

**Early Years**

Trauma Informed Practice in Early Years  
Koorana 25 Jan 2024

Australian Childhood Foundation

1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

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.

Australian Childhood Foundation

2

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Session Goals**

- From Behaviour Management to Trauma Informed Practice.
- Neuroscience of normative brain development in young children
- Understanding impact of trauma on brain and behaviour
- Building nurturing and supportive relationships with children and families
- Understanding vicarious trauma and the importance of caring for yourself

**Early Years**

Australian Childhood Foundation

3

---

---

---

---

---


---


---

---

### Trauma and Me

- *Where has trauma touched my life?*
- *What does it mean for me, to be working with children affected by relational trauma?*



**Early Years** 

4

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

## From Behaviour Management to Trauma Informed Practice



5

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

### From reacting to responding



**Early Years** 

6

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Shark Music



Early Years



7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Recognising Thoughts, Feelings & Behaviours

Thoughts	Feelings	Behaviours	
'It's my fault'	Angry	Screaming	Manipulative
'I don't care'	Anxious	Property damage	Controlling
'I deserve this'	Blame	Out of control	Hoarding
'I'm unloved'	Sad	Oppositional	Impatient
'Nobody wants me'	Terrified	Defiant	Disruptive
'I can't trust anybody'	Depressed	Biting	Depression
'I'm not safe'	Worried	Eating disorders	Avoidance
'I'm better off on my own'	Guilty	Problem sexual behaviours	Poor hygiene
'I have no control'	Vulnerable	Social	Withdrawn
'Will they hurt me?'	Reckless	Unsettled	Destructive
'I'm alone'	Fear	Trapped	Substance abuse
'I want to go home'	Worthless	Worried	Extreme risk taking
'Not sure where I fit'	Complacent	Unsettled	Hyperactive
'I hate myself'	Confused	Worried	Trapped
'I'm stupid'	Lonely	Worried	Worried
'I miss my family'	Lonely	Worried	Worried
'I hate everybody'	Lonely	Worried	Worried



What are the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of the person who is thinking?

Early Years



8

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

## Working with Protective Responses

**Fight or Flight**  
Hyper-vigilant, action-orientated, impulsive, reactive, self-destructive




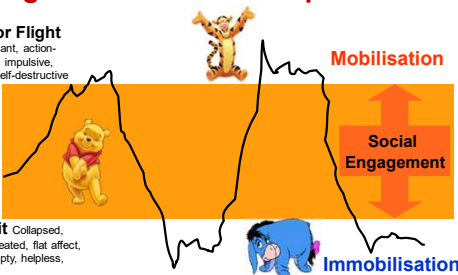
**Mobilisation**

**AROUSAL**


**Social Engagement**

**Immobilisation**





Early Years



9

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



**How The Brain Develops**

Australian Childhood Foundation

10

---

---

---

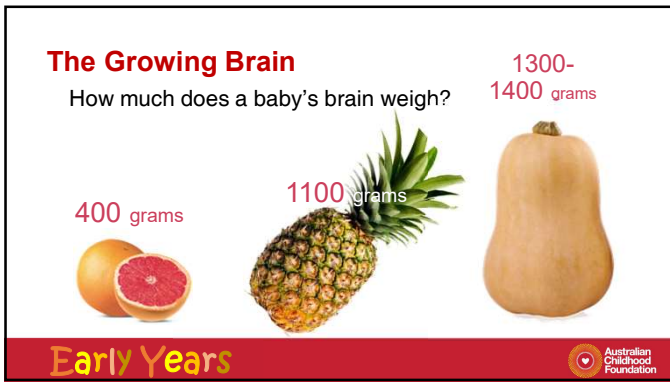
---

---

---

---

---



**The Growing Brain**  
How much does a baby's brain weigh?

400 grams	1100 grams	1300-1400 grams
-----------	------------	-----------------

Early Years Australian Childhood Foundation

11

---

---

---

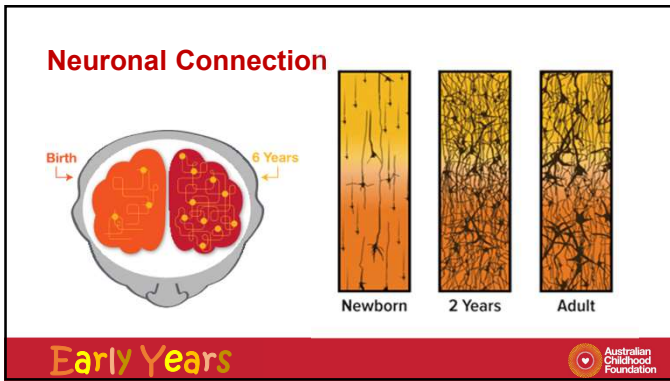
---

---

---

---

---



**Neuronal Connection**

Birth → 5 Years

Newborn 2 Years Adult

Early Years Australian Childhood Foundation

12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Relationships**

**Early Years**

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**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

**Early Years**

14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Growing the Brainstem**

Provide activities which are rhythmical and synchronous with others:

- Rhythmic sounds - stories, songs, rhymes & music
- Rhythmic movement
- Rhythmic touch

