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The Australian Childhood Foundation



We Help Children Heal

On their own, children do not recover from the devastating impact of abuse, neglect and family violence. They need specialised support to heal. We provide therapeutic services to children.



We Keep Children Safe

We build the ability and confidence of individuals and organisations to protect children. We provide parents with education and support to help them raise happy, safe and loved children.



We Stand Up for Children

We advocate for changes to laws and policies that help to make all children safer. We work to strengthen community attitudes that prioritise the rights of children to love and safe relationships.



We Create Understanding for Children

We educate and support adults who look after and work with traumatised children to be better able to understand and respond to their complex needs.



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Our Education Services

Access our latest offerings:
<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/training-development/>

- Our Education Services co-create and amplify knowledge that changes children's lives for the better, by creating networks of learning in partnership with professionals and organisations working with children and young people.
- Our efforts include:
 - Accessible learning opportunities for professionals: a range of self-paced modules and virtual classrooms covering trauma prevention, relational healing and evidence-based approaches to best practice.
 - Customised organisational education: tailored training packages designed to support ongoing staff development, including Train The Trainer options for long-term success.
 - Accredited training: our unique Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma



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Our Safeguarding Services

- Over a decade, Safeguarding Services have partnered with over 300 organisations nationally and internationally to strengthen the capacity of institutions to keep children and young people safe.
- We offer a suite of standard and customised solutions that meet national and state Child Safe Standards, aimed at creating organisational culture change.
- We draw on best practice from the Foundation's experience and our network of partners, and evidence, including our recent Safeguarding Evaluation by the Centre for Social Impact.

Access our latest offerings:
<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/safeguarding-children-services/>

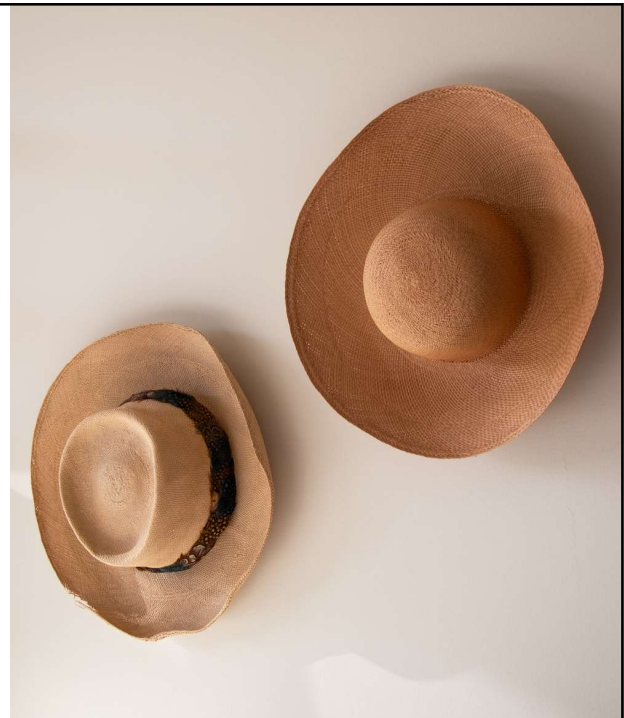


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Safety

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 training and if you need support please ask the facilitator.



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Learning Outcomes:

Develop an increased understanding of the impact of trauma on children and how it may present.

Develop confidence in building strong and healing relationships with children and young people.

Develop strategies for building relationships with children and young people impacted by trauma that are accessible and applicable.



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Reflective Question:

What makes the best kinds of learning spaces for children and young people?



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Neurobiology

Developing our understanding of Neurobiology, the study of brain and nervous system function, provides a clear lens to understand child development and the way trauma can impact that development.

Knowledge of how our brain takes in, processes, and reacts to information allows us as educators to have a wider understanding of what is happening *within* the child as they move through our school environments.



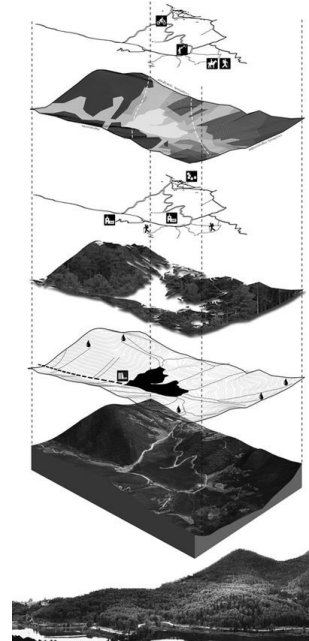
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We are biologically primed to use relationships to develop as human beings.

