


cetc: centre for excellence in therapeutic care

:training

Understanding and responding to the impact of trauma on child and adolescent development

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The Centre for Excellence in Therapeutic Care acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians and owners of this land.

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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Safety

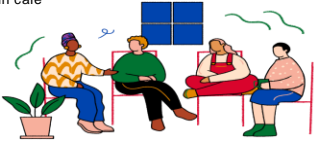
The content of this training can evoke strong emotions and may stir up personal experiences of trauma.

Please be mindful of your own wellbeing during this session and if you need support, please ask.



:training Agenda

- Understanding child and adolescent development at different stages of growth
- Understanding the impact of trauma on child development particularly for children and young people in care
- Responding from a trauma-informed perspective
- Considering the role of culture in our understanding and responses to children and young people in care



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:training Whole Group Discussion

What is it like living/working with the children/young people in your program?

What are the best parts?


What are the challenges?

Please jot down some words in the chatbox each in response to each of the three questions

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:training Activity : Meet James

- James is 12 years old and currently lives in residential care with his 10-year-old brother Alex.
- James was removed from home due to chronic neglect and family violence when he was 8 years old. His mother has serious mental health issues and his father is incarcerated
- James is in residential care after a number of placements broke down, the last one being after the carer became ill
- James is protective towards his younger brother but can often become angry



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Trauma Informed Care

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:training Trauma Informed Care

- Trauma-informed care (TIC) has developed in response to the overwhelming evidence that children in residential care settings have high exposure to trauma and poor health outcomes.
- TIC recognises the impact of a history of trauma on a person's day-to-day living and the need for trauma-aware staff who can provide safe containment and reduce the likelihood of re-traumatisation
- Consequently, many models of residential care share similar underpinnings in relation to attachment frameworks and trauma-informed care (TIC).

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:training What is trauma-informed care?

'A program, organisation, or system that is trauma-informed:

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.'

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA)

:training Being Trauma-Informed

- Provides a new paradigm that views trauma as an injury
- The shift is from "What is wrong with you?" to "What has happened to you?"
- Understands freeze, flight and fight as survival responses
- Recognises that trauma is common

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:training Elements of Trauma Informed Environments

- SAFETY precedes learning
- FEAR overrides ability to think clearly
- BEHAVIOURS communicate feelings
- ENVIRONMENT and ACTIVITIES can calm
- RELATIONSHIPS can heal
- NON-VERBALS are powerful
- TEAMWORK and shared responsibility are vital
- CONNECTIONS across system

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:training CULTURALLY SAFE- Trauma Informed

- Trauma-informed approaches are based on a deep understanding of trauma and its impact on individuals, families and communities, respecting and drawing on Aboriginal knowledge and culture. This is critical to avoid misunderstandings and disengagement and is best implemented through consultation with the community to understand any issues or trauma in that community.
- The ability to adopt a trauma-informed approach is a specifically developed skill set which requires formal training. Opportunities should be provided to staff to train in this field, with a particular focus on culturally-appropriate practice with all cultures, as required to meet the needs and work of your organisation or agency.

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What are the key components of Culturally-Sensitive Trauma-Informed Caring?

- A culturally-sensitive, trauma-informed care provider can help traumatized children and families by:
 - Recognizing cultural variations in the subjective perception of trauma and traumatic stress responses
 - Understanding the role of beliefs in the interpretation of trauma and the recovery process
 - Helping to restore a sense of safety for the child and family through trust-building
 - Attending to the distress of the child or family in the way that they define it
 - Working within and through the family structure to promote emotional and social support and utilization of coping resources

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Profile of Children and Young People in Care

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:training A quick snapshot of children and young people in care

The most common reasons that children and young people are taken into care in relation to abuse and neglect

69% had experienced neglect, 48% physical abuse, 37% emotional abuse and 23% emotional abuse (Chambers et al 2010)

They may have also experienced other difficulties such as pre-natal exposure to alcohol, poverty, placement instability and other neurodevelopmental issues and ADHD and Autism

Children who are placed in out of home care display more behavioural difficulties and mental health problem than children who have had similar life experiences but not placed in care (Ford et al 2007 as quoted in Mclean 2016)

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- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represent 37% of the total population of all children that have been removed from their parents – a staggering 20,077 children – but represent only 6% of the total population of children in Australia.
- Without urgent action, the number of Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is projected to double by 2029.

