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**Messages of safety**

Looking after yourself during our time together is important.

Our own self story, experiences, feelings, distress, sadness, and disappointments can bring up or trigger responses that are overwhelming and make us feel unsafe.

When hearing the stories of others, thinking and talking about children who have experienced significant abuse, neglect and persecution can sometimes have a triggering effect also.

Your emotional safety is paramount, so please take care of yourself throughout the day.


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**“We know we cannot live in the past but the past lives in us”**

**Dr Charles Perkins**





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**hope with a Leaf**

**SASHA - 15 years old**

Drawn by 15 year old Sasha, this picture portrays her spirit beginning to grow again inside her dead body. Sasha had been sexually abused by her step father.

What are the strengths you see in the children, young people, families and communities you work with?

What do the children and young people you work with do well?




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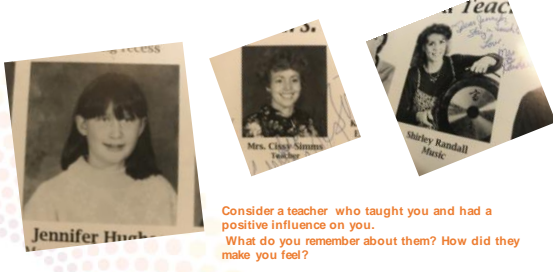
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Consider a teacher who taught you and had a positive influence on you. What do you remember about them? How did they make you feel?

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### Understanding Neuro sequential Brain Development

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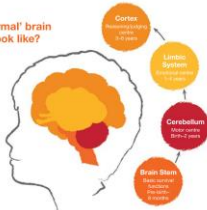
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### Brain Development

What does 'normal' brain development look like?



Cortex  
Limbic System  
Cerebellum  
Brain Stem

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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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### 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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### Amygdala & Hippocampus


**Amygdala**

- the 'smoke detector' of the brain
- is mature at birth
- processes & stores implicit memories

**Hippocampus**

- matures between 2-3yrs of age
- provides context to memories & embeds into long-term memory



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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- executive function

- Responsible for executive functions, such as judgement, reasoning, and self awareness. Final part of the brain to reach maturity in late twenties to early 30s



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### Development of left and right hemispheres

The diagram illustrates the development of brain hemispheres in five stages:

- 0-2 years:** Right hemisphere
- 2-4 years:** Left hemisphere
- 4-6 years:** Right hemisphere
- 6-8 years:** Left hemisphere
- 8+ years:** Integrated

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

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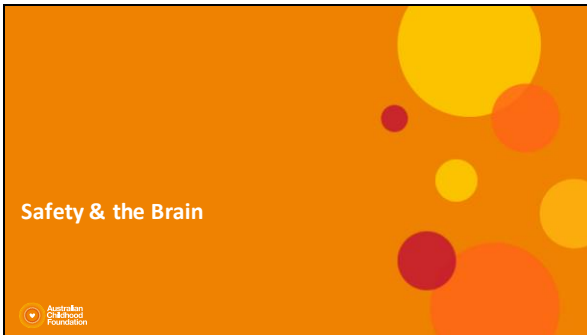
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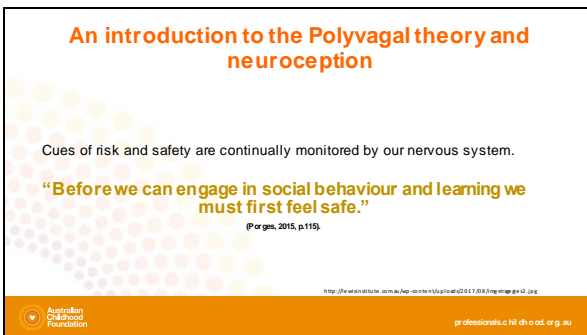
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### Polyvagal theory and Protective Responses