The way our need for safety, love, and connection in our earliest of moments was met inform our brains development and the way we see others around us.

Our needs, experiences of Trauma, our learned patterns of attachment join together to create an individual landscape of Mental Health.

Like different layers of a map each concept informs the way an individual has developed and the way in which they engage the world



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Making SPACE for Learning

SPACE is the central acronym of the program. It includes 5 domains to help educators better understand the needs of children who have experienced trauma and ways to support them in the educational setting.



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What is Trauma?

Trauma is the emotional, psychological and physiological reactions caused by the prolonged and overwhelming stress that accompanies experiences of abuse, neglect and family violence.

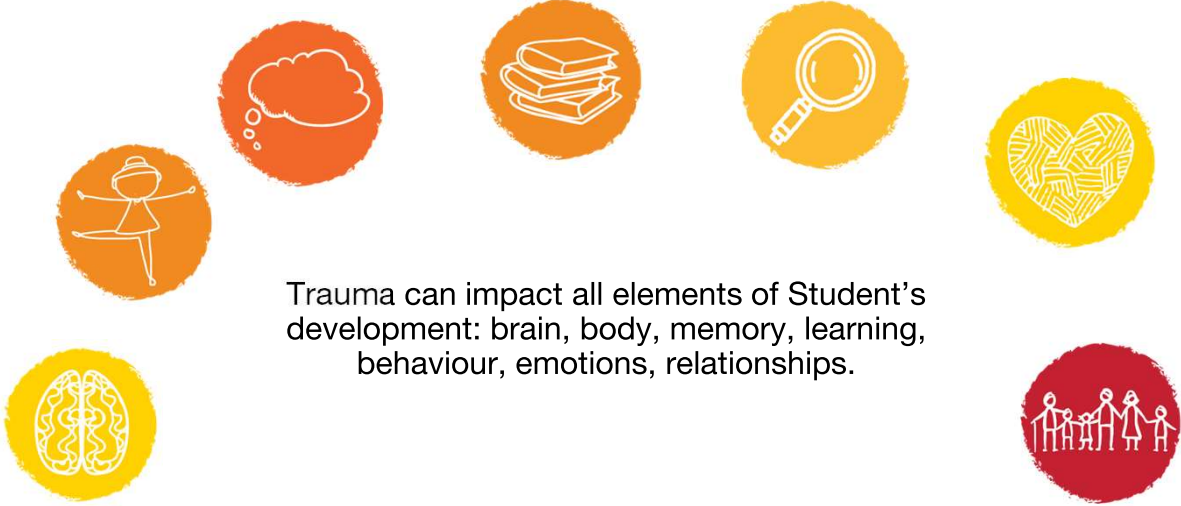
The trauma that results from experiences of abuse, neglect or family violence is often called **complex trauma** or **developmental trauma**.

This type of trauma occurs in the context of relationships and is different to the trauma that may be caused by a one-off event such as a car accident or bush fire.


Children and young people are very vulnerable to the effects of trauma because of their brains' developmental immaturity.



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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 needs

The residue of trauma becomes an experience of unmet needs for children.

Children are left with needs that in the moment of hurt, pain and fear are unfulfilled. These needs stay activated ready for available relationships to respond to them, see them and gradually help them to be met.

These needs are physiological, developmental, and interpersonal, requiring relational investment and presence in order to be resolved

“ It is like they are on a loop hoping that their needs for safety, attention and validation that were not fulfilled will eventually find at least one relationship in the present that meets these needs consistently over time “ Joe Tucci



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Staged

- Brain development is sequential
- One of the ways our brain develops is vertically, from the bottom to the top
- Some neurodevelopmental delays such as those effected by trauma can cause brain changes. However with the right support the brain can be repaired through neuroplasticity.