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Healthy Child Development


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• What normative development looks like

The diagram illustrates five interconnected domains of child development: physical (green circle with a person icon), social (blue circle with two people icons), emotional (red circle with a heart icon), psychological (yellow circle with a brain icon), and behavioural (purple circle with a person icon). These domains are supported by three foundational pillars: Relationships (green bar), Safety (red bar), and Play and Learn (purple bar). The 'cetc:' logo is in the bottom right corner.

:training Child Development


- We become who we are as a result of a mix of genetics, temperament, and experience
- Nature and nurture interact to influence almost every significant aspect of a child's development
- The pace of development is very rapid in the early years
- Each developmental stage is identified by distinct physical, psychological, and emotional characteristics
- At each developmental stage the child faces developmental tasks that require the support of parents to achieve



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:training Child Development


- Healthy development occurs within the context of caring and supportive relationships
- The perceptions, abilities, and behaviour of children change as they grow
- Every area of development impacts on other areas
- Developmental delays in one area will impact on ability to consolidate skills and progress to the next developmental stage



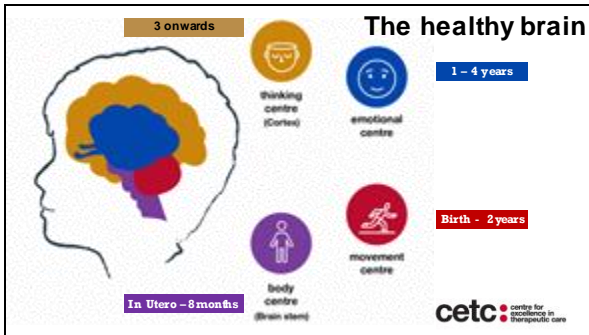
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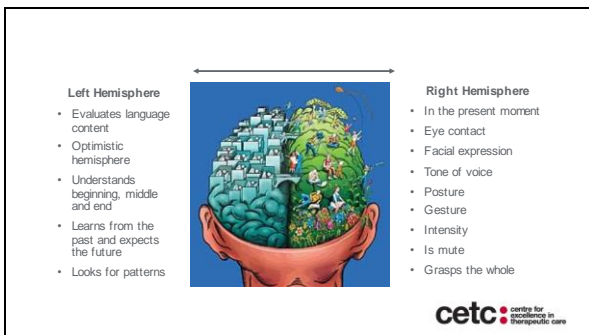
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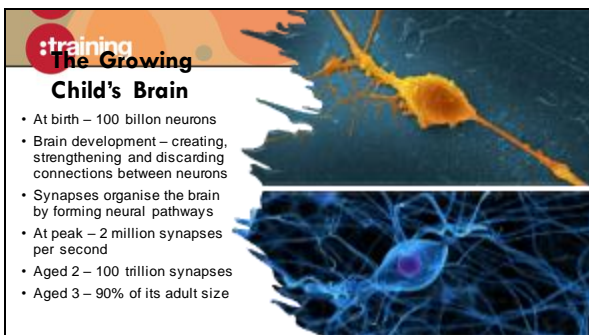
- Early experiences of abuse and neglect impact negatively on a child's developmental trajectory
- Children who miss out on successfully reaching earlier developmental milestones will need significant support to achieve these and move on to the next
- We need to distinguish between 'normal' behaviours for varying ages and stages and those that may indicate unmet developmental needs



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“ *In order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last, and always*

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979)

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- Experience love
- Share emotions
- Build trust
- Connect with others
- Have a sense of belonging
- Form meaningful relationships
- Read people's body language and behaviours

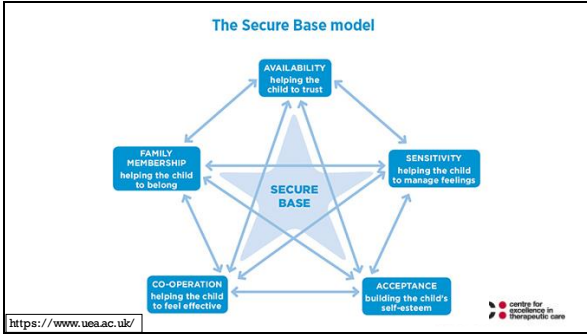
Our brains learn through interactions and forming bonds with others.

