



Australian  
Childhood  
Foundation

# Bringing Up Great Kids (BUGK) Handouts

Facilitating respectful,  
reflective & effective  
parenting groups





# Stop...Pause...Play



When we can relate to our children with mindful awareness we activate a part of the brain (the medial pre-frontal cortex) which allows our defensive systems to switch off, putting us in a more relaxed state and allowing us to think and act more rationally and to step outside our own experience so that we can **BE MORE PRESENT TO OUR CHILDREN'S NEEDS.**

This is an exercise that we will practice every week or use any time you need to take time out to calm down before you respond to whatever is going on.



## Stop

- Stop what you are doing.
- Make sure your feet are placed firmly on the ground.



## Pause

- Focus on your breath.
- Breathe in slowly, right down into your belly, then exhale completely.
- Take 5 more slow breaths, being aware of each breath in and each breath out.
- Smile and enjoy standing like this for a moment. Feel your body relax.
- Reflect. Ask yourself "What do I need?" and "What does my child need?"



## Play

Respond to your child with new understanding.



# Breathing Relaxation Exercises



## 1 Abdominal Breathing

Place one hand over your heart and the other over your abdomen. Breathe normally, noticing the rise and fall of your chest and abdomen. Continue this practice for about 10 breaths.

## 2 1,2,3.....Sigh!

Count slowly 1...2...3 (either aloud or silently) as you breathe in. Then give a long sigh as you breathe out. Repeat this several times until you feel yourself calming down.

## 3 Snake breathing

Breathe in normally. Then with a long breath out, make a SSSSSSSSS sound like a snake.

## 4 Bee breathing

Breathe in normally. Then make a humming or buzzing sound like a bee as you exhale an extended breath out.

## 5 Feather breathing

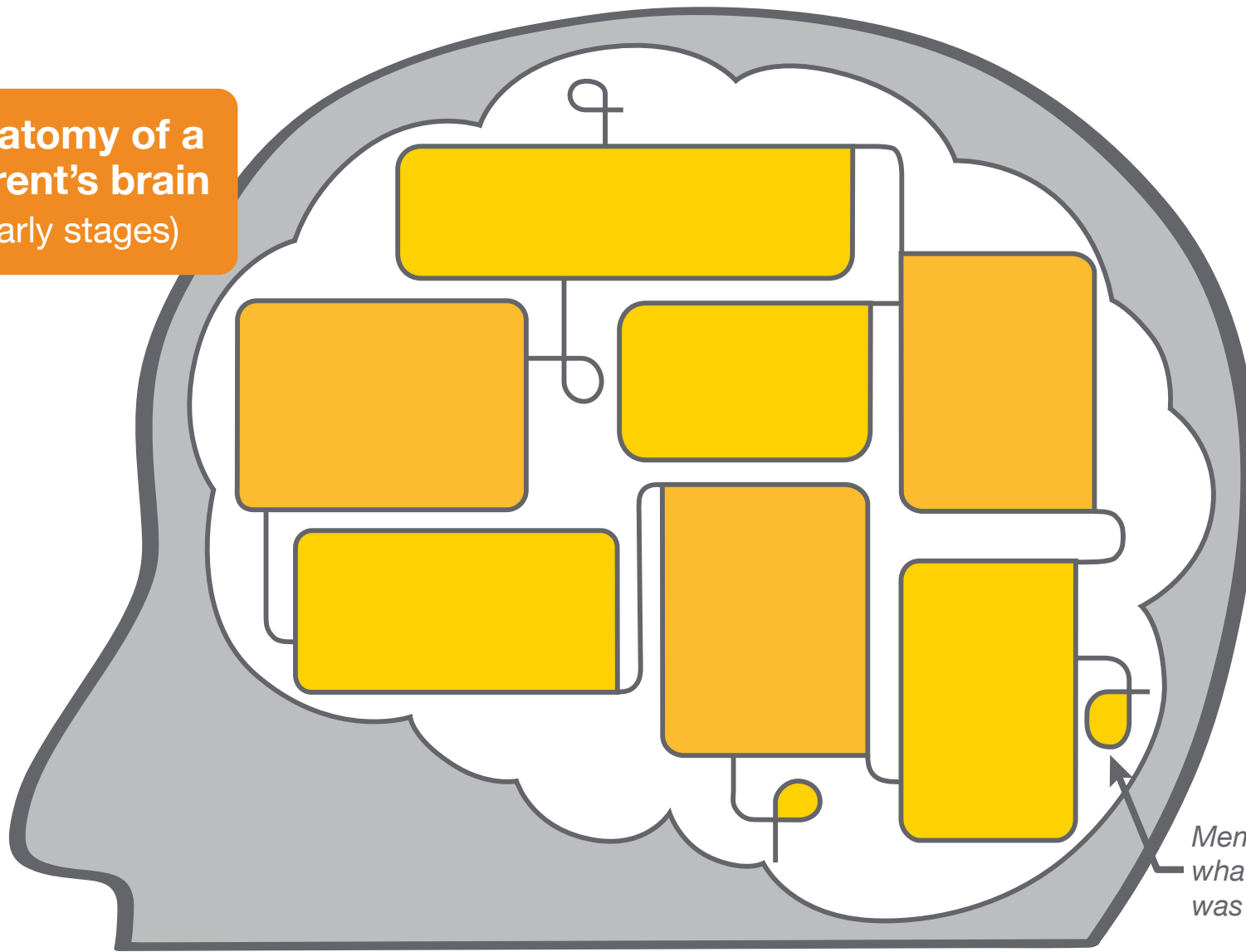
Hold a soft feather in one hand and raise that hand as you breathe in. Let go of the feather and breathe out slowly as you watch the feather float to the ground. Try to make your breath out last until the feather reaches the ground.



