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Trauma Responsive Practice with Children

Blue Cove Group May 2023




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The Australian Childhood Foundation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians and owners of this land and waters. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to the children who are their leaders of tomorrow. We acknowledge their history and living culture and the many thousands of years in which they have raised their children to be safe and strong.



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An overview of the Australian Childhood Foundation

We are a Force for Childhood, making an impact in Australia & New Zealand 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.




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Our Education Services

Access our latest offerings: <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/training-development/>

- Our Education Services co-create and amplify knowledge that changes children's lives for the better, by creating networks of learning in partnership with professionals and organisations working with children and young people.
- Our efforts include:
 - Accessible learning opportunities for professionals: a range of self-paced modules and virtual classrooms covering trauma prevention, relational healing and evidence-based approaches to best practice.
 - Customised organisational education: tailored training packages designed to support ongoing staff development, including Train The Trainer options for long-term success.
 - Accredited training: our unique Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma



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Our Safeguarding Services

Access our latest offerings: <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/safeguarding-children-services/>

- Over a decade, Safeguarding Services have partnered with over 300 organisations nationally and internationally to strengthen the capacity of institutions to keep children and young people safe.
- We offer a suite of standard and customised solutions that meet national and state Child Safe Standards, aimed at creating organisational culture change.
- We draw on best practice from the Foundation's experience and our network of partners, and evidence, including our recent Safeguarding Evaluation by the Centre for Social Impact.



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Learning together online

- Participation welcome
- Cameras on
- Mute yourself when not talking
- Hands up or use the chat button if you have questions
- Please use headphones if children are in your training space
- Confidentiality



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Safety

- The content of this training can evoke strong emotions and may trigger personal experiences of trauma.
- Please be mindful of your own wellbeing during this training and if you need support please ask the facilitator.

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Learning outcomes

- Review your understanding of neurobiology and the impacts of trauma on development and explore a conceptual model of trauma-informed work with children who have experienced developmental (relational) trauma.
- Be supported to translate theory to practice. Participants will be aided to identify and contextualise strategies for working with children who have experienced complex trauma to their work setting.
- Ensure a staff wellbeing approach is included in a trauma informed practice model.

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ACF Trauma Responsive Model

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I need to feel safe....



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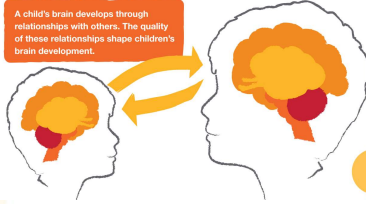
I need safe and attuned relationships...

Relationships shape our sense of self and safety

"I am because we are"
African proverb

"A person's core self - the self that is shaped by early attachment patterns - is defined by who the parental object both perceive him to be and deny him to be"
Bromberg 2001, page 57

A child's brain develops through relationships with others. The quality of these relationships shape children's brain development.



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I need to make meaning of my/the world?



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- ▶ Safety, containment, nurture and warmth, co-regulation
- ▶ Soft mutual eye gaze, kind eyes,
- ▶ Shared attention and focus
- ▶ Nurturing touch, skin to skin
- ▶ Sweet soothing sounds and rhythmic movements
- ▶ Synchronised movements and facial gestures
- ▶ Pleasure, smiles, play, laughter
- ▶ Alternating quiet and arousing activities

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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

The diagram features a central circle divided into three segments: 'Developmental' (top left), 'Simple' (top right), and 'Complex' (bottom). To the right, two overlapping circles represent 'Intergenerational' (top) and 'Transgenerational' (bottom) trauma, with arrows indicating a cyclical relationship between them.

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Trauma impacts

The left diagram, titled 'TRAUMA IMPACTS ON CHILDREN', shows a central heart with 'CHILDREN' written inside. It is surrounded by a ring of dots and lists impacts: 'Loss of safety', 'Loss of trust', 'Loss of attachment', 'Loss of connection', 'Loss of control', 'Loss of autonomy', 'Loss of identity', 'Loss of self', 'Loss of hope', 'Loss of future', 'Loss of dreams', 'Loss of goals', 'Loss of aspirations', 'Loss of motivation', 'Loss of energy', 'Loss of vitality', 'Loss of resilience', 'Loss of coping skills', 'Loss of problem-solving skills', 'Loss of decision-making skills', 'Loss of communication skills', 'Loss of social skills', 'Loss of emotional regulation skills', 'Loss of self-regulation skills', 'Loss of self-awareness skills', 'Loss of self-compassion skills', 'Loss of self-empowerment skills', 'Loss of self-efficacy skills', 'Loss of self-esteem skills', 'Loss of self-worth skills', 'Loss of self-respect skills', 'Loss of self-dignity skills', 'Loss of self-pride skills', 'Loss of self-responsibility skills', 'Loss of self-accountability skills', 'Loss of self-discipline skills', 'Loss of self-control skills', 'Loss of self-mastery skills', 'Loss of self-actualization skills', 'Loss of self-fulfillment skills', 'Loss of self-actualization skills', 'Loss of self-actualization skills', 'Loss of self-actualization skills'.