Relationships

Safety

Play and Learn

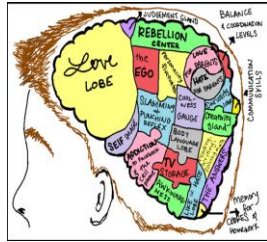
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- What is going on inside the brain in adolescence is different in childhood and adulthood.
- The brain process in adolescence is often defined as a period of *remodelling*.

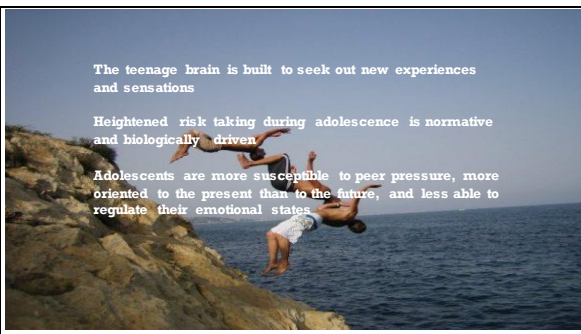


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The teenage brain is built to seek out new experiences and sensations

Heightened risk taking during adolescence is normative and biologically driven

Adolescents are more susceptible to peer pressure, more oriented to the present than to the future, and less able to regulate their emotional states



Remodelling in Three Different Ways

- 1. Reward-seeking overdrive
- 2. Hyper-aroused limbic system
- 3. Increased Plasticity

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Prefrontal Cortex: under construction

- Short attention span
- Impulsivity and increased risk taking
- Procrastination (lack of motivation or internal reward systems)
- Disorganisation (trouble working through long term goals)
- Poor Judgement and problem solving
- Reduction in ability to see things from other's perspective



- Young People's brains are also responsive to new experience – Neuroplasticity
- Practicing Healthy alternatives to problematic behaviours stimulates new pathways in the brain for change (Powell 2015)
- Young People can acquire new knowledge and maturity from exploration and experience
- There can be positive outcomes with coping with difficulties in life – post traumatic growth
- Importance to self monitor to maintain a strength focused approach



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Group Discussion

- Have you noticed young people you know or work with that show you through their behaviors that their brains are changing?
- Risk Taking - Novelty Seeking
- Making poor decisions – acting impulsively
- Increased Neuroplasticity – able to learn new things quickly
- Procrastination – lack of motivation





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Trauma is a response to overwhelming event(s) which is experienced by the individual as physically or emotionally harmful

What is Trauma?

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:training Different types of trauma

Simple Trauma

Describes a **single traumatic event** that lasts a short time and involves a one-off crisis.
For example, a serious accident, death of a family member or natural disaster.

Complex Trauma


Describes the impact on an individual from experiencing **multiple, chronic and prolonged adverse traumatic events**.
Examples include child abuse, bullying and discrimination, family violence, rape, war, imprisonment, and chronic health conditions.

:training Different types of trauma


Developmental Trauma

When a child experiences complex trauma it can have adverse effects on their development particularly the way the brain develops.

Because experiences of trauma can affect a person's behaviour, coping mechanisms, and ability to form relationships, people affected by trauma can inadvertently pass on the effects to the children in their care.



Inter-generational Trauma




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Colonial Trauma

Is transmitted across a number of generations

Colonial Trauma is described as a **complex, continuous, collective, cumulative and compounding** interaction of impacts related to the imposition of colonial policies and practices which continue to separate Indigenous Peoples from their land, languages, cultural practices, and one another. (T. Mitchell, 2019)



Inter-generational Trauma

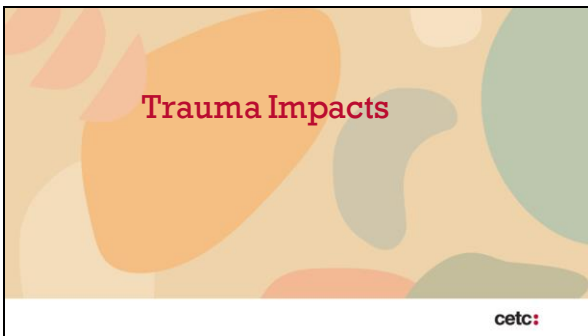


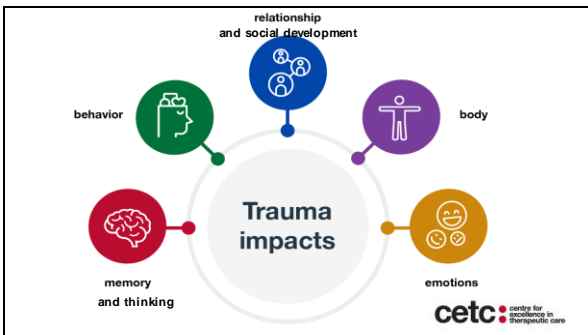
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“ when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next. What we learn to see as "normal" when we are children, we pass on to our own children. Children who learn that physical and sexual abuse is "normal" and who have never dealt with the feelings that come from this, may inflict physical abuse and sexual abuse on their own children. The unhealthy ways of behaving that people use to protect themselves can be passed on to children, without them even knowing they are doing so (Aboriginal Healing Foundation)





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Impacts depend upon.....