# Incomplete Parent Brain



Anatomy of a Parent's brain (early stages)



Memory of what life was like

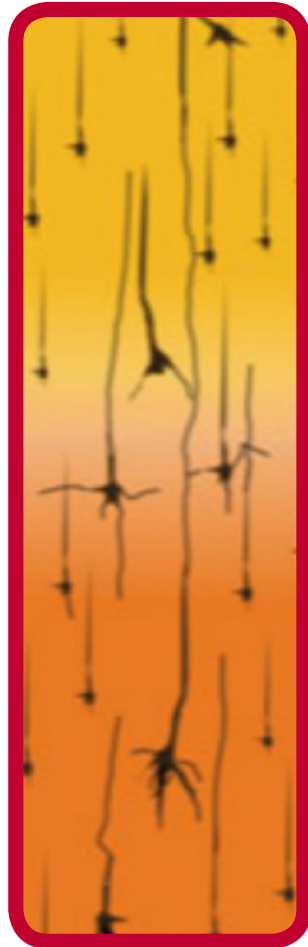




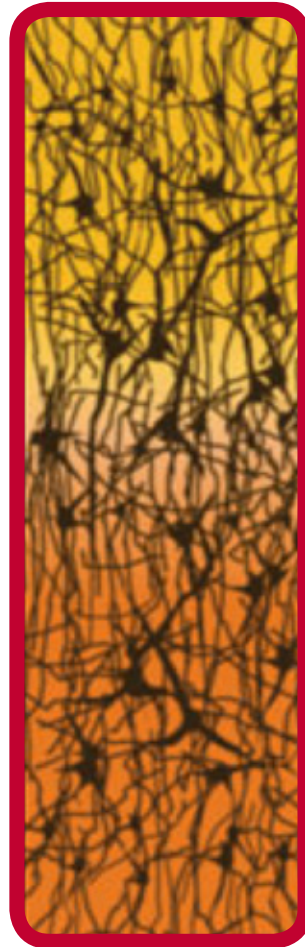
# Note page



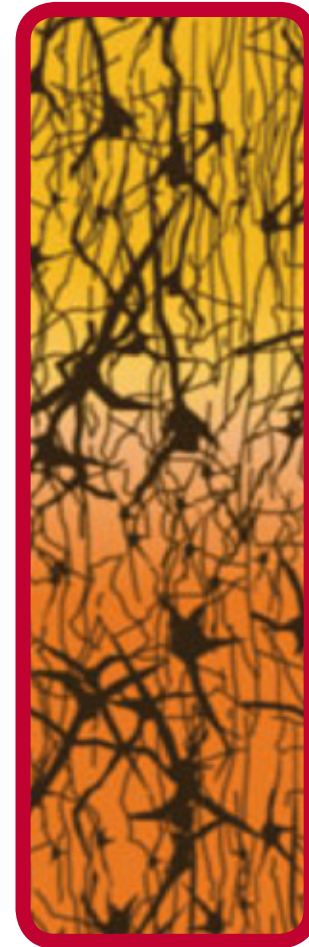
# Neuronal Connections



**Newborn**



**2 Years**



**Adult**

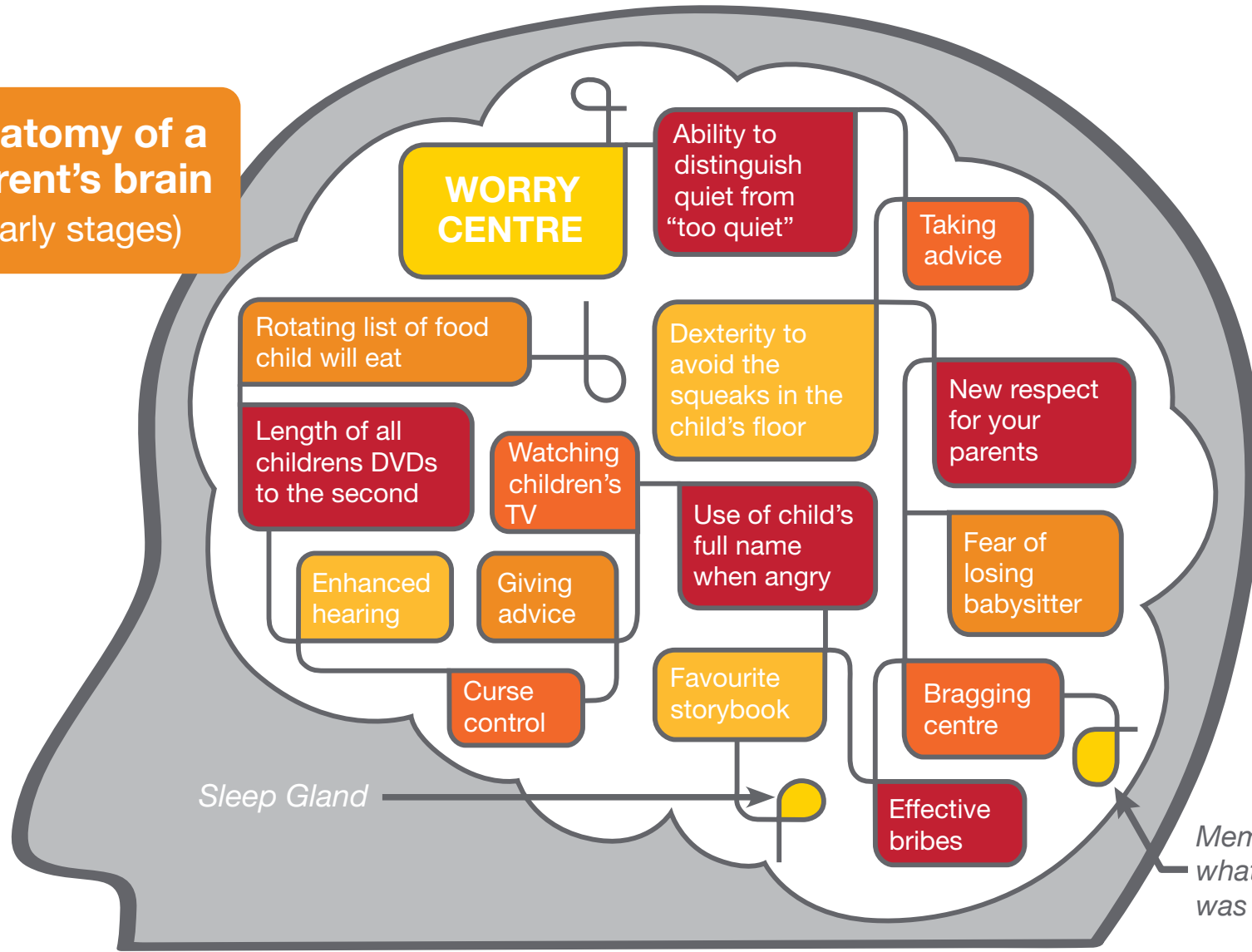




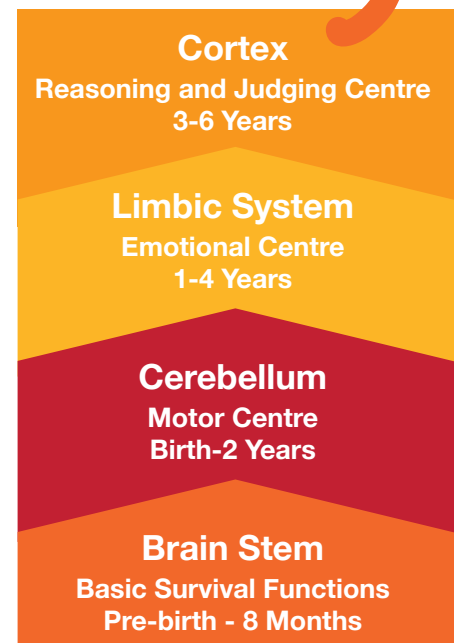
# Complete 1st Parent Brain



Anatomy of a Parent's brain (early stages)



# Bottom-Up Brain Development



The brain is comprised of different structures that grow and develop at different rates and different times.

The **brain stem** area of the brain develops first and is responsible for basic functions that **keep us alive** such as heart rate, breathing and regulating our body temperature. The