The right diagram, titled 'TRAUMA IMPACTS ON FAMILIES', shows a central heart with 'FAMILIES' written inside. It is surrounded by a ring of dots and lists impacts: 'Loss of safety', 'Loss of trust', 'Loss of attachment', 'Loss of connection', 'Loss of control', 'Loss of autonomy', 'Loss of identity', 'Loss of self', 'Loss of hope', 'Loss of future', 'Loss of dreams', 'Loss of goals', 'Loss of aspirations', 'Loss of motivation', 'Loss of energy', 'Loss of vitality', 'Loss of resilience', 'Loss of coping skills', 'Loss of problem-solving skills', 'Loss of decision-making skills', 'Loss of communication skills', 'Loss of social skills', 'Loss of emotional regulation skills', 'Loss of self-regulation skills', 'Loss of self-awareness skills', 'Loss of self-compassion skills', 'Loss of self-empowerment skills', 'Loss of self-efficacy skills', 'Loss of self-esteem skills', 'Loss of self-worth skills', 'Loss of self-respect skills', 'Loss of self-dignity skills', 'Loss of self-pride skills', 'Loss of self-responsibility skills', 'Loss of self-accountability skills', 'Loss of self-discipline skills', 'Loss of self-control skills', 'Loss of self-mastery skills', 'Loss of self-actualization skills', 'Loss of self-fulfillment skills', 'Loss of self-actualization skills', 'Loss of self-actualization skills', 'Loss of self-actualization skills'.

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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, fatigue, sleep, and circadian cycles.

Prefrontal cortex
Responsible for executive functions, such as judgement, reasoning, and self awareness. PFC development and integration impacted by chronic trauma/stress

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

Thalamus
Sensory receptor within the diencephalon. Receives and passes on sensory data to be further processed by other areas of the brain. Chronic trauma can lead to sensory processing difficulties

Cerebellum
Balance and coordination, motor skills may be impacted by trauma

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Trauma impacts

Trauma can impact all elements of adolescent's development: brain, body, memory, learning, behaviour, emotions, relationships and their view of themselves

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Brain-Body implications of chronic stress - HPA Axis

Hypothalamus releases **CRF** (Corticotropin-Releasing Factor) to the **Anterior Pituitary Gland**, which releases **ACTH** (Adrenocorticotropic hormone) to the **Adrenal Gland**. The Adrenal Gland produces **Cortisol**, which is released into the **Bloodstream**. Cortisol then acts on the **Kidney** and provides physiological changes supporting the "fight or flight" response.

Negative Feedback loop: Cortisol levels inhibit the Hypothalamus and Pituitary Gland.

Stress triggers the Hypothalamus to start the process.

Hypothalamic (Diencephalon) / Pituitary / Adrenal Axis


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Trauma and loss

Developmental traumas such as family violence or child sexual abuse can lead to experiences of loss on multiple levels for children. These include a loss of:

- sense of safety and connection
- predictability and familiarity
- contact
- Routines
- belongings
- Connection to culture, belonging & identity



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Trauma Responsive Principles

- Shared understanding neurobiology of **trauma and its impact on child development**
- Promoting **safety**
- Ensuring **cultural humility**
- Healing happens in **relationships**
- Having a sense of control/power in **decision making** – **having a voice, empowerment/** strength based
- **Integrating** care (collaboration)
- Belief in **hope based recovery**
- Worker **Self care** (NCTIC cited in Steele & Kuban, 2013:53)





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Trauma Responsive PRACTICE

- Children and young people and families we work with have experienced both current, historical and generational trauma
- Trauma impacts how people access services
- Responses to trauma are adaptive – without a trauma lens, behaviours can be seen as ‘antisocial’ or ‘maladaptive’
- Trauma survivors require specific, tailored interventions that minimise re-traumatisation and understand individual needs and responses to trauma