-  At what life stage of development the trauma is experienced
-  The nature and frequency of the events
-  Individual characteristics such as genetics and previous experiences
-  The level of support by significant others, before during and after the event(s)

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:training Activity : Impact of Trauma on James

- James can be polite and cooperative with staff and at other times can become angry very easily
- He seems to have the most difficulty with female staff hurling abuse about them being "piss weak and hopeless". He is also known to make racist comments to staff
- James and his brother Alex appear to feel safer and there are fewer problems with an older staff member Terry
- Both James and his brother struggle at nighttime, not wanting to go to bed, and will often delay the process with numerous requests for drinks, toilet breaks, etc.
- At the unit James keeps to himself or spends most of his time with his brother

• What are some of the impacts of trauma for James?



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:training Memory and thinking

Memory	Thinking/cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impaired retention and recall • Difficulty concentrating • Intrusive memories and flashbacks • Memory gaps • Memory triggers and associations • Impaired working memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypervigilance and distractibility • Negative self belief • Reduced attention span • Lack of planning and organising skills • Difficulty with decision making • Reduced problem solving skills • Learning difficulties

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:training Potential behaviours

Aggression	Self destructive	Self isolation	Risk taking and rule breaking
Avoidance	Emotional numbing	Poor impulse control	Difficulty with authority

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:training Relationships and social connections

Relationships	Social interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust issues • Attachment issues • Fear of rejection or abandonment • Reluctance to seek support • Cultural disconnection and identity loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social withdrawal and isolation • Difficulty establishing boundaries • Impaired social skills • Feelings of alienation • Peer rejection or exclusion • Peer influence (negative) • Difficulties with conflict resolution

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:training Body

Sleep disturbances	Unexplained head and stomach pain	Poor immune system	Body tension
Poor eating habits	Hypervigilance	Heightened startle response	Gastro disorders
	Impaired body regulation	Physical health issues	

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:training Emotions

- Anxiety and/or depression
- Self esteem issues
- Irritability and anger
- Emotional numbness
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Guilt and shame
- Emotional regulation challenges
- Emotional Flashbacks
- Helplessness or powerlessness
- Trust and intimacy issues
- Emotional reactivity
- Emotional avoidance/expression

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WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

How Trauma Can Affect Your Window Of Tolerance

HYPERAROUSAL
Anxious, jittery, Out of Control, Overwhelmed. Your body reacts on fight or run away. It's not something you choose - these reactions just take over.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE
When you are in your Window of Tolerance, you feel that you can deal with whatever's happening in your life. You might feel stress or pressure, but it doesn't bother you too much. This is the ideal place to be.

HYPOAROUSAL
Sleep, Zoned Out, Numb, Frozen. Your body reacts to shut down. It's not something you choose - these reactions just take over.

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:training Window of Tolerance

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

As long as the stress stays within this window, there is no health and a person can function normally.

Relationships & the Window of Tolerance

Young person's movement in their window

Movement in my window

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:training ACTIVITY

This activity is done in pairs

1. Write down three things that are important in your life on a sticky note

2. Give your paper to another person

3. Their role is to cross one out and give back to you

4. How does it feel?

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In James shoes

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For some children and young people trauma feels like being in a washing machine – constantly agitated back and forth with no escape.

For some children and young people trauma feels like being an exploding volcano.

For some children and young people trauma feels like being in an out of control barrel that has just gone over the top of Niagara Falls.

For some children and young people trauma feels like living under perpetual threat such that they live in a constant state of vigilance and heightened alarm.

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“ Children and young people’s behaviour can hide the real picture of what is going on for them. For example, because of its intensity, anger can mask many other feelings in children and young people such as frustration, confusion, sadness, fear, and distress. Trauma-based behaviours are often also referred to as "behaviours that challenge".

