


Making SPACE For Learning in Schools

Customised 1 day workshop
Largs Bay Primary School
Melissa Powney





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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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I NEED TO FEEL SAFE

I NEED TO MAKE MEANING OF MY WORLD

CHILD FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

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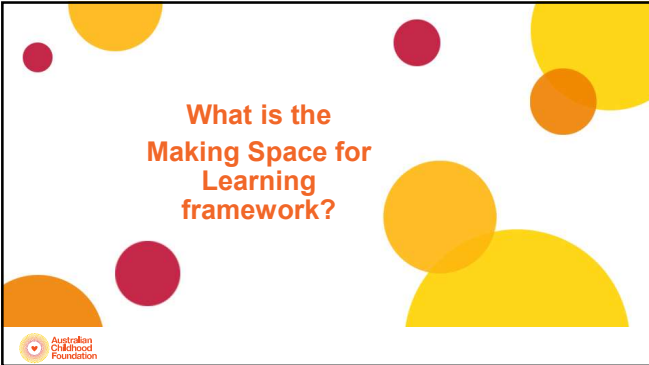
Relationships shape our sense of self and safety

- Relationships are the most important factor in our development and in healing from experiences of trauma
- Secure relationships are central to how a student experiences themselves and others



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What is the Making Space for Learning framework?



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STAGED ADAPTIVE ENABLED

S P A C E


PREDICTABLE CONNECTED



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SPACE in Action

1. Draw a symbol that represents something novel about yourself that you are willing to share.
2. Walk around the room and stop when you have met someone who is far away from where you were sitting and share your symbol. Do not return to your spot until completing two further actions....
3. Tell your partner how you know which seat you were sitting in previously. I.e: Did you leave any reference points for yourself? Like your coat/bag...did you mentally count how many rows before you moved?
4. Imagine now that you couldn't go back to your original seat. Where would you move to and why? What do you consider or what rules do you have around where your most comfortable to sit in a space like this?

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Predictable

- Changes to routines and uncertainty can be a source of stress to student
- Predictability in Student's relationships and activities deactivates their stress systems
- This then promotes flexibility and adaptability




I feel better when I know what is coming next.


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What might predictability look like in practice?



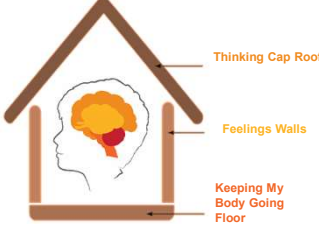
- Build routines and predictability wherever possible
 - Prepare children and young people for what is coming next eg: giving countdowns to transitions
 - Visual timetables are useful
- Think about how to do transitions throughout the day
 - Play and fun
 - Planned brain breaks
- Give plenty of information and time building up to changes

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Staged

- Brain development is sequential
- One of the ways our brain develops is vertically, from the bottom to the top
- Some neurodevelopmental delays such as those effected by trauma can cause brain changes. However with the right support the brain can be repaired through neuroplasticity.



My brain grows upwards, step by step.


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Sequential brain development – building blocks




The Thinking brain
3-5 Years
The Emotions and Memory Brain - Birth to 4 years
The Movement Brain
Birth – 2 years
The survival brain
Pre birth to 8 months


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Brainstem - basic life functions

- Basic life functions
- First part of our brain to develop
- This is the most developed brain part at birth
- Responsible for our heart beat, breathing, sucking, temperature control, blood pressure





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Cerebellum- movement and balance

- Helps us to know where our body is in space
- Helps us with our posture and balance
- Helps us not to fall over and to control our movements
- Has its own connective pathways between the 2 halves- cerebellar vermis



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Strategies for healing...Desktop drumming

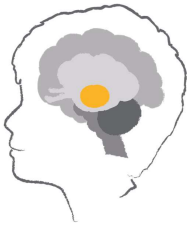


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Diencephalon - sorting & sending centre

- This area of the brain develops mainly after birth
- It sorts out messages coming into the brain and sends them
- It uses hormones to send signals to body
- Hormonal signals tell your body what it needs, eg. food, water, love