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The social engagement system

by Stephen Porges

Behavioural Functions	Body Functions
Social Engagement Soothing and calming Indicates safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowers or raises vocalization pitch Regulates middle ear muscles to perceive human voice Changes facial expressivity Head turning Teens and quails Slows or speeds heart rate
Mobilisation Fight or Flight Active Freeze Moderate or extreme danger	Hyper arousal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases heart rate Sweat increases Inhibits gastrointestinal function Narrowing blood vessels - to slow blood flow to extremities Release of adrenaline
Immobilitation On Edge or submission Death-falting Increased pain threshold Conserves metabolic resources Life threatening situations	Hypo - arousal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slows heart rate Constricts bronchi Stimulates gastrointestinal function

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s53bw32-UY>
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Neuroception – 'detection without awareness'

- Faulty neuroception....
- Familiarity may lead to
- Finding that which is dangerous to be safe
- Finding that which is safe to be dangerous

From the cortex down
 Psychological processes: Thoughts, Imagination, Beliefs

From the outside in
 External senses/ Awareness of body in space: Special senses, Vibration, touch, Proprioception

From the inside up
 'Internal milieu'/ Interoception: Pain, temperature, ANS afferents, Fluid borne chemical signals

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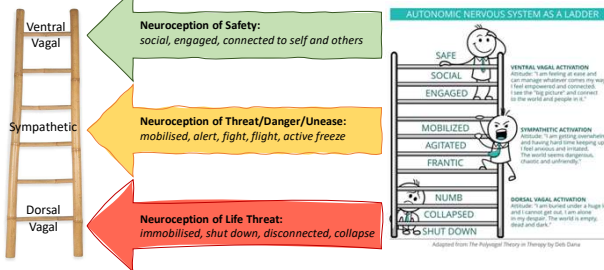
Impact of trauma on arousal



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A polyvagal perspective.....Deb Dana's Autonomic Ladder



Ventral Vagal ← **Neuroception of Safety:** social, engaged, connected to self and others

Sympathetic ← **Neuroception of Threat/Danger/Unease:** mobilised, alert, fight, flight, active freeze

Dorsal Vagal ← **Neuroception of Life Threat:** immobilised, shut down, disconnected, collapse

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM AS A LADDER

- SAFE**
- SOCIAL ENGAGED**
- MOBILIZED**
- AGITATED**
- FRANTIC**
- NUMB**
- COLLAPSED**
- SHUT DOWN**

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Protective responses can present as

Mobilised Responses
(fight, flight, active freeze):

- Hypervigilant
- Edgy/jumpy
- Irritable – easily annoyed
- Poor recovery from distraction
- 'silly', loud, over-excitement
- Unsettled, restless
- Outbursts, aggression
- Defensive, taking things personally
- Inflexible, 'controlling'
- Sensitive to sensory input

Immobilised Responses
(collapse, withdraw, dissociate):

- Flat, numb affect
- Disengaged, disinterested
- Withdrawn
- Frequent "boredom"
- Lethargic, unmotivated
- Disconnected from peers
- Primitive self-soothing
- Hygiene issues
- Wetting or soiling
- Low appetite

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Strategies to promote neuroception of safety

Physiological safety **Relational safety** **Environmental safety**

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Working with protective responses

Social Engagement

- Prosody
- Breathing
- Connection

Mobilisation

- Rhythm
- Containing
- Grounding

Immobilisation

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

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Polyvagal Theory

	I am showing you.....	On the inside.....	I need you to.....
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT	<p>Feeling safe, staying in relationship, connection oriented</p> <p>You might say I am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making eye contact • Listening • Engaging in play and exploration 	<p>I am feeling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe, Calm, Happy, Sober, Alert, Relaxed, Playful, Curious <p>My body says:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach others • Sit still • Breathe deeply 	<p>Help me to stay engaged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play and have fun with me • Play model positive relationships • Set boundaries and natural consequences • Use reflective and problem solving skills so I can learn from you • Notice and acknowledge my strengths and my skills
MOBILISATION	<p>Height, fight, active, freeze, action oriented</p> <p>You might say I am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive • Loud • Fighting • Running away • Hyperactive 	<p>I am feeling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxious, Engorgered, Frenzied, Hurt, Confused, Overwhelmed <p>My body says:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run away • I'm hot • I can't sit still • I need to move 	<p>Help me to down regulate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know me well • Co-regulate - be safe, attuned and responsive to me • Use movement - big then smaller, jumping, lunging, swinging, climbing, tall jumps • Create a safe space near you where I can retreat to until I calm down • Model deep breathing • Repair our relationship - we are ok and our relationship is strong
IMMOBILISATION	<p>Withdrawal, collapse, submission, dissociation, avoidant oriented</p> <p>You might say I am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawn • Avoiding contact • Obedient • Compliant • Hiding 	<p>I am feeling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnected, Unfocused, Flat, Withdrawn, I'm disappearing <p>My body says:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid others • I'm not in my body • I want to hide • Curl up in a ball 	<p>Help me to up regulate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-regulate - be safe, attuned and responsive with me • Tell me I am safe and demonstrate it with your actions, gestures and tone of voice • Help me to orient to this room we are in by looking for specific things like something green, something on the roof or something on the floor • Help me to feel my body by touching different parts, such as my feet on the floor and my bottom on the chair • Repair our relationship - we are ok and our relationship is strong

