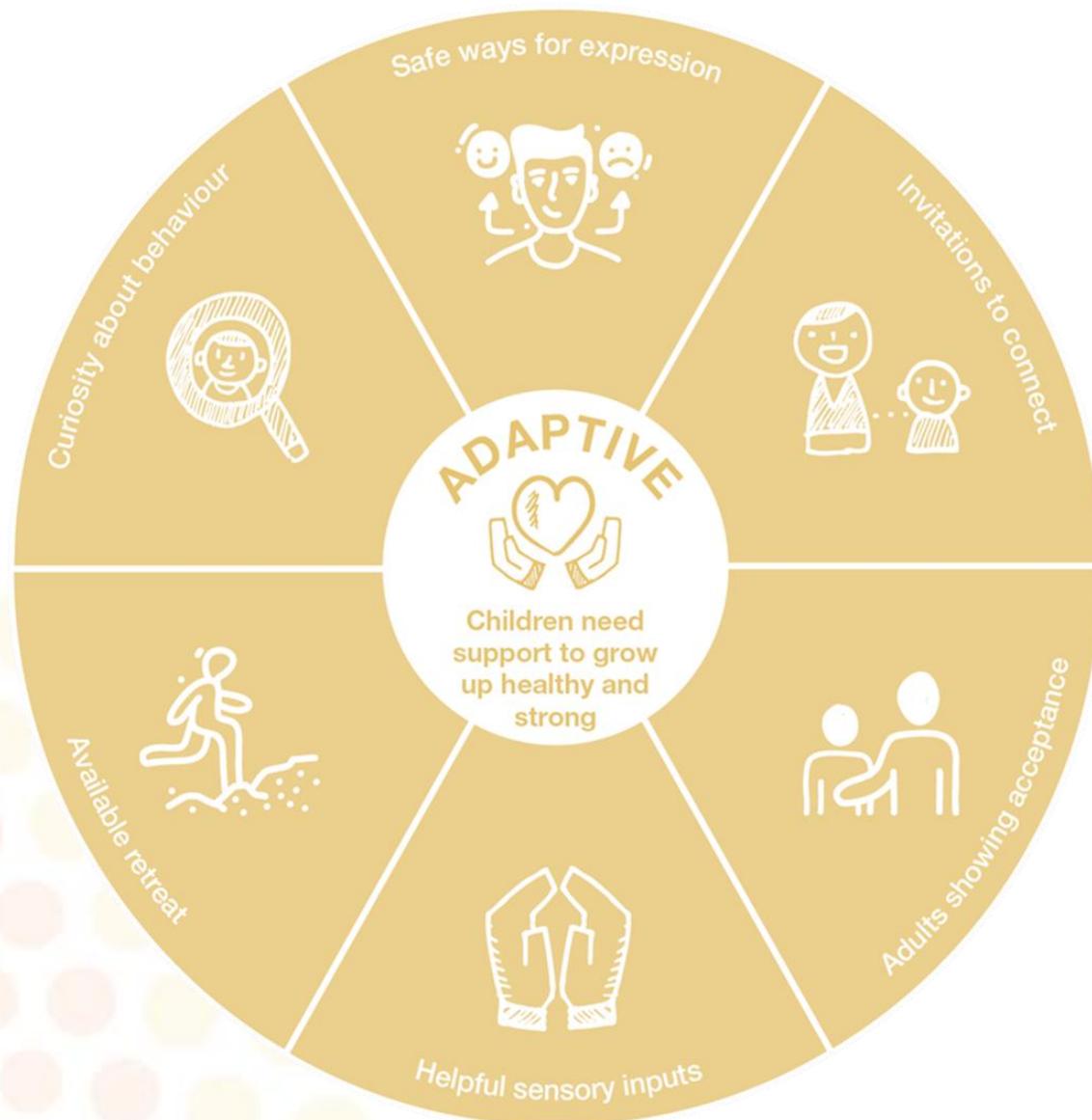
- playing a board game,
- playing a group game at school,
- sharing with family,
- cooperating to achieve a goal together,
- cooking together with someone,
- playing sport as a part of a team,
- acting in a play,
- reading a story and getting into the characters,
- dancing as a part of a group,
- caring for animals, caring for land,
- spending time with your elders, learning about feelings,
- caring for younger children in your family, sharing friendships with people.

Building and strengthening Our Brain House Feelings and Memory Walls

How do we do this in the classroom and across the school?

One way is by having **ADAPTIVE** and **CONNECTED** responses

Adaptive



Adaptive

Behaviour is communication

- If we can understand what drives a behaviour, we can work out how to respond to it.
- If we can meet the need that is driving a behaviour, the behaviour can start to reduce.

Behaviours are functional and almost always makes sense given their specific experiences of trauma.

- Openness and curiosity about behaviour is an important response.

Strategies which promote adaptability in children's behavioural routines are ones that meet children creatively with multiple options for intervention.



Adaptive: Helpful Sensory Inputs



My 5 Senses Soothing Hand

Australian Childhood Foundation
childhood.org.au

Building Your Sensory Hand

1. Trace around your hand on a piece of paper and label inside the fingers each of the five senses.
2. Consider each sense one at a time. What pops into your mind when you think about something soothing or comforting that is related to each sense?
3. Above each finger write or draw the comforting thing/s or idea/s.
There are no right or wrong answers and everyone's sensory hand is unique to them.

Afterwards...

- Are there any creative ways you could build these comforting sensory ideas more strongly into your everyday life?
- Are there any creative ways you could access any of these sensory comforts when or if things start to feel stressful or hard?

Follow up Questions

- Was it easier to think of something soothing for some of the senses and not others? That is called a sensory preference and we all have them.
- Do you think your sensory hand might be different, depending on the season? Would it be helpful to build a summer and a winter Sensory Hand?
- Do you think your sensory hand might change over time? Why? Why not?

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This resource has broad application. It is a quick and easy sensory profile that can help us understand more about what soothes and comforts us according to our five senses.

Exploring Feelings

The Colours of My Heart

Colours have long been linked with feelings. This activity is about colouring in a heart shape with colours that represent the feelings in your heart right now.

You might like to draw a heart outline on a piece of paper or get someone to draw a heart for you. Use whatever drawing/painting implements are available to you and feel right to colour in your heart.

How will you apply the colours? Will you use dots, stripes, squiggles, smudges, block colouring, blend the colours? Will there be spaces without colour in your heart?

After...

Stand back and look at your colouring in. What did this activity feel like? I wonder what colours you used and what they might mean to you in terms of feelings? I wonder if the way you applied the colours in or around your heart shape means something to you right now? I wonder if the colours of your heart might change over time?