brain stem is fully developed at birth. It is the part of the brain that is 'hard wired' and least susceptible to change.

Connected to the brain stem is the **cerebellum** or motor centre of the brain. This area is responsible for **movement** and develops over the first few years of life. Development in this area is seen in babies gaining head control, sitting, crawling and walking. In the next few years, children will gain greater co-ordination, learn to skip, kick a ball, ride a bicycle, cut, draw and eat with cutlery.

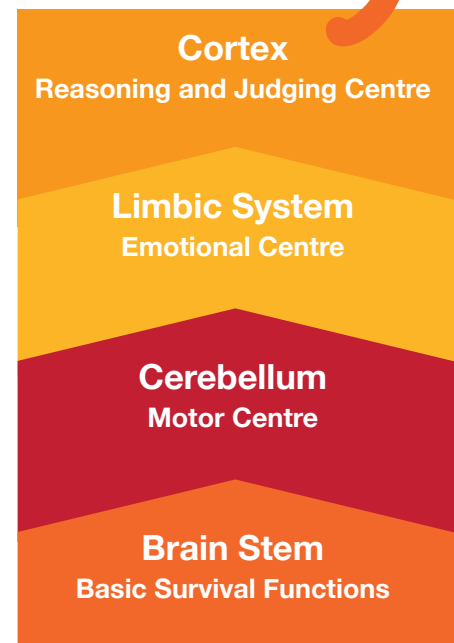
The **limbic system** is the **emotional** centre of the brain and rules the lives of young children up to around four years. During the toddler years, the limbic system goes through a period of rapid development. This helps explain their bursts of irrational behaviour and tantrums. Toddlers need our help to manage their **strong** feelings. Young children **feel** then **act**, they **can't think** then **act**. This is due to the emotional centre of their brain developing before the cortex, or the thinking part of their brain. Young children basically view the world through an emotional lens.

The **cortex**, or thinking part of the brain, is the last part to develop. This is the part of the brain responsible for reasoning, planning and problem solving. This is the part of the brain that enables humans to **think** before they **act**. As children grow and develop, the cortex is gradually able to help us to pause when we are flooded by **strong** emotions, thus allowing us to **feel, think, then act**.