by Stephen Porges

Behavioural Functions	Body Functions
<b>Social Engagement</b> Soothing and calming Indicates safety	<b>Hyper-arousal</b> • Lowers or raises vocalisation pitch • Regulates middle ear muscles to perceive human voice • Changes facial expressivity • Head turning • Tears and eyelids • Slows or speeds heart rate
<b>Mobilisation</b> Fight or Flight Active Freeze Moderate or extreme danger	<b>Hyper-arousal</b> • Increases heart rate • Sweat increases • Inhibits gastrointestinal function • Narrowing blood vessels - to slow blood flow to extremities • Release of adrenaline
<b>Immobilisation</b> Collapse or submission Death feigning Increased pain threshold Conserves metabolic resources Life-threatening situations	<b>Hypo-arousal</b> • Slows heart rate • Constricts bronchi • Stimulates gastrointestinal function

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### Changes in Arousal States

<b>Affect:</b> Shame, anger	<b>A R O U S A L</b>
<b>Thought:</b> "I'm a screw up, this is unfair"	
<b>Behaviour:</b> Hitting, running away	
<b>Sense of self:</b> "I am bad, I am broken"	
<b>Consciousness:</b> Hyper-focused, narrow, rigid	
<b>Affect:</b> Joy, pleasure	<b>Window of Tolerance - optimal arousal zone</b>
<b>Thought:</b> "This is fun, "I'm good at this"	
<b>Behaviour:</b> Increased, sustained effort	
<b>Sense of self:</b> "I'm competent, I can do this"	
<b>Consciousness:</b> Focused and flexible	
<b>Affect:</b> Shame	<b>A R O U S A L</b>
<b>Thought:</b> "I don't care, I can't do it"	
<b>Behaviour:</b> Collapsing, spacing out	
<b>Sense of self:</b> "I am bad, I am broken"	
<b>Consciousness:</b> Diffuse, spacy	

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### Co-Regulation

When people are in relationship one's ability to regulate themselves in relation to their window of tolerance will effect the others ability to regulate themselves in relation to their window of tolerance

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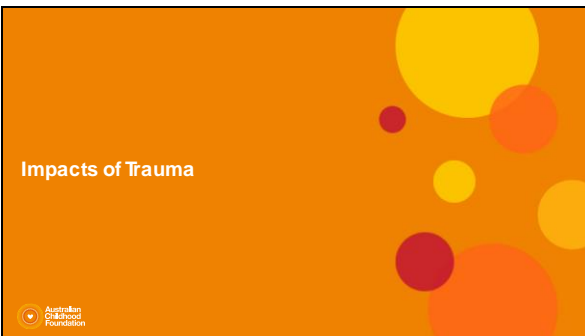
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**Defining trauma**

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

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Trauma can impact all elements of student's development: brain, body, memory, learning, behaviour, emotions, relationships.

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Trauma and exposure to chronic stress experienced during childhood and adolescence shake the foundations of healthy brain and body development.

They trap their development and prevent them from maturing emotionally, psychologically and cognitively.

Children may not progress much beyond the developmental milestones that they had achieved prior to the start of their experiences of abuse and violence.

Children and young people who have suffered this degree of trauma find it difficult to adapt to their environment.

In order to best support them, the environment should adapt to their needs. This occurs when relationships surrounding children are safe, predictable and nurturing.

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Exposure to chronic toxic stress or complex trauma affects key brain structures which integrate dimensions of memory.

The emotional and physiological resonances of traumatic experiences are stored as memory fragments in the limbic system, cerebellum and brain stem without reference points. They do not connect to detailed explicit memories (i.e. the facts) of the events in which these reactions occurred.

Traumatised children and young people are lost in time. Their present and their past are mixed up and confused.