Grounded in the work of Dr Dan Siegel, Dr Stephen Porges and Dr Bruce Perry

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Strategies for working with Protective Responses

<p>Calm the brain with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long outbreaths • Mindful activities • Orienting outwards • Connection & Co-regulation • Time in nature 	<p>De-activate Mobilised Responses with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythm (drumming, music, swinging, rocking, bouncing, dancing) • Stretching/Yoga • Carrying heavy items • Heat pack, weighted blanket • Reduce stimulation • Hugging a teddy/cushion 	<p>Counter Immobilised Responses with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounding through the senses • Proprioceptive input • Splash face with cold water • Something cold or sweet to drink with a straw • Chewing candies/sucking a mint/lollipop • Movement
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Activity - Soothing through the senses



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Repairing interpersonal relationships

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I need safe and attuned RELATIONSHIPS

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Regulated Arousal

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

Freeze Physically immobilized, frozen, tense musculature

Sympathetic Hyper-arousal

Window of Tolerance

Parasympathetic Hypo-arousal

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

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Dys-regulated Arousal

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

Freeze Physically immobilized, frozen, tense musculature

Sympathetic Hyper-arousal

Window of Tolerance

Parasympathetic Hypo-arousal

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

Ogden, Minton, Pain 2006

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Interpersonal regulation

In relationships, one's ability to regulate one's window of tolerance will affect the other's ability to regulate their own window of tolerance

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“For years mental health professionals taught people that they could be psychologically healthy without social support, that “unless you love yourself, no one else will love you.”

...The truth is, you cannot love yourself unless you have been loved and are loved. The capacity to love cannot be built in isolation”

Bruce D. Perry, The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog, And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook

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Rupture and repair

What you did is not ok, but you're still a good person and our relationship is still strong.'

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Blocked Trust

Blocked trust is a child's way to adapt to very poor care – **it's a survival state**. Blocked trust is blocking the pain of rejection by:

- Negative bias
- Dissociating
- Suppressing social emotions
- Provisioning – self reliance
- Manipulating
- Resisting authority – aggression, 'defiance'
- Story telling – fantasy
- Lying behaviours



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Relationship is the key!5 Brain systems that support parenting – Dan Hughes

Parental Approach System

- Get close to the child without becoming defensive.

Parental Reward System

- Enjoy interacting with the child.

Parental Child Reading System

- Understand the mind of the child.

Parental Meaning Making System

- Make sense of our experiences with the child and our social life.

Parental Executive System

- Regulate interpersonal conflicts between approach and avoidance, pro-social and defensive reactions.




Image source: Dreamtime

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Mutual Joy



How do you enjoy spending time with your child?

What does this teach us and remind us about ourselves?

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Squiggle and Swap Drawings

Let's do some squiggle drawings together! We'll read some paper and at least two pairs of pencils to play!

I will draw a squiggle on my page and then pass it to you. You can draw a squiggle on your page and then pass it to me.

Let's look at the squiggle the other person drew for us and see if it reminds us of anything. Then we can draw our pictures based on the squiggle on our page.

After we are finished, we can show each other our drawings. Should we go again?

Some examples of squiggle drawings made by children

Embracing relationship
Short and often activity times built into your day

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Psycho-education and Reflection for caregivers

How does your child experience you when you are in tune with him/her?

How does your child show what they need through their behaviour, feelings and play?

Where do your ideas about parenting come from?

What do you notice about yourself as a parent?

Stay Calm

How does understanding more about brain development help you understand your child?

How will this understanding influence your parenting approach?

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Empathy – a strength and a vulnerability

If empathy is to 'walk a mile in someone's shoes' we need to ensure we step out of those shoes at the end of the mile or we will wear those shoes all the time...and that is vicarious trauma.

- Somatic empathy (Rothschild 2004)
- Limbic resonance
- Cortical empathy

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Practice reflections...what do your relationships look like?

Take a moment to think of all the interactions you have over the course of a day, a week, a month, a year with all the people you share your life with.