Unlike the brain stem, the limbic system and cortex are highly susceptible to change due to experience and the environment in which the child lives.



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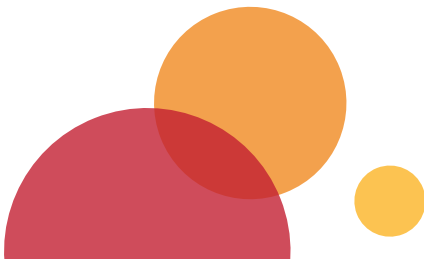
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# My children



If you had three wishes for your children 20 years from now, what would they be?

A large red thought bubble with horizontal lines inside for writing.A large red thought bubble with horizontal lines inside for writing.A large red thought bubble with horizontal lines inside for writing.

# 10 Breaths

When something wonderful touches you, savour the experience by offering it 10 full breaths. By paying close attention to special moments, we come to see that opportunities for happiness present themselves many times each day.

## Give your 10 breaths to anything that seems wonderful to you

- Something beautiful from Nature
- A special moment with your child/partner/friend
- A piece of music
- Eating something delicious
- A work of art

- 1 Stop whatever you are doing
- 2 Close your eyes, place a hand on your belly and take 3 deep breaths to calm yourself.
- 3 Open your eyes and focus on your special object/person/experience
- 4 Stay focused on whatever has caught your attention as you 'count with your body', 10 slow breaths, by pressing and releasing in turn, each finger resting on your belly.
- 5 If you are still entranced by your special moment, repeat the 10 breaths practice.

# Anthill Scenarios



7 month old

Cries loudly when left at Childcare and when put in cot for sleep.

My child does that because he is feeling...  
What he needs is...  
When he does that I feel...  
... because I need ...

2 year old

Screams, throws them self on floor and kicks, when taken off coin-in-slot ride at shopping centre.

My child does that because he is feeling...  
What he needs is...  
When he does that I feel...  
... because I need ...

4 year old

Cries loudly when left at Childcare and when put in cot for sleep.

My child does that because he is feeling...  
What he needs is...  
When he does that I feel...  
... because I need ...

6 year old

Stares at the window during class time, leaves work uncompleted.

My child does that because he is feeling...  
What he needs is...  
When he does that I feel...  
... because I need ...

8 year old

Hits other children and disrupts other children's games.

My child does that because he is feeling...  
What he needs is...  
When he does that I feel...  
... because I need ...

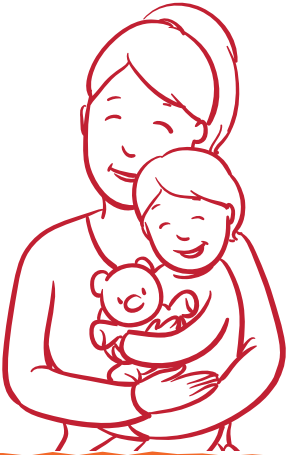


10 year old

Very quiet, with a blank expression on their face. Never asks for help. Chooses to stay in the library at lunchtimes.

My child does that because he is feeling...  
What he needs is...  
When he does that I feel...  
... because I need ...

## Children's Behaviour



Situation	Behaviour	Understanding (emotion, reason, intention)
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# Chinese symbol for listening