They shut down traumatic memories and therefore find it difficult to make sense of what has happened to them and what continues to drive their thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

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Traumatised children may perceive feelings as a threat, because they can activate memory traces of trauma. Memory traces evoke intense physiological stress responses in the body (as if they are back in the past). They learn to shut down/disconnect from their feelings. They do not learn to understand their own feelings, express them in words or link them to events. They have difficulty understanding the feelings of others. They need adults responding to them in a consistent, congruent and validating manner. Adults who help them settle, connect their feelings and experiences with words and help them understand what happened.




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Traumatised children have poor relational experiences, which may be associated with fear and mistrust. They may not experience adults as a source for comfort and help.

They are not comfortable with new experiences and in new environments.

Supporting children to re-experience relationships with a safe adult is the key to trauma recovery and change:

- Consistent and positive communication
- Acknowledge and validate children's feelings
- Being protective, a source for comfort and support
- Even when their behaviour is challenging




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Trauma-based behaviour, in general, serves important adaptive functions. It often makes sense in the context in which it first emerged.

Reshaping trauma-based behaviour by responding to the source. There could be multiple drivers:

- Comfort seeking, including self-soothing
- Seeking connection, but experiencing rejection
- Self-Protection
- Sensory overload



Traumatised children struggle to internalise collective rules or understanding the consequences of breaking rules

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Traumatised children's capacity to learn is compromised:

- Toxic stress affects memory
- Elevated levels of stress hormones impact attention span and concentration
- Possible delays in language acquisition and comprehension
- Likely difficulty with logic and sequencing tasks and narrative based exercises
- Challenges reading the play and flow of a sports game
- Social interaction and tasks requiring cooperation can be sources of stress



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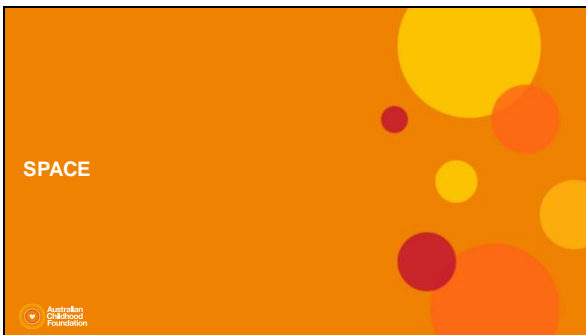
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SPACE



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STAGED ADAPTIVE ENABLED

S P A C E

PREDICTABLE CONNECTED



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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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## Predictable You

“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

Hiam Ginott



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## Adaptive



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## Adaptive



- Traumatized children rely on a limited set of behavioural routines to respond to people and challenges in their environment.
- Strategies which promote adaptability are those which are able to maintain multiple meanings for behaviour. NOT just one specific trigger!
- Keep an open mind to multiple options for interventions.

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### Building understanding of behaviour

- Behaviour is communication
- 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
- Openness and curiosity about behaviour is an important response




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### Connected




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### PACE Approach (add to slide)

- Playfulness
- Acceptance
- Curiosity
- Empathy

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# Enabled

Children need to know more about what makes them who they are.

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# Enabled

- Engaging students in the process of understanding themselves can build social and emotional well being.
- Learning about and identifying feelings, understanding them and practice communicating them with others in socially cohesive ways bolsters emotional regulation.
- 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

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# Self Care

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"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."

R.N. Remen, M.D. 1996



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### Caring for yourself and each other

- Teaching is hard work
- This work can challenge our sense of who we are, our beliefs about the world and our core values
- We need a combination of both self care and community care strategies

Caring for ourselves is an essential part of this work



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### Awareness

1. My own stress levels
2. Recognising my own emotions and where they are coming from?
3. What measures do I take to alleviate stress and take care of my physical, emotional and mental health?

### Reflection

1. What are my warning signs and how do I recognise them?
2. How can I safely and appropriately release my emotions when the pressure is too much?
3. What can I do to maintain a positive approach about myself in my role?



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### Develop Your Self Care Plan

1. What might get in the way?
2. What negative strategies do you need to avoid?
3. If you implement your plan, how might you feel?



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