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Superior Colliculus

- Processes visual threats – looming objects identified by cells in the retina of the eye
- Retinal neuronal input received by Superior Colliculus which engages the body in **Avoidance and defensive behaviours**

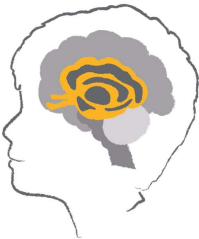


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Limbic lobe- emotional gateway

- The part of the brain that helps us attach an emotion to an experience or memory
- This part of the brain is particularly involved with the emotions of fear and anger
- Also heavily involved in attachment processes
- This area develops mainly after birth



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Understanding the needs

- I need support to connect with how I'm feeling in my brain and body
- I need help to express how I am feeling in my emotions and in my body.

Healing Goal:
Help students to be more in touch with their feelings as they relate to language, bodily sensations, and behaviours

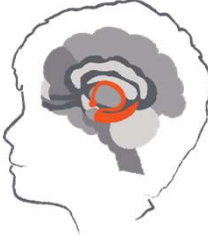
Australian Childhood Foundation What do my sensations mean for me?

<p>Body Sensations</p> <p>Achy, Dull, Knotted, Sharp, Blotchy, Electric, Staccato, Light Heavy, Smooth, Breathless, Energised, Sore, Achy, Brittle, Branched, Burning, Buzzy, Open, Pounding, Spinning, So Hot, Cold, Clenched, Pulsing, Throbbing, Tight, Tingling, Tickling, Itchy, Dry, Lumpy, Shaky, Damp, Full, Rappy, Hefty, Puffy, Prickly, Wobbly, Flushed, Numb, Tense, loose</p>		<p>Emotions</p> <p>Happy Sad Scared Worried Disgusted Surprised Angry Calm</p>
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Hippocampus – Brain’s historian

- Explicit memory system
- Develops approximately 2-3 years of age
- Provides context to memory and embeds long term memory

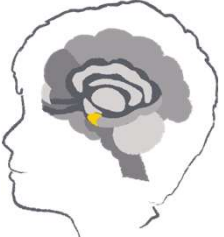


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Amygdala – smoke alarm

- Detects threat
- Develops from birth
- Learns by association
- Involved in implicit memory processes




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Cerebral cortex- complex thinking

- The largest part of the brain
- Associated with higher brain function such as thought and action
- Examples of functions:
 - Reasoning
 - Logic
 - Judgement
 - Voluntary movement




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The Prefrontal Cortex

Final part of the brain to reach maturity in one's mid to late twenties


- self awareness
- reasoning and judgement
- foresight and anticipation
- focusing and sustaining attention
- planning organising and prioritising
- decision making
- reflecting
- enthusiasm, motivation and persistence
- impulse control
- working memory



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Key Brain Area	Potential impact of trauma
Brainstem & Diencephalon	May experience fast or slower heart rate Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties Sleep disturbances and unsettledness Sucking and swallowing and digestion difficulties May feel hot or cold or not notice changes in temperature Becomes overwhelmed and cannot sort through information
Cerebellum	Difficulty in maintain posture & balance Lack of awareness of their body in space Poor fine or cross motor skills
Limbic Lobe	Receptive communication- struggle to read/ understand others Expressive communication- may themselves struggle to express emotions. Oversensitivity or under-sensitivity to threat Struggle to recall information Difficulty in placing time and dates to memories
Cortex	Unable to or limited ability to: Use foresight and anticipation Organise and plan decisions well Use impulse control Be enthusiastic, motivated or persistent with activities



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Strategies for building healthy brain development

Brainstem & Diencephalon	Basic survival & sensory processing	Pacification or stimulation. Activities in the child's preferred sensory modality
Cerebellum	Coordination of movement	Using music, rhyme and movement activities
Limbic	Emotional processing	Building relational connection through plays, animals, games
Cortex	Thinking processes	Linking experiences and sensations to words and descriptions
Prefrontal cortex	Analytical and abstract thinking	Challenges and safe risk taking activities