聽 Listen

耳 Ear  
眼 Eye  
心 Heart  
一 One (whole body undivided attention)  
王 King

聽



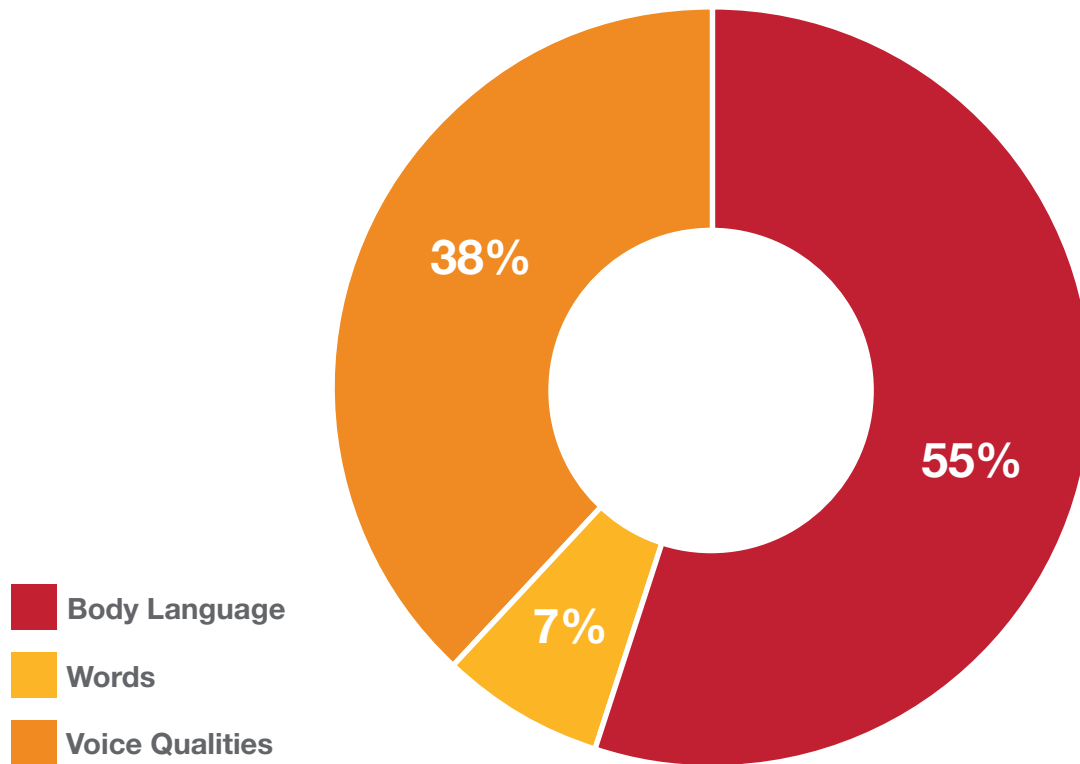


# Are we missing anything?



When parents have a new baby they learn about the baby through their body language “cues”. Some examples would be when your baby is tired they might rub their eyes or when their tummy hurts they pull their little knees up to their tummies.

## Communication Pie

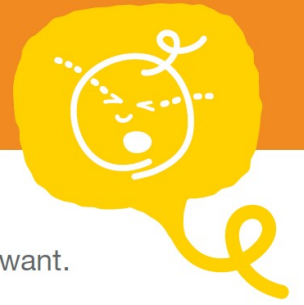


Somehow when children become verbal, parents forget to use the skill of reading body language and only listen to the words. We are only using 45 percent of the communication pie and missing 55% of opportunities to tune into our children “missing cues”.

Are we putting up communication barriers by not embracing all elements of the communication pie?



# Feelings and Needs Cards



Cut out each card and fold them in half. You may choose to laminate the card if you want.

bringupgreatkids.org

rest/sleep safety shelter touch

play creativity hope belonging

empathy love nurturing respect

security trust comfort support

**Needs**

**Feelings**

calm	happy	proud	playful
curious	enthusiastic	angry	mad
sad	frightened	lonely	scared
bored	excited	fulfilled	relaxed

