

Trauma Informed Practice with Children and Young People

26th May 2023



Additional Resources

Trauma Responsive Principles – Reflective Questions

Review of the Principles underpinning trauma responsive practice

- Informed by best available evidence: Childhood development and the Neurobiology of trauma; Systems change theory
- Cultural humility practice approach
- Restoring safety and development
- Prioritises therapeutic relationships
- Self-determination- Child centered, meaningful engagement and feedback
- Hope based recovery
- Acknowledges the impact on carers/workers and seeks to minimise risk

Understanding of neurobiology of trauma & child development

- Application of the theory into practice
- **How do you understand what's happening in the child's brain** and how will that influence your practice? i.e: *behaviour is an unmet need so how will your intervention address that unmet need rather than focussing solely on the behaviour?*
- **How do you understand the child's developmental age versus their chronological age?** How will this inform your decision-making around support and intervention for the child and the family?
- Parental brain development – given parents likely trauma history, what is happening in their brain and **how will this influence your engagement with them?**

Cultural understanding

- Be curious, practice with cultural humility; culture is a resource!
- **Child's sense of identity, belonging?** How is that supported/promoted?
- **Parents history, identity, parenting practices, style?** Where does it come from? How do we work with this?
- Cultural awareness/competence? What does this look like in my practice?
- Cultural competence, accessibility? Programs tailored to meet cultural needs?
- Diversity - **Who has a voice in this space?**



Key principles and actions that support a developmental trauma informed, culturally safe response to traumatised children and young people:

- Relationships are critical- individual, family, community
- Using stories and story-telling is a valuable and important tool
- Connecting to country and culture needs to be meaningful and not tokenistic
- Continual self-reflection builds cultural humility – who am I? What are my biases? What else do I need to know?
- Children and young people still all come with their own stories and we need to listen to those and not assume
- Holistic approaches, as distinct from

Safety



- Without 'felt safety' trauma processing is not possible
- Consider child's internal world versus the external world
- Polyvagal theory – biological safety, child's perception of safety (felt safety)
- Human safety – **are the people around me safe?**
- Environmental – **Is the environment conducive to the perception of safety?** Sensory input – smells, sights, sounds, etc.
- Organisational safety - does my organisation promote policies and practices that ensure safety of clients and staff?
- Parents own trauma history and perception of safety – how will this impact on your ability to engage with them? How can you restore safety?

Promoting safety in your role



Consider your practice...

- Do you (and your workplace) explicitly acknowledge the role of safety in supporting children and young people?
- How is the child's experience of safety understood and acknowledged?
- In what ways do you promote safety?
- What specific strategies do you implement? Verbal and nonverbal

Therapeutic Relationships

- **Child experiences safe, attuned, consistent relationship/s.**
What does this look like?
- **Worker-parent relationship** – minimising re-traumatisation, co-regulating.
- Respected, **supported work relationships**
- Program requirements enable relationship building
- **Practice frameworks** that promote therapeutic relationships – DDP, sanctuary model



Self determination



- Child centred practice – **child's voice is heard and acknowledged**
- How is the **parent's experience understood** and acknowledged?
- How do you address **power imbalance** in your role?
- **How does the child/parent participate** in the care team process?
- Rights of child are always prioritised- safety, developmental opportunities, be involved in decisions that effect them

Activity: reflection

Consider your practice...

- In what ways do you promote self determination?
- How is the child's experience and wishes understood and acknowledged?
- How do you acknowledge the strengths of the child/family/community?
- How do you address power imbalance in your role?
- How does the child/parent participate in the care team process?

Honouring the voice of your clients - Key Questions to consider

- What do we hope to achieve?
- Where have we got so far
- What will children and young people get out of it?
- Are we prepared to resource it properly?
- Why have we not done it before?
- Are we being honest with the children and young people?
- What are our expectations?
- Are we prepared to share some power?
- Are we prepared to take some criticism?
- Do we recognize this as a long-term commitment? Are we prepared to build in changes long term, and not just have a one-off event?
- What is our plan for how to deal with potential harm or risk related disclosures?

Adapted from Claire O'Kane's- Children's Participation in the Analysis, Planning and Design of Programs (2013)

Ethical Considerations

- Children and young people must understand the purpose and nature of the participatory process.
- Participation must not harm or place at risk children and young people.
- Participation needs to be voluntary.
- Workers should have procedures for dealing with children's disclosures of harm.
- Workers should have procedures for responding should they become concerned about the safety of a child.
- Children and Young People who are providing feedback should be made aware of what will happen with their feedback.
- Organizations/programs should have processes to feedback to children and young people how they have heard and integrated children's input.
- Children and young people should be made aware at the outset whether their contribution will be kept confidential if they choose to participate.

Cultural Considerations

- It is best for all children and young people to engage in an environment of trust. Consider who is best to work with with the child/young person.
- Consider the most appropriate space to meet with children/young people.
- Consider the best format for providing information.
- Use translations and interpreters where appropriate.
- Consider that in some cultures it is unusual to seek the views of children independently of adults.
- Understand that expressing negative feedback can be very uncomfortable for people of some cultures.
- Seek ways to aid children feel safer to express their views.

Consent / Agreement

It is a vitally important to get consent for involvement from children and their guardian before commencing.

- Seek children's consent in words that are child friendly and explain the extent of what is involved.
- Children and young people must understand that they can opt out at any time along the way.
- Children and Young People must have all the information they need to decide if they wish to participate.