And then...

- This activity could promote exploration around how we link feelings with experiences, and how we express feelings ...how could someone else know what we are feeling in our hearts?
- You could explore certain situations/experiences and what feelings dominate, recede, or are maybe missing. It can be used as a springboard for exploring calming strategies if fear, anger, worry etc. are dominating.
- You might like to revisit this activity at different times as a non-verbal expressive tool that offers a chance to know more about your shifting feelings.

This activity emerged from the practice of Katherine Gentle, a Child Psychologist based in Bermagui, Australia. She participated in ACF's Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma. Thanks, Katherine for generously sharing it with ACF and our wider online community



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Adaptive: Exploring liked and unliked sensory inputs and what students consider as available retreats for them at school.

Body Talk

A Fun Sensory Exploration Activity

Our bodies are very smart. If we tune into them, they can have lots to tell us.

Our bodies are always located somewhere. Take the place you are right now. Tuning into how this place speaks to different parts of your body could provide ideas about how you might change your environment to fit in the best possible way.

How to Play

Preparation: Cut up the body parts cards, laminate them if you like, and then put them in a bag or box.

Activity: Pull out body parts cards, one at a time and respond to the question on the back of the card.

You can record your responses on the recording sheet if you like.

Repeat this process.

Reflect upon your experience of tuning into your body. Based on your responses experiment with changing the environment to better fit with what your body needs and likes.

Option: Invite children to make up the two body jigsaw like people when all of the questions are exhausted.



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This is a simple sensory audit activity for use with anyone who wants to learn more about tailoring environments to better meet the sensory needs of individuals. It has wide application across settings. It may be useful for children, young people, and/or adults. Use it as a self-reflective activity, in a one-to-one session, or in a group.

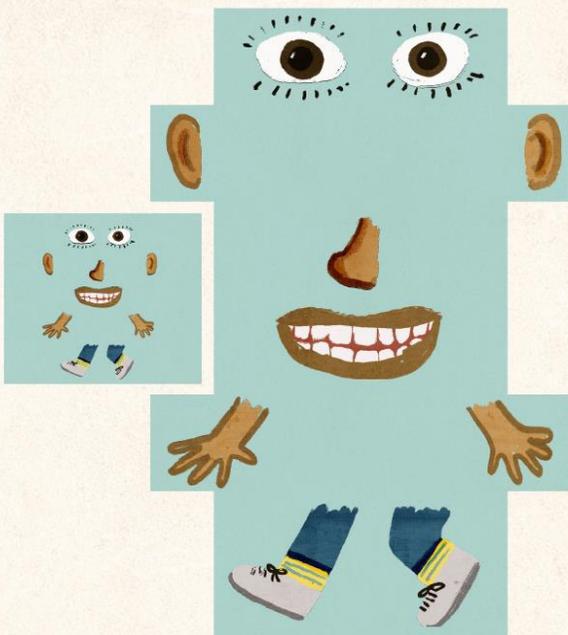
Recording sheet

LIKE		DONT LIKE
What do you like to look at the most when you are here?		What don't you like to look at when you are here?
What do you like to hear the most when you are here?		What don't you like to hear when you are here?
What do you like the smell of the most when you are here?		What don't you like the smell of here?
What do you like to taste the most when you are here?		What don't you like to taste when you are here?
What do your hands like to play with the most when you are here?		What don't your hands like to touch when you are here?
Let your legs take you to your favourite spot here.		Let your legs take you to your least favourite spot here.
What is an activity that your whole body likes to do here?		What is an activity that your whole body doesn't like to do here?

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Adaptive: Exploring what safety means on a sensory level at school

What my body likes



What my body likes

What do you like to look at the most when you are here?

What do you like to hear the most when you are here?

What do you like the smell of the most when you are here?

What do you like to taste the most when you are here?

What do your hands like to play with the most when you are here?

Let your legs take you to your favourite spot here.

What is an activity that your whole body likes to do here?

What my body doesn't like



What my body doesn't like

What don't you like to look at when you are here?

What don't you like to hear when you are here?

What don't you like the smell of here?

What don't you like to taste when you are here?

What don't your hands like to touch when you are here?

Let your legs take you to your least favourite spot here.

What is an activity that your whole body doesn't like to do here?



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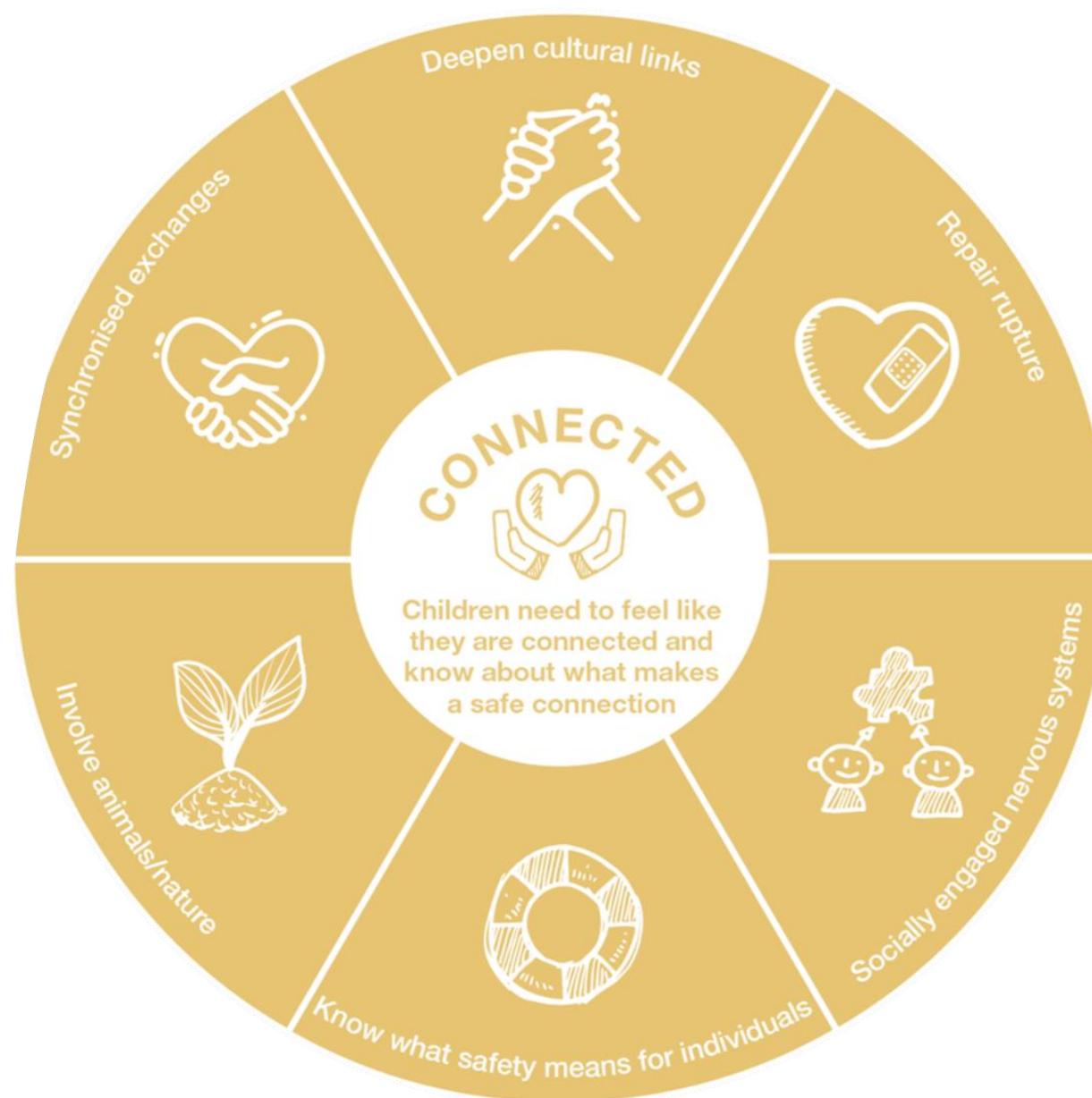


