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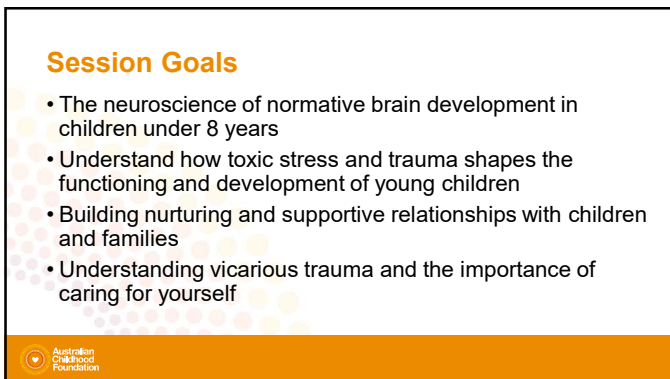
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### Hearing from Each Other

- Who are you?
- Where are you?
- How are you?



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### Defining Trauma



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### Trauma and Me

- *Where has trauma touched my life?*
- *What does it mean for me, to be working with children affected by relational trauma?*



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### Developmental Trauma

- The better integrated the different parts of the brain are the more adaptive we can be to our environment
- Developmental trauma is dis-integrative, disconnecting, and disruptive to both brain and body



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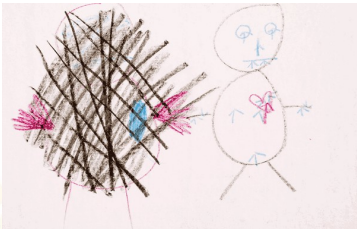
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### Defining Trauma

Trauma is not what happens to you, but what happens inside you.

(Gabor Mate 2018)



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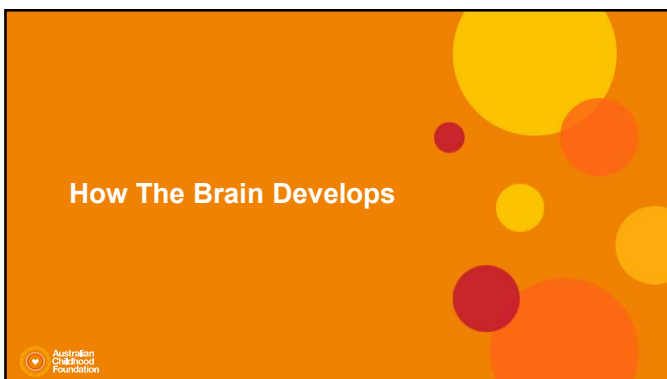
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### How The Brain Develops



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### The Growing Brain

How much does a baby's brain weigh?

400 grams

1100 grams

1300-1400 grams

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The infographic shows three stages of brain weight: 400 grams (represented by a slice of watermelon), 1100 grams (represented by a kiwi fruit), and 1300-1400 grams (represented by a pumpkin). The background features a pattern of yellow and white dots.

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### Neuronal Connection

Birth

6 Years

Newborn

2 Years

Adult

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The diagram illustrates the development of neuronal connections. On the left, a cross-section of a brain at birth shows a few simple connections. An arrow points to a more complex network at 6 years. To the right, three vertical panels show the progression of neurons: 'Newborn' with sparse connections, '2 Years' with more dense connections, and 'Adult' with a very dense, interconnected network.

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### Traumatised Brain

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The diagram shows a network of six orange circular nodes connected by red lines. The connections are chaotic and dense, representing a state of neuronal disorganization or trauma.

