

**cetc:** centre for excellence in therapeutic care

**:training**

**Understanding child and adolescent development and the impact of trauma on children in out of home care**

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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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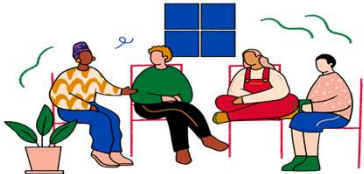
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**:training Agenda**

- 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
- Understand the impact of caring for children and young people on self



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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 two words in the chatbox each in response to each of the three questions

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**training** Activity : Keeping the child in mind

- Draw a picture of a child or young person that you are working with
- In your picture consider representing what might they enjoy doing.
- Who might they spend time with?
- Who do they rely on for care and connection ?
- Where and with whom do they find safety in their world?



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- Session 1:
- Risks to Healthy Child Development

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## Slide 4

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**CF1** Cyra Fernandes, 2/10/2023

**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 another of 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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**What normative development looks like**

The diagram illustrates five interconnected developmental domains: 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). Below these domains are three colored boxes: Relationships (green), Safety (red), and Play and Learn (purple). The 'cetc:' logo and the number '8' are in the bottom right corner.

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**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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**:training Child Development**

- 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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**:training Activity: Normal Development**

In small groups:

- Provide an overview of normal development for your allocated group
- What might you notice in children and young people you care for at that stage of development
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Did you notice any difference between the children you care for and what you read?



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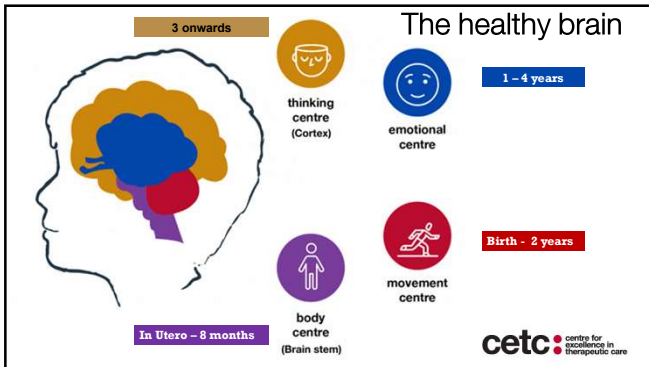
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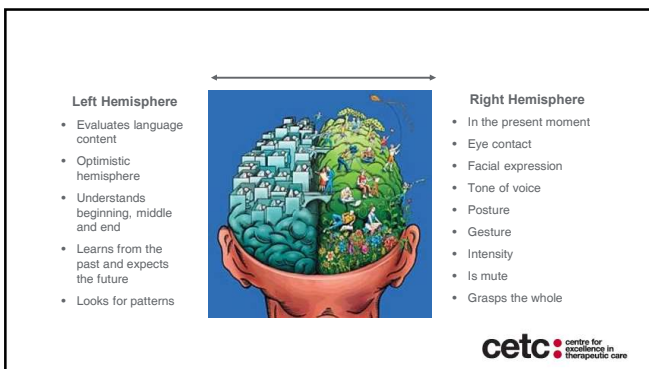
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**:training**

**Brains**

*"It's all about nurturing relationships. Early relationships build children's brains and their futures."*

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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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Children come into the world biologically pre-programmed to form attachments with others, because this will help them to survive.

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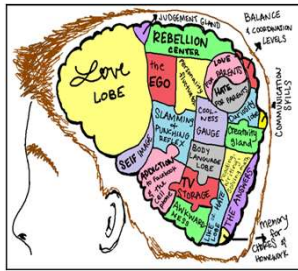
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- What is going on inside the brain in adolescence is different in childhood and adulthood.
- The brain process in adolescence is often defined as a period of *remodelling*.