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Connected



Connected

- Children's relational templates for forming and being in relationships take shape as they grow. They learn what to expect and how to navigate relationships through their experiences of connection with those around them.
- We tend to expect things from relationships based on what we have known from past connections.
- Negotiating relationships at school and in the community can be a source of stress when children have found them hard or unsafe in the past.
- **Strategies to support children as their relational templates continue to develop emphasize relationships with safe and consistent adults and peers as the foundation for healthy, strong social and emotional functioning.**



What is relational safety in the classroom?

Accompaniment is an experience for a child that offers emotional reciprocity, validation, care and comfort.

In this experience they feel heard, met, felt and understood.

“ Children internalise the people who understand and comfort them, so that they often have the felt sense of accompaniment when they are alone.”

(Bonnie Badenoch)

Connected

Group Count

This game helps groups drop into connection with one another and promotes listening.

It is good for groups of five or more people. Collect into a circle so everyone can see one another. Then someone begins counting by saying 'one.' Without going around the circle or there being any pattern emerging, people should continue to add a number each 'two,' then 'three' and so on. Should more than one person say a number at the same time, the group count must begin again. Every member of the group should have a turn before someone gets another go. Notice how the number you achieve together gets larger the more you play the game.



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This is a group activity that can work well as a warmer when groups first come together. It can also be useful when used each time by groups meeting over a number of times. The higher the number achieved, the deeper the group attunement.

Hand to Hand Attunement



Let's work together to hold an object up between our hands or fingers and not let it fall.

We will need to synchronise our movements and attune to one another. What object feels right to hold between us? A big gym ball? A sports ball? A cushion? A balloon? A pencil? Let's try moving the object around. What is that like for you? As you move together notice if one person is leading, or if the movement initiation is swapping between you? Play around with this. When you become accomplished, add another object so you are using both of your hands to hold up two objects between you. What does it feel like to be in synch with another person?



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This activity has broad application. It could be useful for family work to strengthen bonds between family members. It can be good to begin with large objects, like a gym ball when the face to face orientation of this activity feels too intimate for people to begin with. It could also be a useful activity in group settings, where people could pair up or work as trios to have a go.

Connected

Keepy Uppy

A game of Cooperation and Coordination

Preparation:

- Inflate a few balloons.

Let's see if we can work together to keep our balloon from touching the ground.

More things we could add:

Every time we hit the balloon in the air we could make a funny noise- boink, blah, beep, plob etc.

Or! Let's count each time we hit the ball up in the air and see what number we reach before it touches the ground.

If we get good with one balloon, we could add another one into the mix. Can we keep two balloons off the ground together? Or even more?



A simple fun game, great for children of many ages, especially younger children. This game encourages people to cooperate in service of an aim, which can feel connecting and rewarding. Watch Season 1 - Episode 3 of Bluey on ABC's new entitled 'Keepy Uppy' for more ideas about playing this game.



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Hacky Sacks

A game of Cooperation and Coordination

A hacky sack otherwise known as a footbag is a small rice, sand, pellet, or legume filled ball like bag that is small enough to fit in your pocket. There are many games that can be played with hacky sacks. Most are cooperative games which involve coordinating with other players to achieve an outcome. You don't need a lot of space or equipment or time to play with a Hacky Sack in indoor or outdoor environments. It does however, take some body coordination, which builds through practice in groups or on your own.

Achieving a 'Hack'

Guidelines: This game is for 3 or more people.

Stand in a loose circle together.

The only one to hold the hacky sack in their hand is the server, who begins each turn by throwing the ball at waist height towards another player. Players should take it in turns to serve.

Kick the hacky sack up on the end or inside of your foot towards another player.

Try to direct the hacky sack towards someone that hasn't had a turn yet.

No one is to apologize if the hacky sack falls on the ground.

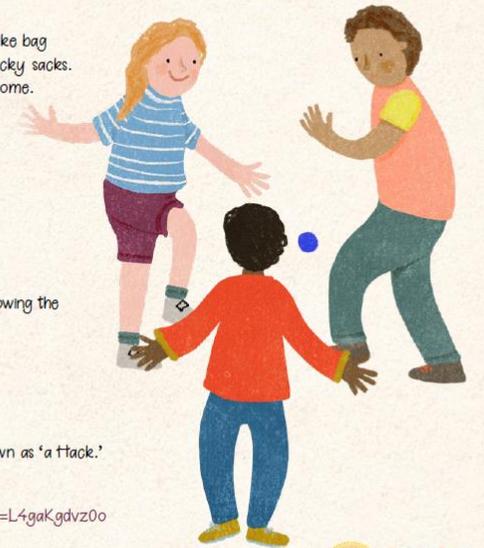
When everyone has had a turn at kicking the hacky sack on in one passage of play it is known as 'a Hack.'

Hacky Sack's can be easily purchased in store or online- (google for local options)

Or make your own following this young person's tutorial- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4gaKgdvz0o>

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A simple fun game, great for children and young people. This game encourages cooperation, connection, movement and coordinated bodies to achieve collective aims. It can be a great game to play in snatches of time with little set up, equipment or specific locations for play required.