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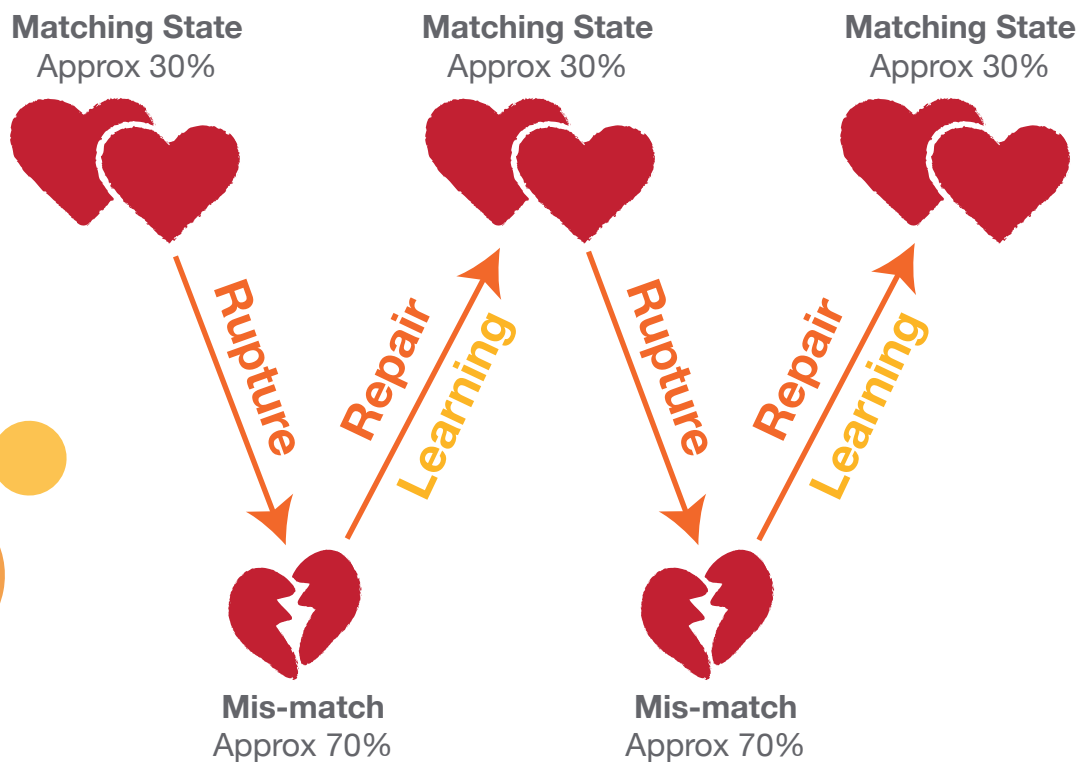
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calm	happy	proud	playful
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# Good Enough Parenting (Ed Tronick)



Having a look to this illustration, please discuss the following questions in your group:

- How do you feel about your relationship with your child?
- How can a rupture in relationship be an opportunity for learning and growth?
- Do you feel able to repair after a relationship rupture?



# Family Case Scenario 2



## James, a single dad, cares for his three children.

Adam, aged 6 who demonstrates some challenging behaviours and has recently been diagnosed with ADHD. Sarah, aged 10, is a very nervous child who struggles to make friends. Sam, aged 3, is a very sociable and friendly child.

The only support James gets each week is from his mum who lives nearby and looks after the children two afternoons a week.

The house James has been renting for five years has been sold and will no longer be available for rent. There are no other houses in the nearby area within James's budget so he no choice but to move to the other side of town to where he can afford to rent. The move will mean a change of schools and finding a new day care for Sam.

## Group Discussion



Consider the children in the scenario and what the change of circumstances may mean for each one, take into account each child's;

- Stage of development
- Personality / Temperament
- Gender
- Position in the family

Consider possible impacts on the child's:

- Feelings
- Sense of security
- Friendships
- Behaviours



# Family Case Scenario



## Shalini and Jack Murphy have four children:

Darren, their sensitive 10 year old son, attends the local primary school; Kieran, their sociable 6 year old son, is in his early years at school; Three year old Kevina their only daughter, is known as the comedienne of the family and has started an early years program this year; and their placid baby boy, 8 month old mason.

The family has recently moved to the country from their home of the last 10 years in the inner suburbs of a capital city, to a rural area where they now live on a small farm property.

While the family was living in the city, Jack went out to work for 5 days each week. Since the move to the country, he works from home.

Shalini has not returned to the workforce since Mason's birth.

## Group Discussion



Consider the child in your 'age group' and what the family's change of circumstances might mean for him or her. Take into account, the child's:

- Stage of development
- Personality
- Gender
- Position in the family

Consider possible impacts on the child's:

- Feelings
- Sense of security
- Friendships
- Behaviour