**Early Years**

15

---

---

---

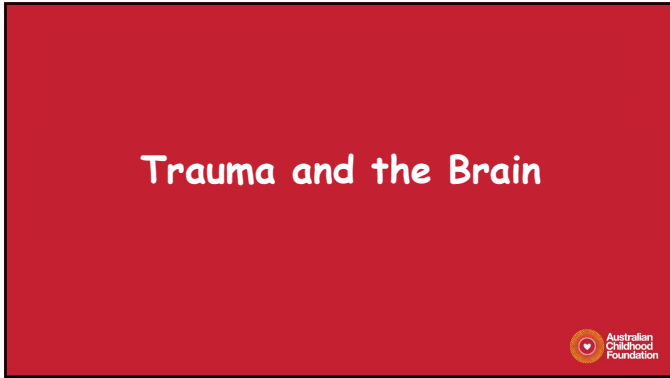
---

---

---

---

---



16

---

---

---

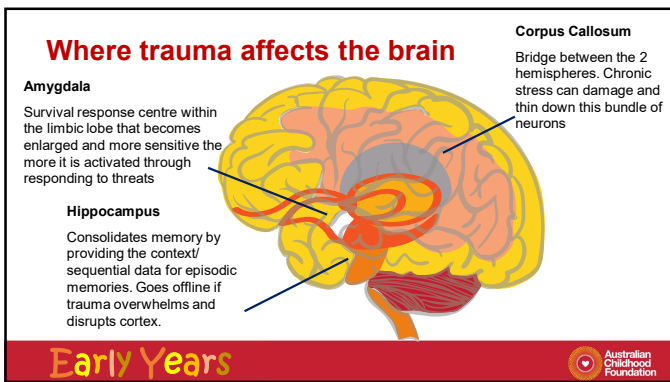
---

---

---

---

---



17

---

---

---

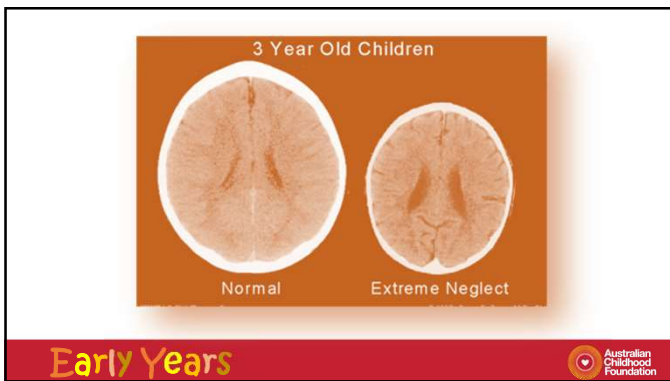
---

---

---

---

---



18

---

---

---

---


---

---


---

---

Children are very vulnerable to the effects of trauma because of their brain's developmental immaturity - their brains are malleable, so the impact of trauma is faster to manifest and leaves deeper tracks of injury.



**Early Years**



19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Behaviour is a Story**



**Early Years**



20

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

**What Trauma Looks Like**



21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Internal Working Models

<b>View of self</b>	I am lovable I am worthy	I am unlovable I am unworthy
<b>View of others /relationships</b>	Others are responsive Others are loving Others are interested in me Others are available to me	Others are unavailable Others are neglectful Others are rejecting Others are unresponsive
<b>View of the world</b>	The world is relatively safe	The world is unsafe

**Early Years** Australian Childhood Foundation

22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Living in Survival Mode

**Early Years** Australian Childhood Foundation

23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### The 'Still Face' Experiment – Ed Tronick

**Early Years** Australian Childhood Foundation

24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**The Family**



25

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**The Paradox of the Family**

We look to it for nurture and care



It is the institution in society where the most violence occurs

**Early Years**



26

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

**Role of Early Childhood Educators in Repair**



27

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

**“ Play is a neural exercise and I have never met a child who is able to resist being part of this type of exercise ”**  
*Theresa Kestley*



**Early Years** Australian Childhood Foundation

28

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Neuroplasticity**



<http://highexistence.com/its-all-in-your-head-how-to-take-advantage-of-neuroplasticity/>

**Early Years** Australian Childhood Foundation

29

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Reframing our Approach**

Rather than asking:  
*“What are you doing?”*  
 and  
*“How can I stop it?”*

Ask: *“What are you trying to tell me?”*  
 and  
*“What do you need from me?”*

**Early Years** Australian Childhood Foundation

30

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Follow the Child's Lead**

Anger      Sadness  
 Joy  
 Fear      Curiosity  
 Shame

**Early Years**

31

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Building Predictability**

OUR LIVES ARE SO PREDICTABLE

I KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO SAY THAT

**Early Years**

32

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Neuroception of Safety: Predictability**

*Predictability is a metaphor for safety.*

“The removal of threat is not the same as the presence of safety”  
 (Porges, 2014)

Up's & Downs Cards – Innovative Resources

**Early Years**

33

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Building safety and connection

Managing transitions and change is extremely difficult for traumatised children

- transitions are experienced as a threat
- they feel a loss of their sense of safety
- they may revert to survival mode

How can you help children to feel safe during TRANSITIONS?