Connected

Adventures in Nature

Ideas for Day Time Walking Explorations



Traditional Custodians

As you set off on your walk you might want to talk about how you are on the land of first nations people that have shared a connection with this place for tens of thousands of years. How amazing is that! Do you know who the Traditional Custodians of your area are? Here are some websites that might give you a hand to find out if you aren't sure- <https://aiatsis.gov.au/whose-country> and <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>

Feathered Friends

Look out for birds on your walk. Do you know much about the birds that live in your local area? What bird songs do you know? Visit Birdlife Australia <https://birdlife.org.au/> to learn more about common birds in your area. You might also like to take part in the annual Aussie Backyard Bird Count, a citizen science event which happens every October.

Micro Creatures

Keep your eyes out for any tiny creatures you might see on your walk. They might fly by or move along the ground or be hiding in secret crevices as they notice some big giant's feet approaching. I wonder what the littlest of creatures might be doing with their day as we notice them? Are they hunting for food or looking for shelter or on their way to visit a friend? Are they part of a group or on their own? How do they move from place to place? Can we follow their trail/s?

Tree Time

Pick a big tree and sit at the base of it and look up into its branches. What animals might live in this tree? Can you see any? Close your eyes and listen to the sounds of the tree. Feel how the tree supports your back and touch its bark with your hands. What smells are you aware of as you sit by the tree? How long do you think this tree has been alive? What change has it seen happen around it in its lifetime?

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Here are some ideas encouraging children and adults to step outside and go for a ramble together in nature. Grab a drink bottle, an internet enabled mobile phone if you would like to follow some of the suggestions in this resource, and head out together for a walk.

Adventures in Nature

Ideas for Day Time Walking Explorations



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Frog songs

Do you have any frogs around where you live? There are many species across Australia. Learn about frogs or take part in some citizen science counting frogs in Australia's biggest frog count- www.frogid.net.au

Animal Detective- Follow the trail

Can you spy any signs that animals might have been here recently? Footprints, trails, dropped feathers or skin or animal poo. Be an animal detective and see if you can identify any animals that might have been past recently. Take photos of the evidence as you investigate how many different animals you think you have detected.

Cloud watching

Look up at the clouds. Sometimes they move into familiar shapes that you can talk about together. Check out this fun instagram account that might inspire your own cloud shaping imagination- 'adailycloud'

Sun rise or Sun set

In her book 'Wild' Cheryl Strayed reminds us that we can choose to put ourselves in the way of beauty everyday- 'There's always a sunrise and always a sunset and it's up to you to choose to be there for it.' Which one would suit you more to put yourself in front of today, sun rise or sun set? Maybe you could take a photo each time you put yourselves in the way of a sun-rise, sun-set or other natural wonder?



Here are some ideas encouraging children and adults to step outside and go for a ramble together in nature. Grab a drink bottle, an internet enabled mobile phone if you would like to follow some of the suggestions in this resource, and head out together for a walk.