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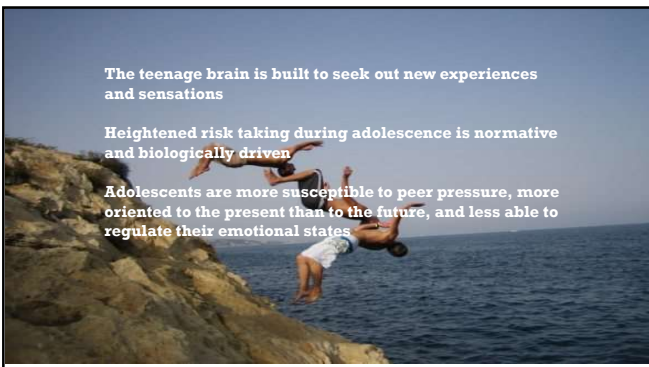
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The teenage brain is built to seek out new experiences and sensations

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




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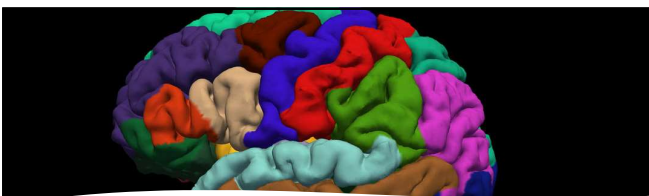
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**Remodelling in Three Different Ways**

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

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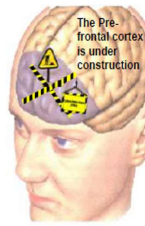
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### Prefrontal Cortex: under construction

- 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



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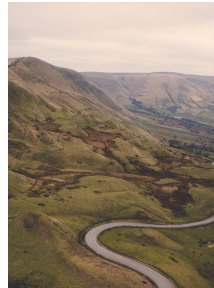
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- Young People's brains are also responsive to new experience – Neuroplasticity
- Practicing Healthy alternatives to problematic behaviours stimulates new pathways in the brain for change ( Powell 2015)
- Young People can acquire new knowledge and 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 or life threatening.

**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.

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**: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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**:training Developmental Trauma**

- Trauma – especially complex relational trauma – experienced during a time of development can have significant impacts as children and young people are very vulnerable to the effects of trauma because of their brain’s developmental immaturity.
- Because children rely so much on the adults around them, they are even more intensely affected when it is these adults who cause harm to them. The trauma associated with experiences of interpersonal violence undermines the very resource that can help children recover – the stability and predictability of their connections with others.
- When we use the phrase ‘Developmental trauma’ we are including children who are neglected, abused, forced to live with family violence or experience high parental conflict in the context of separation or divorce.

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**:training Different types of trauma**

Trans-generational Trauma

Colonial Trauma

Is transmitted across a number of generations  
Occurs without direct stimulus but is instead passed from a parent or grandparent who has experienced a traumatic event

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)

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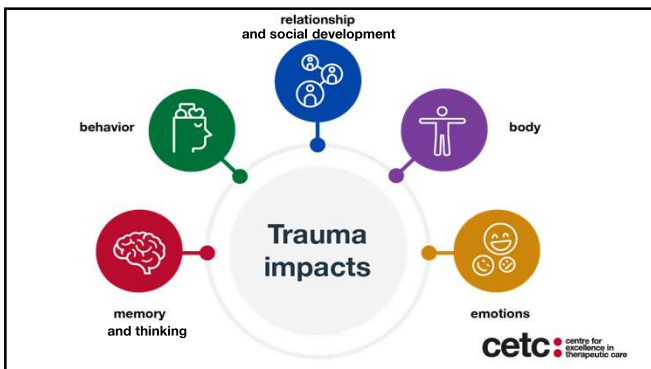
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### Impacts depend upon.....

- 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 : Keeping the child in mind

- Go back to the child or young person that you drew at the start of the session
- Represent (through drawing) how trauma may have impacted them ( you can do the same or different drawing)
- How has it affected their development?
- How has it affected their relationship with peers, carers and other adults ?



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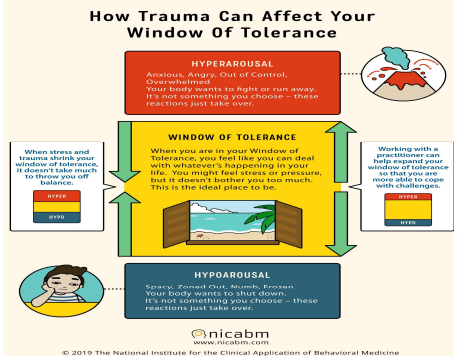
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### How Trauma Can Affect Your Window Of Tolerance



**WINDOW OF TOLERANCE**

**HYPERAROUSAL**  
Anxious, Angry, Out of Control, Overwhelmed  
Your body wants to 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 like 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**  
Spacey, Zoned Out, Numb, Frozen  
Your body wants to shut down. It's not something you choose - these reactions just take over.