Early Years



34

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Transitions

List all the transitions you expect children to traverse in one ordinary day

- How many are essential?
- How can you provide safe passage for children through the transition?
  - ❖ Safe Person
  - ❖ Safe Activity
  - ❖ Safe Place



Early Years



35

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Practice Frameworks



36

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Undertake a Sensory Audit

**Early Years**

37

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Models of Trauma Informed Practice

Playful  
 Accepting  
 Curious  
 Empathic

**P.A.C.E**  
(Dan Hughes)

**Early Years**

38

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### P.A.C.E

- **Playful** – light, open, hopeful, spontaneous.
- **Accepting** – unconditional acceptance of the experience of the child (feelings, emotions and thoughts).
- **Curiosity** – non-judgemental, active interest in the child's experience, as well as behaviours to learn what is triggering them.
- **Empathy** – about past hurts and present challenges. A 'felt' sense of the child, which is actively experienced and communicated.

**Early Years**

39

---

---

---

---

---


---


---

---

**Empathy**

'I'm sorry that happened' 'that must be really hard',  
'that must feel really bad'.



**Early Years** 

40

---

---

---

---


---

---

---


---

**Playfulness**



*"A sense of playfulness is the best defense against taking yourself too seriously."*  
- Peter Kai Chang

"I really prefer it when you call me by my name rather than swear at me!"

**Early Years** 

41

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Acceptance**

"Thanks for telling me about what happened. I feel sad that you've had such a difficult time."



**Early Years** 

42

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

**Curiosity**



“I wonder if you might be feeling sad because Mum left you today? Do you think that might be what’s going on?”

**Early Years**



43

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Mapping the System**



**Early Years**



44

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Models of Trauma Informed Practise**

- Needs
- Unconditional positive regard
- Re-frame child’s perceptions
- Time in & repair
- Use words for child’s experience
- Reflect back child’s feelings
- Enjoy play together

**N.U.R.T.U.R.E**

**Early Years**



45

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Anticipate child's Needs					
Unconditional positive regard					
Reframe child's perceptions					
Time in and repair					
Use words for child's experience					
Reflect back child's feelings					
Enjoy play together					

Early Years



46

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Taking Care of Yourself



47

---

---

---

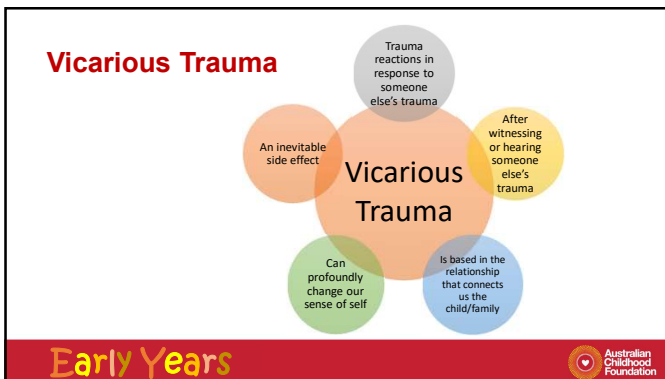
---

---

---

---

---



## Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious Trauma

Early Years



48

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Impacts of Working with Trauma

Personal:

- Experiencing current stressful life circumstances
- Blurring the lines between home and work
- Forgetting to take time out or undertaking activities that are pleasurable, relaxing and fun

Early Years



49

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Impacts of Working with Trauma

Professional:

- Hearing stories of children's and family's trauma and abuse
- Lack of experience, training and understanding of children who have experience trauma
- Not accessing supervision

Early Years



50

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Workplace Symptoms



<https://www.holyface.com/25/positive-aggressive-office-kitchen-notes/>

<https://www.theballo.com/13-18/abuse-acts-of-vengeance-you-need-to-see/>

Early Years



51

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



52

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Supporting Each Other

- Recognise signs and symptoms in others
- Provide education about vicarious trauma
- Support and value each other
- Ensure the workplace culture acknowledges and accepts vicarious trauma as a real condition
- Encourage taking time out and taking leave

Early Years Australian Childhood Foundation

53

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**It is a strength to ask for help.**

Early Years Australian Childhood Foundation

54

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Prescription (My self-care activity)	Dose (how long?)	Frequency				
		Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Yearly
Call or visit a friend or family						
Practice breathing / muscle relaxation						
Walk, play sport or exercise						
Have a bath						
Read a book or magazine						
Have one-to-one time with your partner						
Watch a movie						
Listen or dance to music						
Write, paint or play an instrument						
Cook your favourite meal						
Go out for dinner						
Do some gardening						
See a counsellor						
Go away for a weekend						
Go on holiday						

Early Years



55

---

---

---

---

---


---

---


---

**Safe harbour**

*'Be my anchor when I'm all at sea'*  
PREDICTABLE PERSON



*'Ferry me to calmer waters'*  
SING-SONG VOICE  
RHYTHMIC, REPETITIVE ACTIVITY  
SENSORY INPUT



Early Years



56

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---