Connected

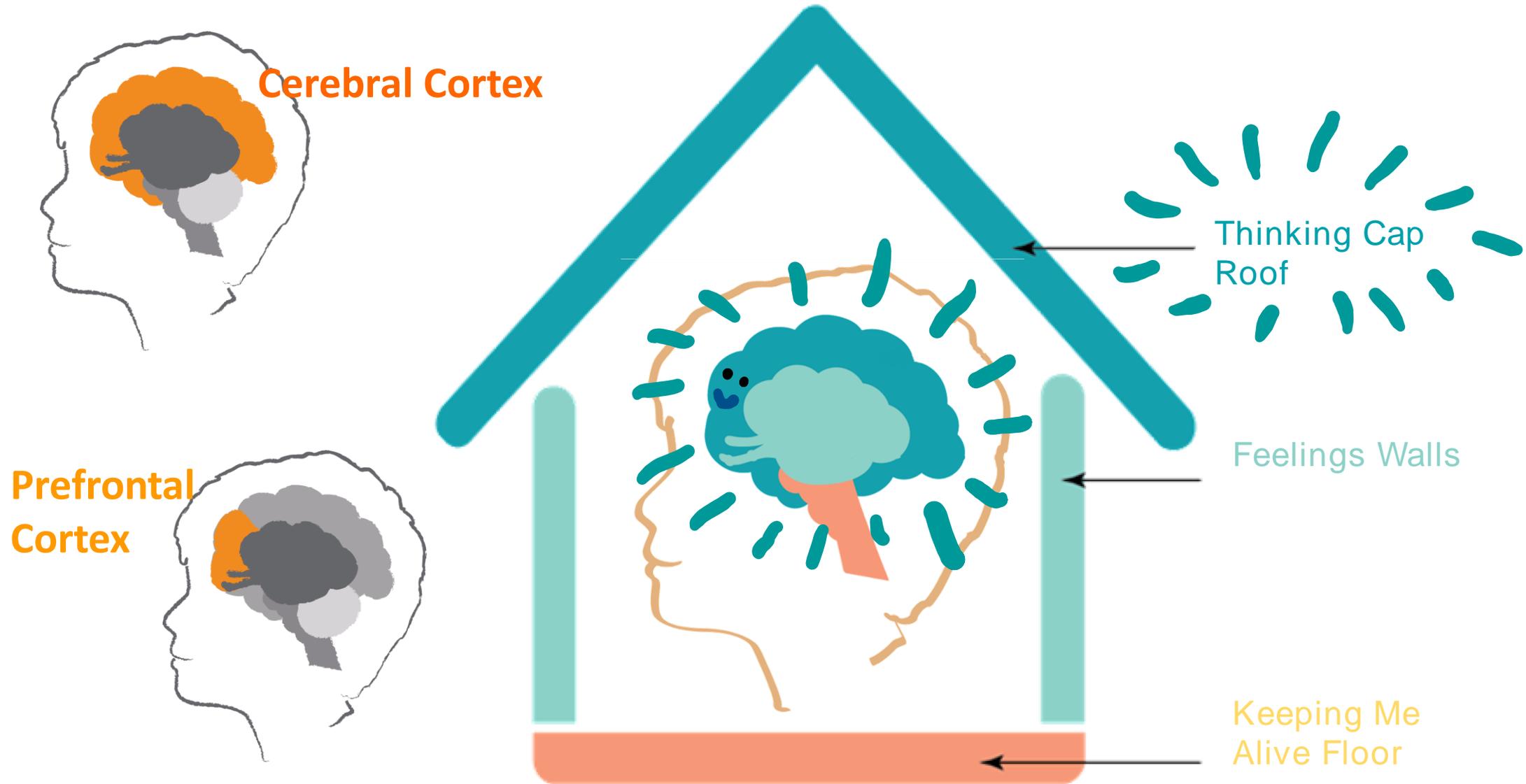


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Our Thinking Cap Roof



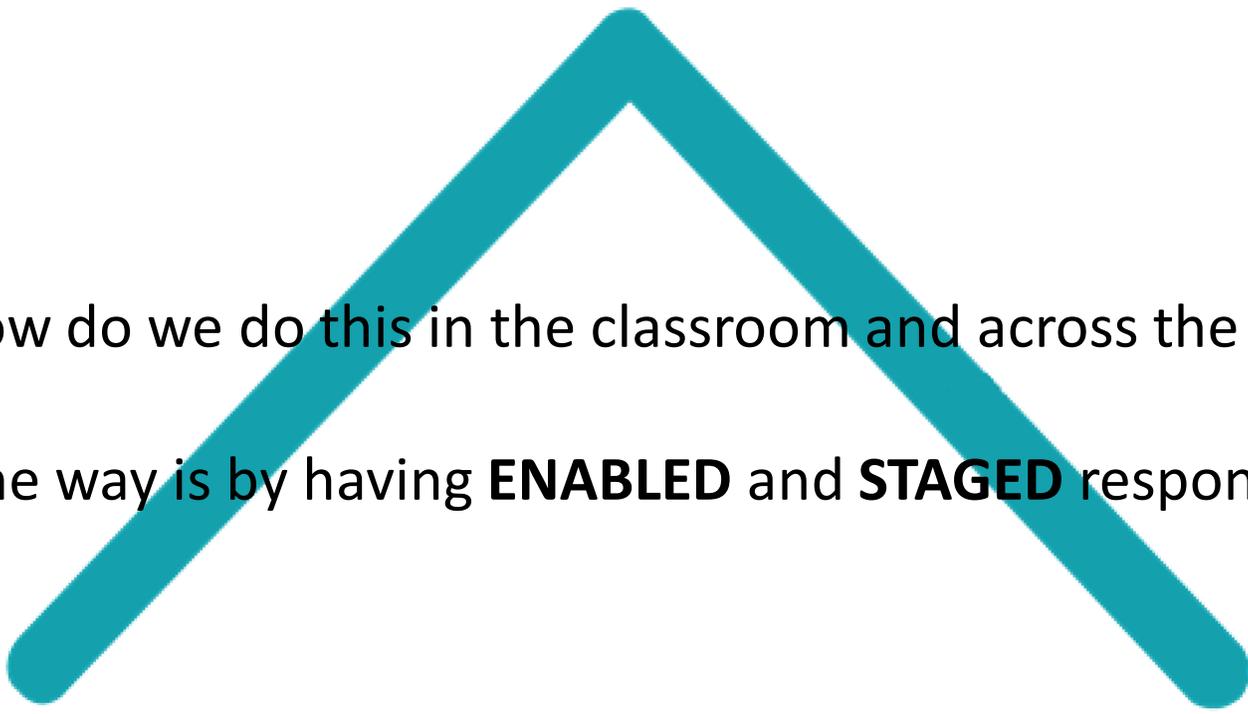
Thinking Cap Roof of My Brain House



Strengthening Our Thinking Cap Roof Game – Hands Up

- doing puzzles,
- counting,
- reading,
- writing,
- story telling,
- building things so they work,
- coming up with a plan for something,
- solving problems,
- fixing things,
- reading maps,
- making up jokes,
- following instructions,
- computer coding,
- playing computer games,
- learning a new language,
- being able to navigate to get from one place to another place,
- reading music,
- playing music,
- coming up with new ideas.

Building and strengthening Our Brain House Thinking Cap Roof



How do we do this in the classroom and across the school?

One way is by having **ENABLED** and **STAGED** responses

Staged



Mindfulness/Focus and co-regulation

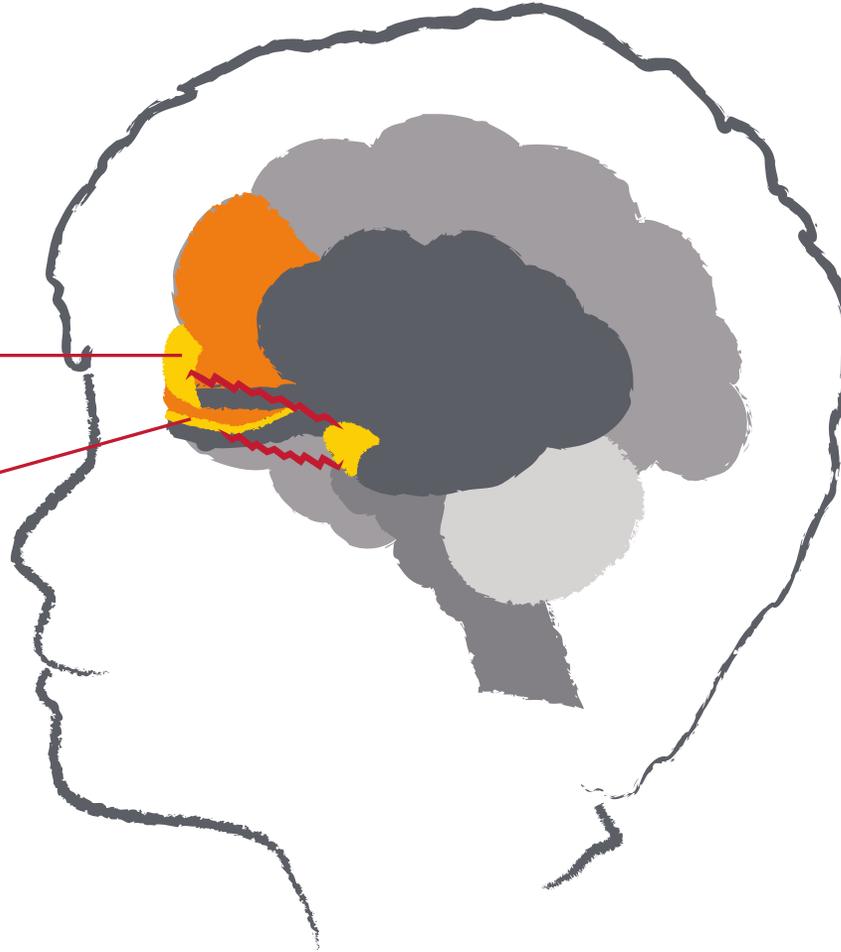
Medial

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

Staged – Top Down - Mindfulness

Magnetic Mindfulness

A Mindfulness Analogy - Our Magnetic Minds

Every day we have thousands of thoughts passing through our minds. Unfortunately, sometimes we think thoughts we don't want to think. These thoughts can get stuck and magnetize in our minds. It can feel hard to let them go. If emotions such as fear, anxiety, sadness, guilt, or worry attach to the thought, the thought gets even bigger and has more magnetic attraction in our mind.