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training Beliefs about Behaviours that Challenge

Please select one of the following for each item:

Totally agree **Somewhat agree** **Disagree**

- Behaviour is a form of communication
- Some young people just want attention
- Some young people are born that way
- There are reasons behind young people's behaviour
- Behaviours are most easily changed when a young person feels safe

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Behaviours that Challenge

Coping Communicating Connecting

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What Happens When We Focus Just On the Behaviour?

Attachment - Function of behaviour

- Faced with danger a child will seek safety
- Faced with distress, they will seek comfort
- Faced with isolation, they will seek proximity
- Faced with chaos they will seek predictability

Quick Fix

↓

Problem Recurs

Baim & Morrison, 2011

What does behaviour tell us?

What we see are the behaviours that challenge - the learned behavioural responses to survive their pain and betrayal!

Underneath it all is all the pain and sadness, the fear of not being good enough, not loved and the shame of not even being wanted

- Feeling and hearing "I am so bad I can't even live with my family."
- My life is a constant struggle of hurt and pain. Everyone asks why I am so angry? Why do I push people away and try and hurt myself and them?
- I feel like nobody cares about me
- The people who are supposed to love me and keep me safe, hurt me
- I will end this relationship before it starts so it won't hurt so much
- I don't need anybody. Do I even matter?
- I believe I am unlovable, I am bad, only I can keep myself safe
- I really want to feel safe, loved, cared about just for who I am. I want to have friends and fun like other kids
- I want to feel capable, included, respected and connected. I want to belong, but I don't know how!
- I'm trying to tell you all this but you are not hearing me.

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:training Case Study - James

- James can become upset and agitated when a boundary is set eg he is told no or after a phone call with his mother. James will often refuse to follow directions such as bedtimes and can become verbally aggressive towards staff. He also throws things around eg threw the phone at the wall after contact with his mother and slammed doors. On one occasion he punched a hole in the wall of his bedroom
- What might be some underlying reasons for James' behaviour ?
- How might you respond to James?

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Engaging with Children and Young People in Residential Care

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Specific techniques are relatively unimportant in addressing behaviours that challenge compared to the power of therapeutic relationships, which are the result of a pattern of interaction over time. As Howe (2011) says: "If relationships are where things go wrong, then relationships are where they are going to be put right".

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Instead of seeing a young person who is not doing well as because they do not want to"


**Shift your thinking to
"young people do well if they can"**

Ross Greene



Engaging with Children and Young People

- Spend time developing a relationship with a young person whilst they are calm, get to know the things they enjoy, notice the early signs of distress and consider how you can provide comfort and support to them
- Ask open-ended questions
- Emphasise listening over talking
- Pay attention to nonverbal language
- Do not try to solve problems too quickly
- Follow up and follow thru
- Be aware of your own personal insecurities and keep them in check



Engaging with Children and Young People

- Provide consistency, and predictability both in relationships and the general structure and routine of their day
- Help them manage overwhelming emotions
- Help children and young people to name emotions
- Teach relaxation skills and encourage activities that allow for positive emotions exercise, art, and music



training PACE: Daniel Hughes

- Playful
- Accepting
- Curious
- Empathic

"PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the child feel safe. It is based upon how parents connect with their very young infants. As with young toddlers, with safety the child can begin to explore." Dan Hughes

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PACE cheat sheet:

P keep it light, be silly, find the fun (where possible)


A see the young persons feelings and needs separate to the behaviour and respond to them first.

C 'I wonder what...?' 'What do you think?' questions and guess and check

E 'That sounds really tough' 'that must have been really hard'.

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Homework : Relational Snakes and Ladders




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Summary of what we have covered

- Gained a good understanding of typical child and adolescent development with a focus on the role of attachment and brain development
- Developed an understanding of the different impacts of trauma on a child and young person's development
- Responding to children from a trauma-informed perspective



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Link to Practice Guide for Behaviours that Challenge following :
<https://cetc.org.au/app/uploads/2021/03/CETC-Practice-Guide-Behaviours-that-Challenge.pdf>

And
Practice Guide for Empowerment & Limit Setting
[empowerment-limit-setting-practice-guide.pdf \(cetc.org.au\)](https://cetc.org.au/app/uploads/2021/03/CETC-Practice-Guide-Empowerment-Limit-Setting.pdf)

If you are interested in our free other resources that we have please visit
<https://cetc.org.au/publications/>

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Thank you for listening

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