- If you were to make a list of these things what would it look like?
- How would these people describe you?
- What qualities would they identify in you?
- What would they say is helpful about you? Why?

How do you create safe attuned relationships with young people?



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A dance of feeling and meaning making... beginning with:

- Enjoy being with each other.
- Be animated when showing feelings.
- Try to 'read' the child's feelings and show that you get it.
- Stay with what is happening here and now.
- Try to get some back and forth happening (in play or talking).
- Use your story telling voice (tone of voice, pace of talking, rhythm, melody and facial expression)
- Help the child make sense of what is going on through story telling.




Dan Hughes



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HEART BUTTONS

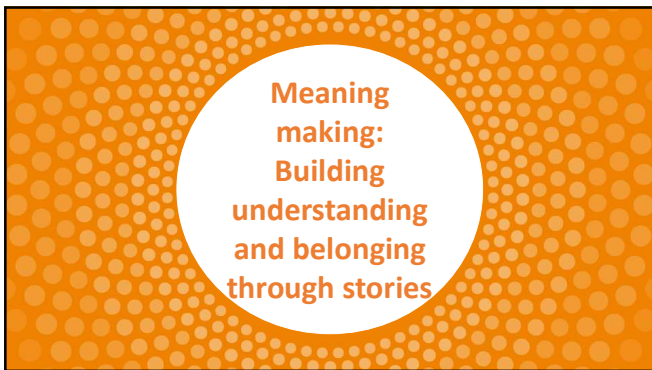
Feeling connected when we are apart

Being in kinder, or school, or wherever mean can be hard.
 What if we drew a little heart on the back of each other's hand?
 I will draw you a heart and then draw a line onto it to send in my hand.
 You can draw a little heart or dot on the back of my hand
 and draw a line onto it to send to your hand.
 These are our heart buttons, and they are connected by love.
 No 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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Activity idea
 for children
 who feel
 insecure and
 anxious
 about
 relational
 permanence

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**Meaning making:
 Building understanding
 and belonging
 through stories**

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I need to MAKE MEANING of my world

NEED PROTECTIVE AND CHILD FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

NEED TO FEEL SAFE

NEED CONNECTION TO MY LIFE

NEED SAFE AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

NEED TRUST, INFORMED AND INTEGRATIVE SERVICES

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Self Concept: Internal working models

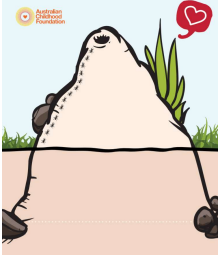
	Positive internal working model	Negative internal working model
View of self	I am lovable I am worthy	I am unlovable I am unworthy
View of the world and relationships	Others are responsive Others are loving Others are interested in me Others are available to me The world is relatively safe	Others are unavailable Others are neglectful Others are rejecting Others are unresponsive The world is unsafe

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Building understanding of behaviour – child and caregiver

- When we feel understood, we become open to trying to understand others
- Always consider the underlying function of a caregiver's behaviours and reactions, as much as the child's
- Help caregivers to wonder about their child's inner world
- Develop openness and curiosity about behaviour
- 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
- **Some clues:** is the behaviour a fight/flight/freeze/withdraw response? Is it related to hunger/tiredness? Is it a bid for connection or space?



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Building strength and belonging through stories

- Develop family traditions and rituals
- Story telling
- Family/Child story book
- Help families explore their history




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How do we take care of ourselves?

Staying regulated during client work:

- **IN THE MOMENT:**
 - Physically (regulate our body systems)
 - Mentally (keeping our cortex online)
- **AFTER THE MOMENT:**
 - Debrief (social engagement system!)
 - Physically - regulate body systems
- **BEFORE THE MOMENT (and all the time)**
 - Effective self care
 - Organisational culture



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The Four Ms:

- Movement**
Something to engage our Bodies
- Mindful Practice**
Something for our Minds
- Making**
Something to nurture our Imaginations
- Message**
Something considering others with gratitude



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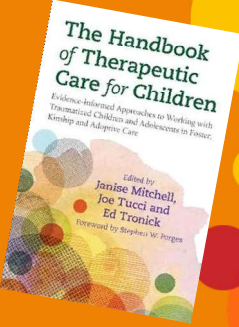


Thank you for coming today...
Image: Pinterest

Hold onto Hope

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A valuable resource
 Includes chapters from:
 Martin Teicher
 Ed Tronick
 Allan Schore
 Bruce Perry
 Dan Hughes & Jon Baylin
 Kim Golding
 Cathy Malchiodi
 Joe Tucci
 Janise Mitchell
 Glenda Kickett
 Noel Macnamara



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