What mindfulness attempts to do is to reduce the power of the magnets so that those thoughts can pass through our minds more easily. The more we practice mindfulness, the weaker the magnets in our minds become.

Non-Mindful Magnetism

A busy, wary or distracted state: strong magnetic pull with stuck thoughts and feelings.



Mindful Magnetism

An open, mindful state: thoughts and feelings pass through the mind with weak magnetic pull.



Magnetic Mindfulness- An Experiment

What you will need

- 2 long magnets - (representing a magnetized mind)
- A small range of different sized metal objects, e.g. Coins or metal balls - (representing thoughts and thoughts with emotions attached)

The Experiment

- Place 2 long magnets on a table or the ground, parallel with each other. This is our magnetized mind.
- Move a small coin or metal ball between them. This is a thought traveling through our mind. See if the coin moves through without being caught by the magnets. Experiment with moving the magnets closer together - indicating a more magnetized mind, and further apart. What happens?
- Use a bigger coin (which might represent a thought attached to an emotion) and see how it's even more likely the coin will get stuck on the magnets, because it's bigger and has more magnetic attraction.
- Spread the two magnets further apart - this is what mindfulness allows our mind. It decreases the strength of the magnetic field in our mind to allow thoughts to pass through more easily, without getting stuck. Move coins through and feel the reduced magnetic pull.



This resource offers an analogy and experiment for professionals to use with young people or parents/carers, to aid in the understanding and practice of mindfulness.

Magnetic Mindfulness

Three Tasks for Reducing the Mind's Magnetism

Acceptance

Thoughts are going to always come through our mind, like a passing parade, and we can choose to pay attention to them, or not. As we accept our thoughts in this way, our mind expands, and our thoughts are less likely to get magnetized and stuck.

Focus on the Breath

Our mind can only focus on one thing at a time. By focusing on our breath, we aren't focusing on those tricky magnetic thoughts. This takes practice, but each time we let go of a thought and return to focus on our breath we are growing this skill.

Commitment

Just like going to the gym, mindfulness might take a while before we notice any real change. We also might not like it to start with because it could expose us to some thoughts that feel hard. However, the more we practice, the further apart and weaker the magnets become, and this makes it easier to let thoughts and feelings pass through our mind.

Mindfulness Related Apps to try

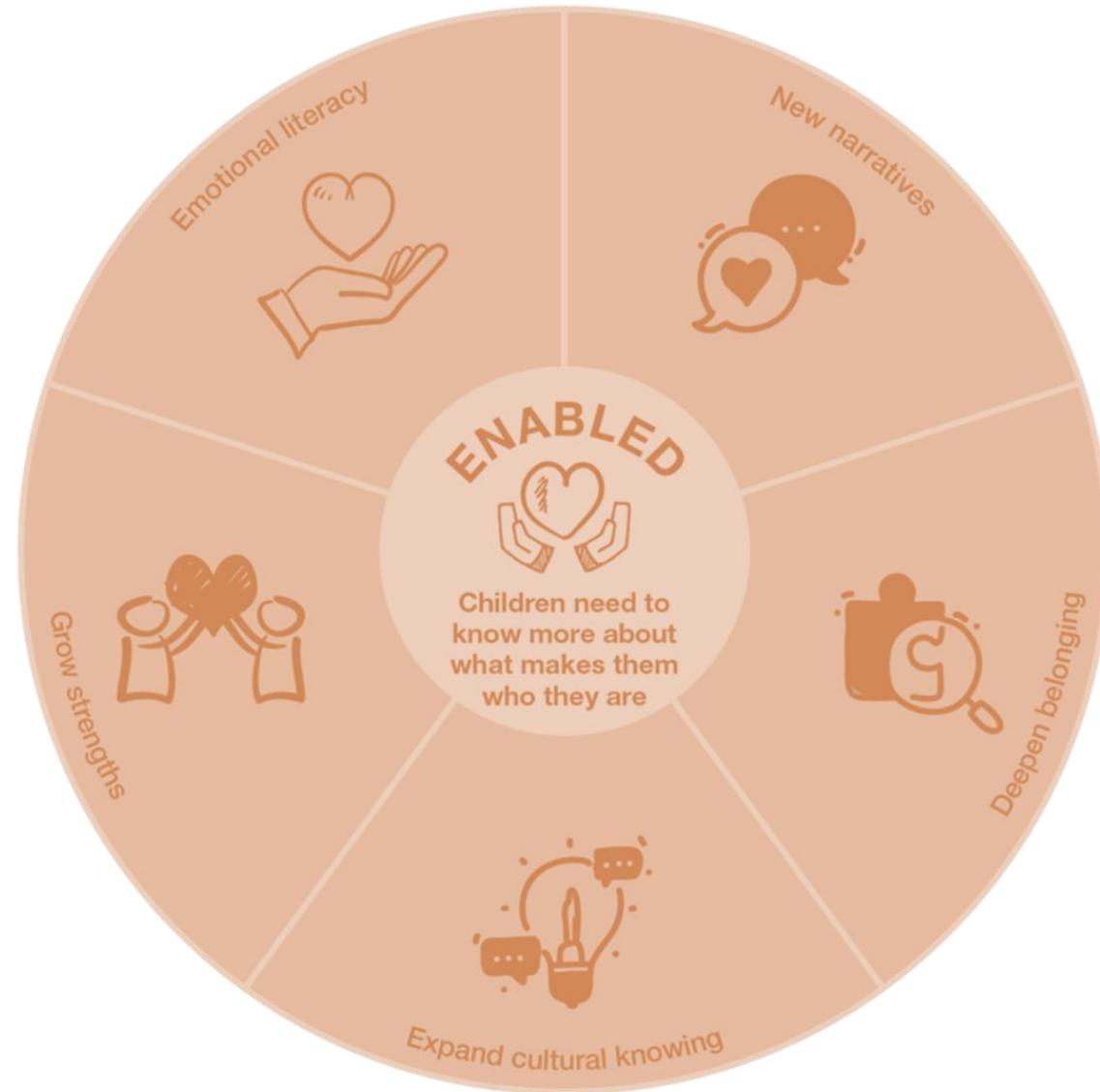
Smiling Mind - IOS, Android, or Web
Stop, Breathe and Think - IOS, Android, or Web
Headspace - IOS, Android, or Web
Calm - IOS, Android or Web
Mindful Flowers - IOS or Android

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This resource offers an analogy and experiment for professionals to use with young people or parents/carers, to aid in the understanding and practice of mindfulness.