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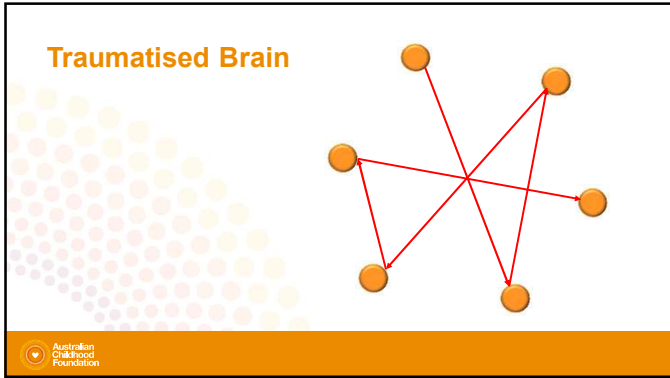
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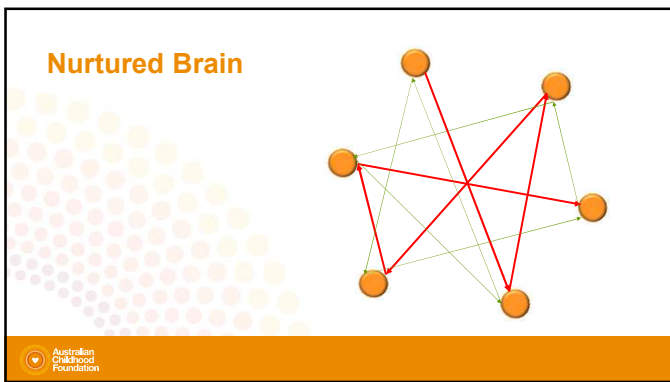
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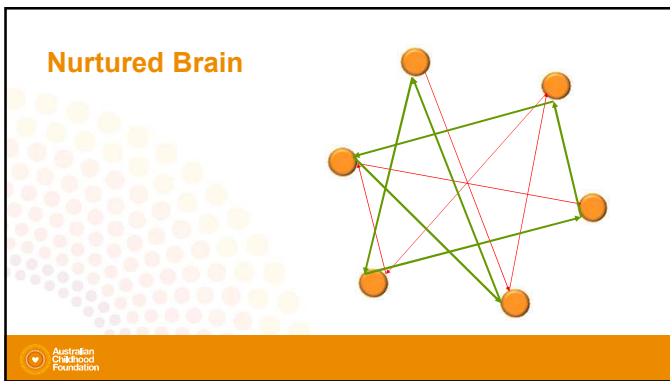
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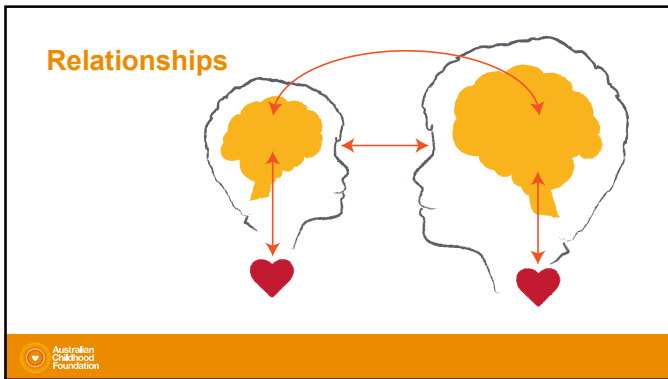
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### Attachment and the Right Brain

- Neuroimaging studies show areas of the right hemisphere lighting up in the brains of parents & infants during non-verbal interactions. (Schore, 2003)
- A secure attachment relationship facilitates right brain development and promotes efficient affect regulation.



Australian Childhood Foundation logo in the bottom left corner.

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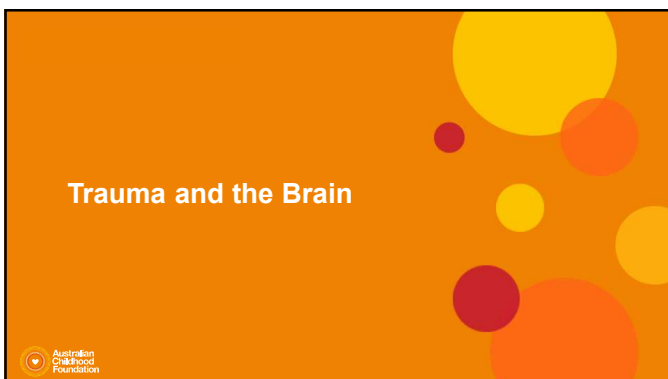
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### Trauma and the Brain



Australian Childhood Foundation logo in the bottom left corner.

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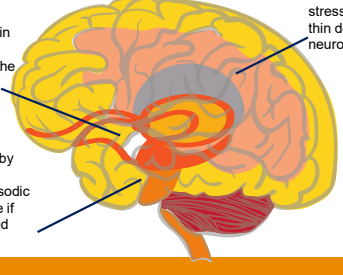
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### Where trauma affects the brain

**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.

**Corpus Callosum**  
Bridge between the 2 hemispheres. Chronic stress can damage and thin down this bundle of neurons



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### 3 Year Old Children



Normal      Extreme Neglect

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Children are very vulnerable to the effects of trauma because of their brain's developmental immaturity - their brains are malleable, so the impact of trauma is faster to manifest and leaves deeper tracks of injury.