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Hemispheric integration

Left Hemisphere

- Evaluates language content
- Optimistic hemisphere
- Understands beginning, middle and end
- Learns from the past and expects the future
- Looks for patterns



Right Hemisphere


- In the present moment
- Eye contact
- Facial expression
- Tone of voice
- Posture
- Gesture
- Intensity
- Is mute
- Grasps the whole

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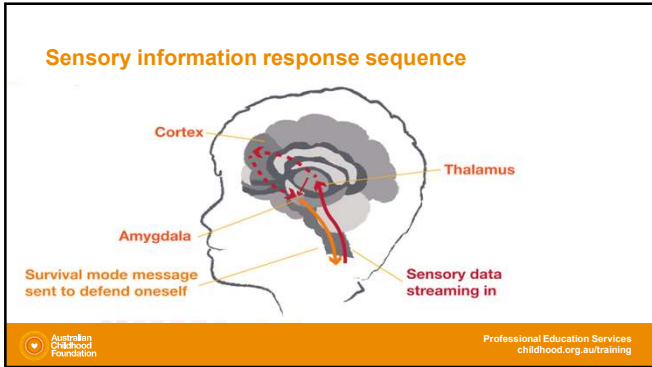
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BODY SYSTEMS

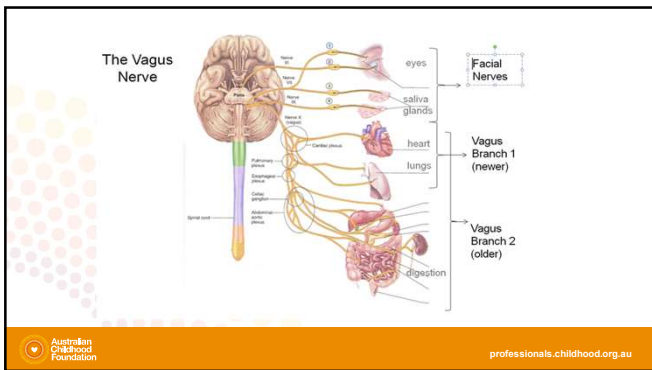


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Polyvagal theory and protective responses

By Stephen Porges

Behavioural Functions	Body Functions
Social Engagement Soothing and calming Indicates safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowers or raises vocalisation pitch • Regulates middle ear muscles to perceive human voice • Changes facial expressivity • Head turning • Tears and eye lids • 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
Immobilisation Collapse or submission Death feigning 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

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Strategies to promote neuroception of safety

Physiological safety Relational safety Environmental safety

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When I am terrified

- Containment- help me feel back in my body
- Grounded- Help me feel present in the Here and Now.
- Present- Stay with me, help me know I am not alone in my distress

Notice and name

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

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Working with nervous systems

Increase Resources – Regulatory Capabilities

Social Engagement

Offer...

- Heat snap pack
- Something weighted
- Something rhythmic
- Reduction in stimulus
- Physical task

Offer...

- Punching bag
- Screwed up paper to kick / throw
- Change environment
- Pool noodle

Immobilising

Offer...

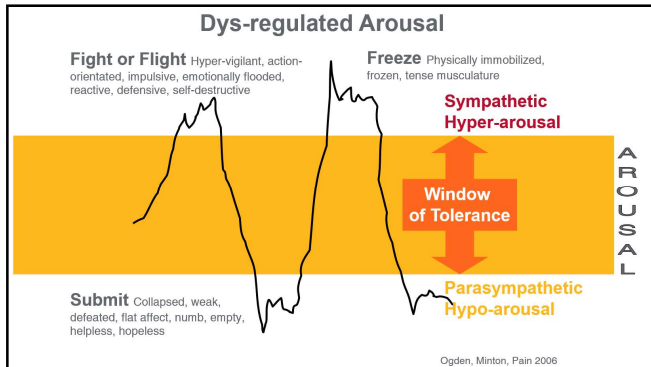
- Heat snap pack
- Gentle sensory/ spine engagement
- Chewing on a sweet or sour lolly, drinking cold or sweet

Offer...