Enabled



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.



Enabled

- Engaging students in the process of understanding themselves can build social and emotional learning.
- When students know about their qualities, their attributes and their talents they can feel good about themselves.
- Knowing about their own special story helps students to build a coherent self-narrative.

How do you enable your students?

Enabled

Teachers could gather ideas for word clouds from students and other teachers.

They could make up a word cloud for each student in their home group or grade and give it to them for their birthday each year.

Identity Clouds

When we begin working with young people we usually spend some time connecting with those who know them best to learn more about them and to begin building a picture that will be added to as we go. What if at this time we composed an actual picture of words for our young people based around the contributions of those who know them best. Word pictures or clouds are images composed of words based around particular subjects. The size of each word in the display indicates its frequency or importance.

What if we asked those in a young person's support team to contribute five positive descriptive words about the young person to help us better understand more about them. It would be good for these people to be aware that their words will contribute to a word picture that the young person will see.

Once we have collected these words they can be entered into a free online word cloud generator. There are many available, including this one: <https://www.wordclouds.com/>

The resulting word cloud could be printed out or electronically shared with the young person as you engage with them. It could be a place to start considering 'identity' together. This could be an activity that allows conversations about the picture others have of us compared with our own internal conception. Who we think we are, what we believe others think of us, and who we are becoming can feel increasingly important as we move through adolescence.



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This identity focused activity could be useful for workers as they build therapeutic relationships with young people. It provides an opportunity for young people to learn more about how others view them, and to think about how this sits alongside the way they know themselves.

Enabled

Linked Together



What you will need:

- Coloured paper to be cut into strips
- Scissors
- Glue or a stapler

Let's cut up some coloured paper strips (approx 3 cm width & 20 cm length)

Each of us can choose a strip of paper to write on.

Let's write down one strength or positive thing about ourselves and our names on the coloured side of our strip.

If it feels ok, let's read them out to each other.

Using some more coloured strips let's write down one thing we know about a strength of each of the other people in the group as well as the individual's name on each strip.

Everyone can then move around and give the strips they wrote for others to the individuals they are written about.

Using glue or a stapler/s let's make our strips into a series of looped circles. Once we have linked the strips with our names on them, let's link them together with everyone else's to form a group paper chain.

We are all a part of this chain. Our strengths combine when we come together in this group.

What could we do with our group's linked up chain?

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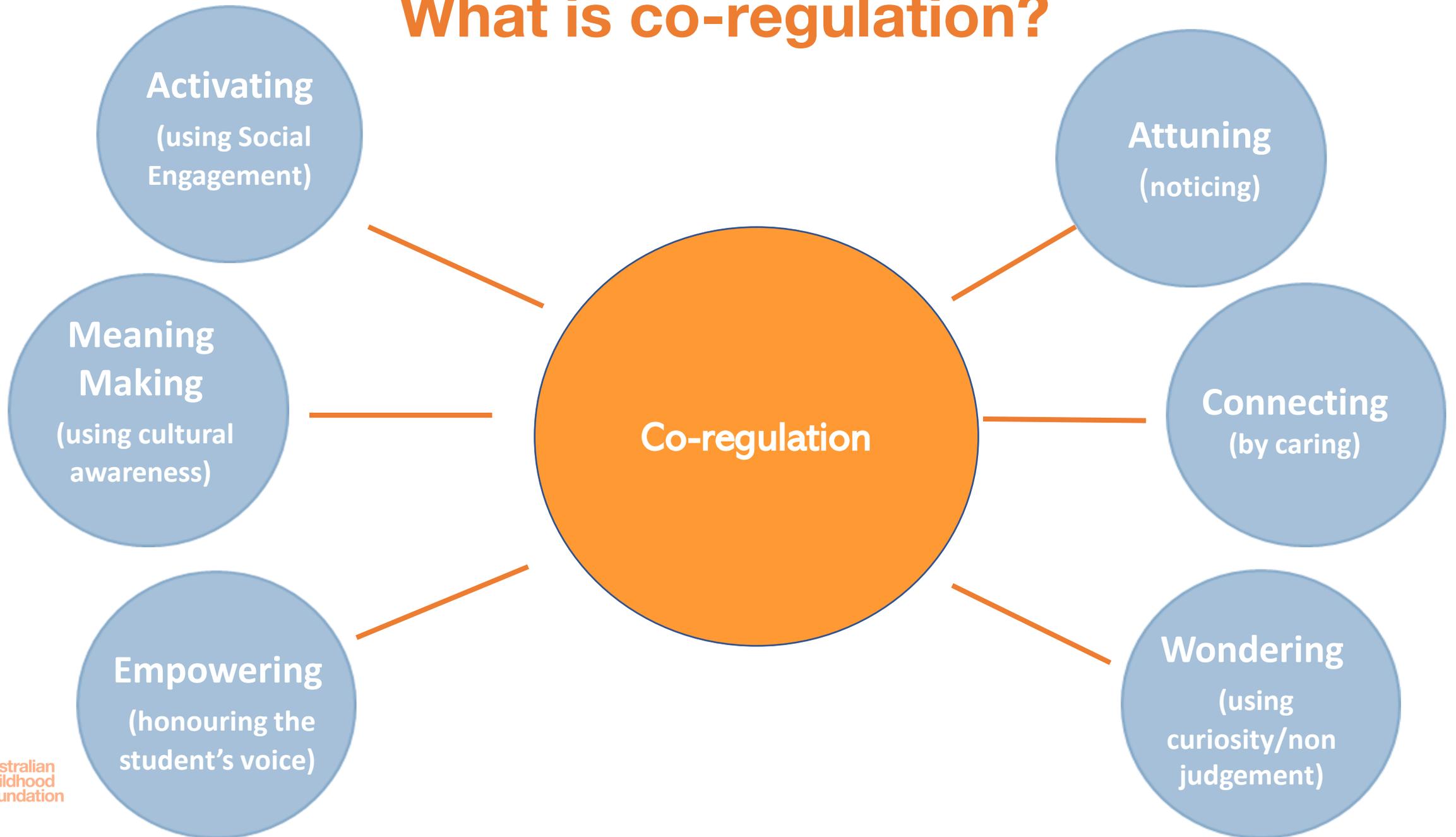


This is a craft activity for formed groups of many kinds. It could be used therapeutically for example with families or in schools or other settings. It encourages people to share ideas about individual strengths and uniqueness that contribute to make up the group. It is suited for people with skills to read and write simple sentences on smallish strips of paper.