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**Activity in Small Groups: Impact of Trauma on Development**



Consider the impact of trauma on the development of the child / young person for your allocated age group

Make sure you include physical, emotional, relational, social, and cognitive impacts for your allocated age group

- Does you see any of these trauma indicators in the young people you are caring for

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**Understand the importance of self-care and strategies to prevent and address vicarious trauma**

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**“**

Caring deeply about others makes us emotionally vulnerable to the catastrophes that affect them” –Charles Figley

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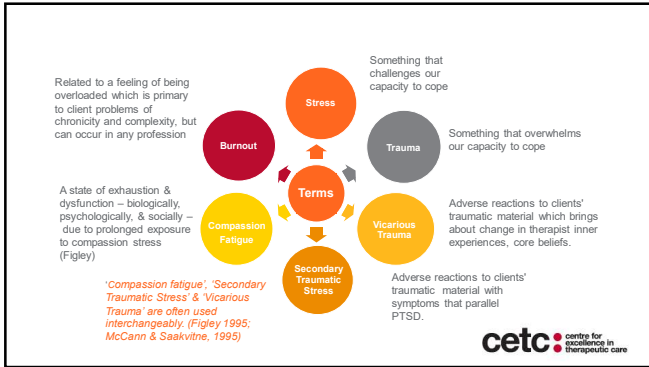
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**Multidimensional:**

- Physical
- Sensory
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Relational

**Can include:**

- Fatigue
- impaired immune system
- sleep and appetite disturbances
- Anxiety
- hyper vigilance/control issues
- decreased self esteem
- loss of interest in tasks
- Avoidance – avoiding client contact or supervision

Not all indicators in isolation will determine vicarious trauma. However, experienced collectively, these can have a significant impact on the individual, the team and organisation.

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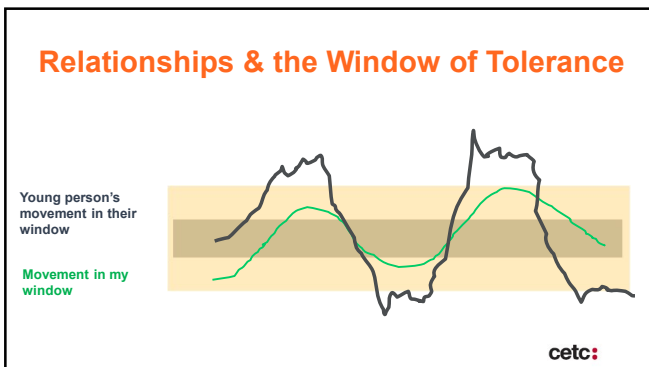
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- Maintaining self-care through the day and prioritising healthy lifestyle/personal wellbeing
- Life outside of work incorporates social, relaxing, spiritual, fun aspects
- Supportive and healthy relationships
- Work-life balance : maintaining healthy boundaries
- Personal & professional values align with the work
- Personal wellbeing plans are well-integrated & effective



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**Homework : Relational Snakes and Ladders**



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**:training 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
- Focused on the importance of self-care in our caring role



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**What will we cover next week**

- Explore in more detail the impacts of trauma on children and young people
- How to respond to children and young people from a trauma-informed perspective
- Consider the role of culture in our understanding and responses to children and young people who have been adversely affected by trauma

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**Link to Practice Guide for Behaviours that Challenge following :**  
<https://cetcc.org.au/app/uploads/2021/03/CETCC-Practice-Guide-Behaviours-the-Challenge.pdf>

**And Practice Guide for Empowerment & Limit Setting**  
<empowerment-limit-setting-practice-guide.pdf>  
 (cetcc.org.au)

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

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**Thank you for listening**

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