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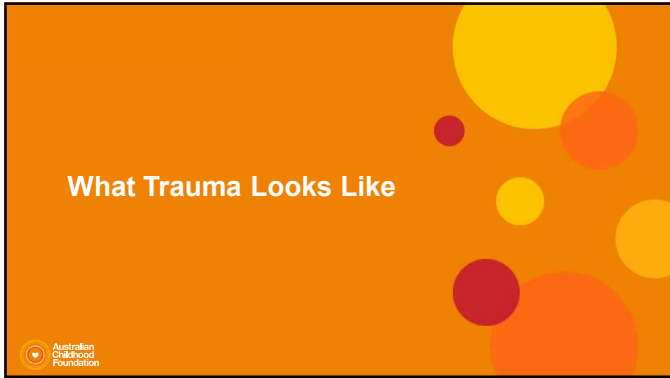
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### Internal Working Models

<b>View of self</b>	I am lovable I am worthy	I am unlovable I am unworthy
<b>View of others /relationships</b>	Others are responsive Others are loving Others are interested in me Others are available to me	Others are unavailable Others are neglectful Others are rejecting Others are unresponsive
<b>View of the world</b>	The world is relatively safe	The world is unsafe

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### Living in Survival Mode

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**Behavioural Functions**      **Body Functions**      by Stephen Porges

<p><b>Social Engagement</b> Soothing and calming Indicates safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowers or raises vocalisation pitch</li> <li>• Regulates middle ear muscles to perceive human voice</li> <li>• Changes facial expressivity</li> <li>• Head turning</li> <li>• Tears and eyelids</li> <li>• Slows or speeds heart rate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mobilisation</b> Fight or Flight Active Freeze Moderate or extreme danger</p>	<p><b>Hyper arousal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases heart rate</li> <li>• Sweat increases</li> <li>• Inhibits gastrointestinal function</li> <li>• Narrowing blood vessels - to slow blood flow to extremities</li> <li>• Release of adrenaline</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inmobilisation</b> Collapse or submission Death feigning Increased pain threshold Conserves metabolic resources Life threatening situations</p>	<p><b>Hypo - arousal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slows heart rate</li> <li>• Constricts bronchi</li> <li>• Stimulates gastrointestinal function</li> </ul>

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**The 'Still Face' Experiment – Ed Tronick**



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**Behaviour is a Story**



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# The Family



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## The Paradox of the Family

We look to it for nurture and care



It is the institution in society where the most violence occurs



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## Building relationships with families

- Meaningful and empathic engagement
- Non-judgemental interactions



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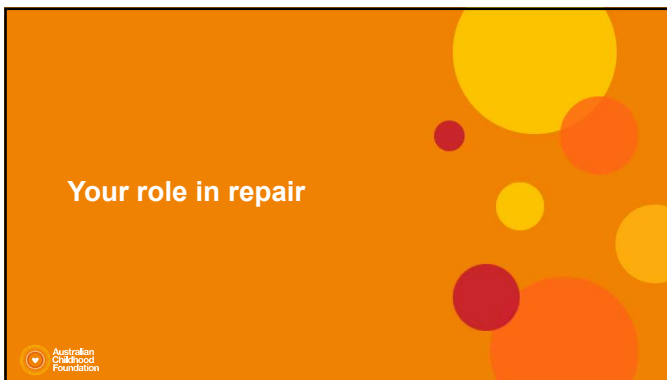
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### Reframing our Approach

Rather than asking:

*"What are you doing?"*

and

*"How can I stop it?"*

Ask: *"What are you trying to tell me?"*

and

*"What do you need from me?"*



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### Follow the Child's Lead



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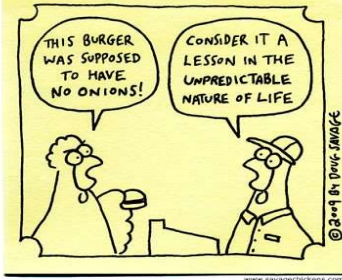
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### Building Predictability

*Savage Chickens* by Doug Savage



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**Neuroception of Safety: Predictability**

*Predictability is a metaphor for safety.*

“The removal of threat is not the same as the presence of safety”  
(Porges, 2014)



Up's & Downs Cards – Innovative Resources

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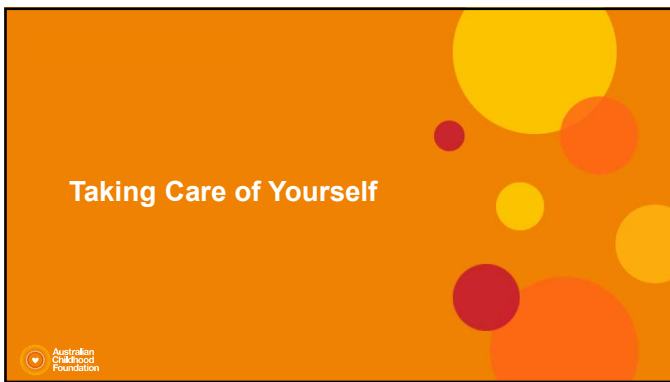
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**Taking Care of Yourself**



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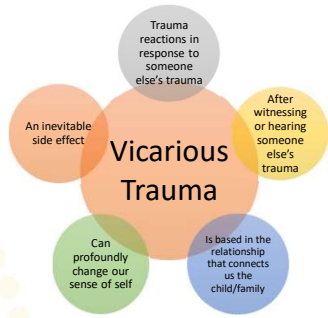
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**Vicarious Trauma**



Trauma reactions in response to someone else's trauma

After witnessing or hearing someone else's trauma

Is based in the relationship that connects us the child/family

Can profoundly change our sense of self

An inevitable side effect

Vicarious Trauma

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### Signs & Symptoms of Vicarious Trauma

Symptoms that may present:

- **Fatigue**
- Impaired immune system
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- **Anxiety**
- Hyper vigilance/control issues
- Memory issues
- **Increased sick days, late to work**

 A photograph of a person sitting at a table, looking distressed with their head in their hand. There is a coffee cup on the table.