Using ourselves to co-regulate



What is co-regulation?



Activating
(using Social
Engagement)

Attuning
(noticing)

**Meaning
Making**
(using cultural
awareness)

Connecting
(by caring)

Empowering
(honouring the
student's voice)

Wondering
(using
curiosity/non
judgement)

Co-regulation

Creating safety – using ourselves

- Environment
- Proximity
- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice
- Posture and gestures

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.

Polyvagal Theory



Mobilised

I don't feel safe zone

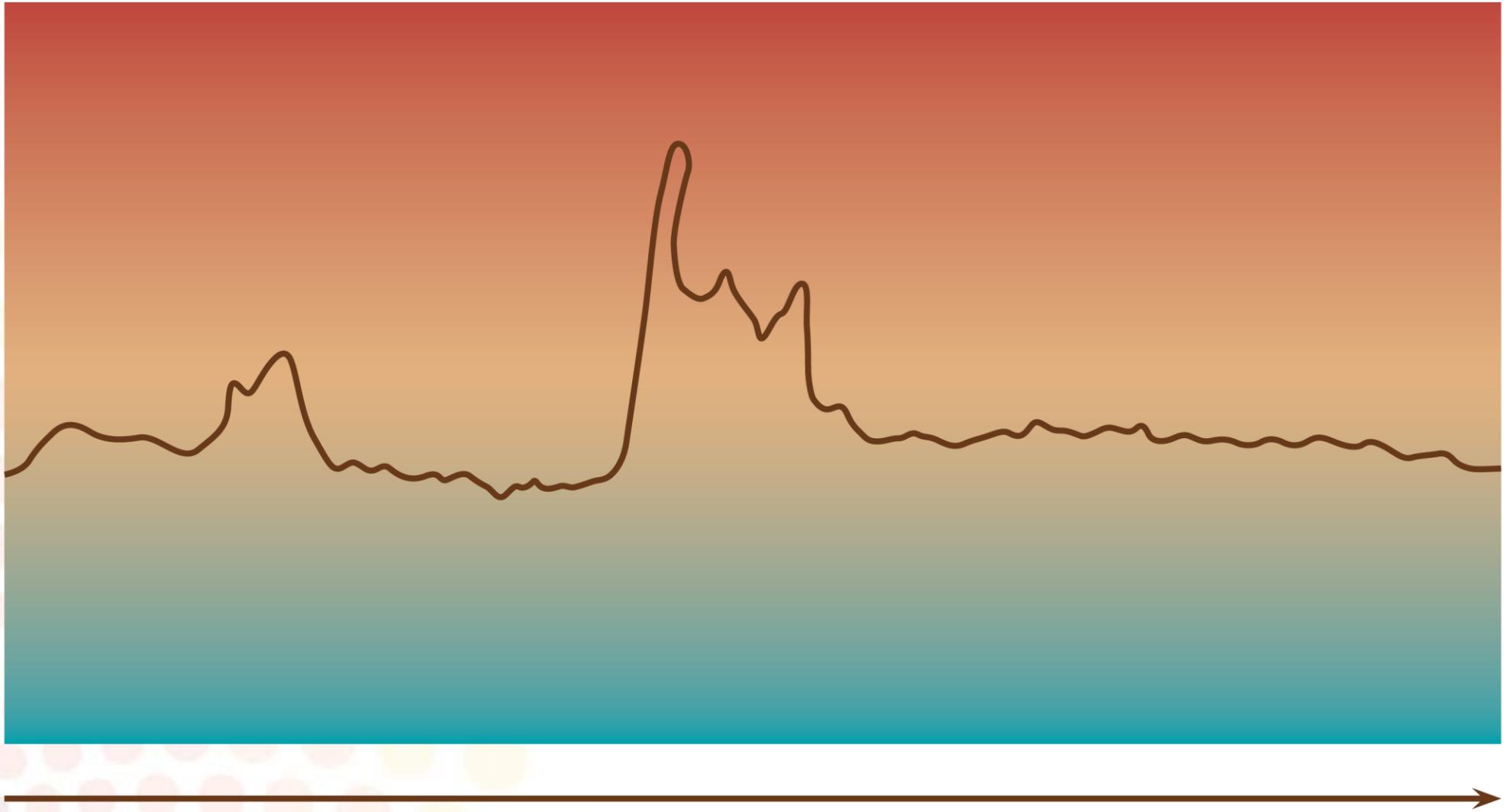
Socially Engaged

I feel safe zone

Immobilised

I don't feel safe zone

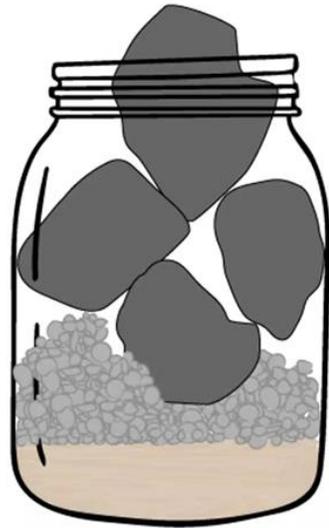
My Day



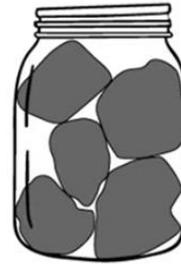
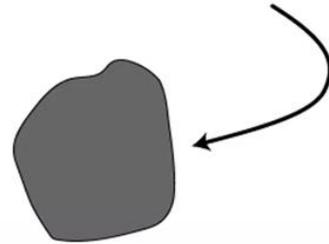
**Putting it in to practice...what are
your next steps?**

Putting it into practice....

Theory into practice – what are our BIG ROCKS?

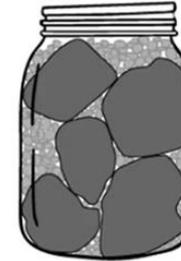


IF YOU FILL YOUR JAR WITH
GRAVEL AND SAND FIRST,
YOU WON'T HAVE SPACE FOR
YOUR BIG ROCKS



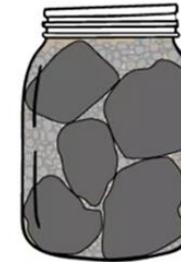
Big Rocks first...

- What are our big ideas, values, mindsets
- E.g. School wide agreements/expectations



Gravel next...

- What does this look like in practice?
- E.g. Consistency - language, visuals



Lastly, sand...

- What do we do every day to support this?
- E.g. Timetables/Routines

One thing you will take away from today

Circle Time:

Share one thing you will
take away from our days
together



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