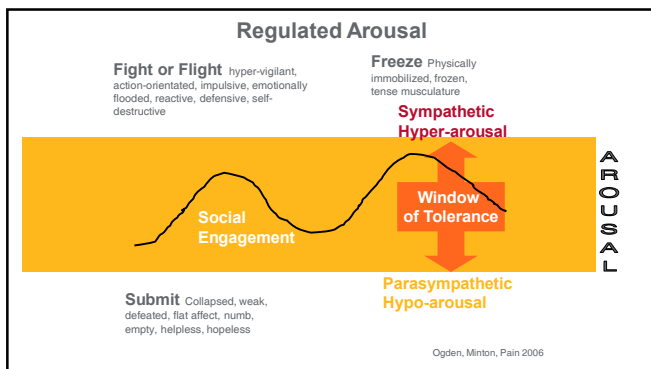
- Drip cold water on the skin i.e. palm initially
- Music, hum
- Voice of safe person
- Seek small movement

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Overshooting your Window of Tolerance:

- Upset and hyped up
- Angry and agitated
- Frustrated
- Heart beating fast
- Tense and can't think clearly
- Unable to regulate your emotions

Within your Window of Tolerance:

- Feeling safe, calm and peaceful
- Happy and able to think clearly
- Ready to learn
- Settled and content
- Mindful and able to regulate your emotions

Undershooting your Window of Tolerance:

- Sad and tired
- Unmotivated with no energy
- Feel empty and withdrawn
- Don't want to listen, talk or play
- Can't think about learning

Making Space for Learning – Action Research Project – St Thomas More School, Elizabeth Park, S.A.

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Reflection Time

- During your teaching day are you more likely to become hyper or hypo aroused?
- When you felt dysregulated and someone co-regulated you. What did they do that helped?
- During a difficult day at work you self-regulated. What skills did you draw on to be able to do this?




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Behaviour is Communication

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



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Connected

Strategies to support students as their relational templates continue to develop emphasise relationships with safe and consistent adults and peers as the foundation for healthy, strong social and emotional functioning.

- **I need to feel like I am connected.**
- **I need to feel safe.**
- **I need safe connections in my life.**



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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 gum 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 synchrony with another person?

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What might Connected look like in practice?



- The student feels safe and connected
- Co-regulation occurs
- A feeling of connectedness is what you get when you feel like you belong in a group, when you are with others of your
- Attuned listening.


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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

I grow stronger as I learn more about what makes me, me.



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What might Enabled look like in practice?

- Creating safety
- Understand triggers
- Check in, tell and hearing their story
- Classroom approaches for individuals
- Flight, Fight, Active Freeze or Submit responses are assisted to enable learning.



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Activities to support body awareness



Round – straight
 Sit – stand
 Small – large
 Freeze – melt
 Push – pull
 Wide – narrow
 Left – right
 Hot – cold
 Fast – slow

Light – strong
 Under – over
 Yes – no
 In – out
 Tall – short
 Loud – soft
 Up – down
 Happy – sad
 Fast slow

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Safety in the classroom

- Create connection and sense of belonging
- Consider sensory environment
- Consider where each student is at in their nervous system as they enter – do they need to up regulate or down regulate to focus
- Include brain breaks and meaning-making or reflection opportunities
- Facilitate early opportunities for success
- Make things predictable and consistent
- Identify an 'emotional anchor' or key person for the student



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Making SPACE for Learning – Site Audit Tool

This audit tool can be used to evaluate the policies and practices of a school that measure and engage 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 traumatised students at your school.

	Whole Site	Staff	Classroom / Group	Small Group	Individual Student / Child
S Support					
P Professionals					
A Activities					
C Connected					
E Enacted					

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How do I access MSFL? & other Questions

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Thank you!
For more resources
Please check out our website
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