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### Impacts of Working with Trauma

Personal:

- **Experiencing current stressful life circumstances**
- Blurring the lines between home and work
- Forgetting to take time out or undertaking activities that are pleasurable, relaxing and fun

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### Impacts of Working with Trauma

Professional:

- Hearing stories of children's and family's trauma and abuse
- Lack of experience, training and understanding of children who have experience trauma
- Not accessing supervision



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### Behaviours We Might See

Signs that may present:

Decreased

- Communication with colleagues
- Ability to accept change or adapt
- Ability to try new things/explore
- Self esteem
- Attendance in staff meetings, PD, other functions



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### Supporting Each Other

- Recognise signs and symptoms in others
- Provide education about vicarious trauma
- Support and value each other
- Ensure the workplace culture acknowledges and accepts vicarious trauma as a real condition
- Encourage taking time out and taking leave



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### Taking care of yourself

The 3 key supports to aid positive mental health

- Gratitude
- Empathy including kindness and compassion
- Mindfulness



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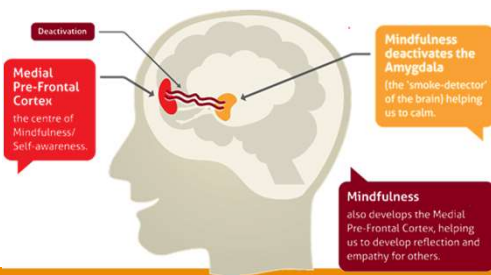
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### Mindfulness




**Deactivation**

**Medial Pre-Frontal Cortex**  
the centre of Mindfulness/ Self-awareness.

**Mindfulness deactivates the Amygdala**  
(the 'smoke-detector' of the brain) helping us to calm.

**Mindfulness**  
also develops the Medial Pre-Frontal Cortex, helping us to develop reflection and empathy for others.



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### What Do You Do to Look After Yourself?



**Mental health**





**Physical health**







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Prescriptions (My self-care activity)	Dose (How long?)	Frequency				
		Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Yearly
Call or visit a friend or family						
Practice breathing / muscle relaxation						
Walk, play sport or exercise						
Have a bath						
Read a book or magazine						
Have one-to-one time with your partner						
Watch a movie						
Listen or dance to music						
Write, paint or play an instrument						
Cook your favourite meal						
Go out for dinner						
Do some gardening						
See a counsellor						
Go away for a weekend						
Go on holiday						

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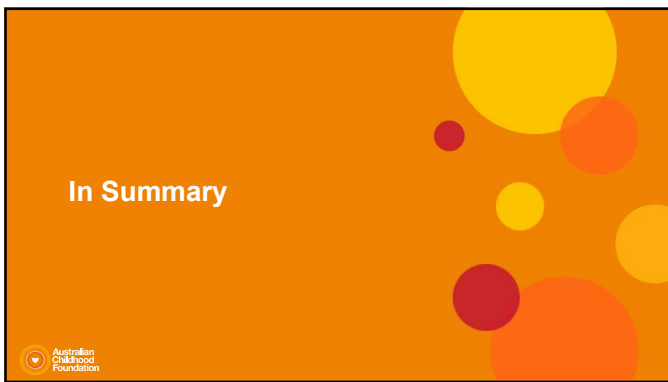
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### Working with traumatised children

Relationships:

- Respect and empathy
- Connection and sense of belonging
- Personal competence



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### Trauma-based behaviours and you

- Don't take the child's behaviour personally
- Don't take the parent's behaviour personally
- Be aware of what presses your own buttons



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### Calming and regulation

- Traumatized children find it difficult to regulate their own feelings of stress/distress.
- The best way to help the extremely dysregulated child is to remain calm and regulated yourself.



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**Safe harbour**

*'Be my anchor when I'm all at sea'*  
PREDICTABLE PERSON



*'Ferry me to calmer waters'*  
SING-SONG VOICE  
RHYTHMIC, REPETITIVE ACTIVITY  
SENSORY INPUT

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**Story Time**

**Calmer Choice**  
Cultivating Awareness • Living Mindfully • Enhancing Resilience




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**ACF Parenting & Early Years**

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

Email:  
[parenting@childhood.org.au](mailto:parenting@childhood.org.au)




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