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The Importance of Culture



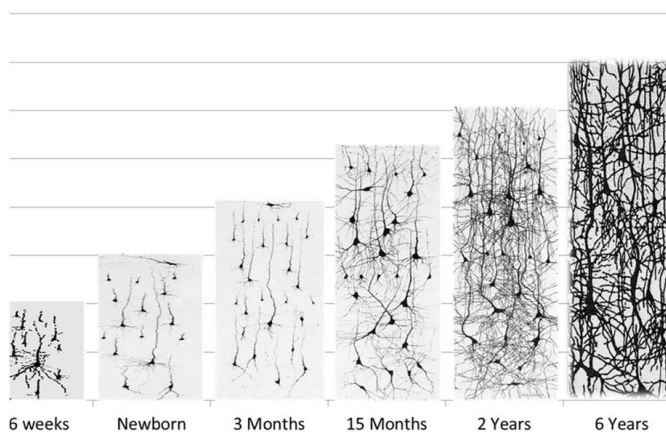
How did you become who you are?

Safety: Belonging
Relationships: Connection
Meaning making: Identity



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Neuronal development

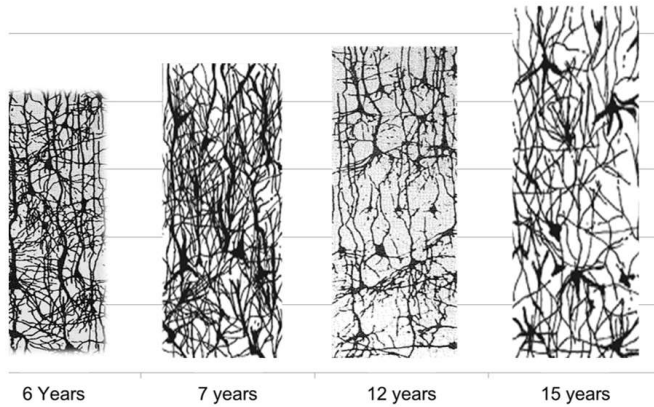


- Rapid growth occurs from birth to 6 years
- **Critical period** of development
- Healthy neuronal development occurs through **relationships, regulation, repetition**



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Neuronal development



- Early years – period of **rapid growth**
- Followed by onset of puberty in which **synaptic pruning and formation of new neurons** occurs.



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Staged- Sequential Brain Development



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Prefrontal Cortex

Final part of the brain to reach maturity in one's mid to late twenties

- self awareness
- reasoning and judgement
- foresight and anticipation
- focusing and sustaining attention
- planning organising and prioritising
- decision making
- reflecting
- enthusiasm, motivation and persistence
- impulse control
- working memory



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Trauma Impact

Behaviours associated with an overactive **limbic system** and under-active **pre-frontal cortex**

- Lack of impulse control
- Increased risk taking
- Emotional dysregulation
- Inability to regulate
- Misreading of social cues of others
- Reactive, rather than responsive

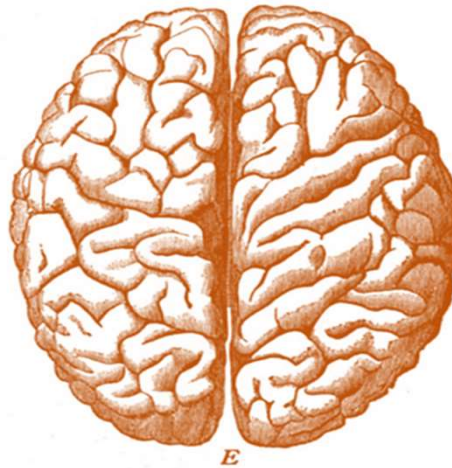


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Hemispheric Intergration

Left Hemisphere

- Evaluates language conte
- Optimistic hemisphere
- Understands beginning, middle and end
- Learns from the past and expects the future
- Looks for patterns



Right Hemisphere

- In the present moment
- Eye contact
- Facial expression
- Tone of voice
- Posture
- Gesture
- Intensity
- Is mute
- Grasps the whole



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Integration



Strategies for transforming: strengthening the individual hemispheres

Building the Right Hemisphere

- Use attunement activities
- Use relational-based activities
- Practice mutual smiling, laughing
- Play mirroring games based on facial expressions
- Practice voice copying
- Model appropriate gestures and proximity

Building the Left Hemisphere

- Provide language and logic activities
- Play strategy games
- Have discussion times in class
- Incorporate cognitive processes into calming or stimulating activities
- Count when doing breathing activities
- Involve students in debates



Strategies for transforming: strengthening the corpus callosum and integrating the hemispheres

Emotionally

- Attune into students' facial expressions & body language
- Notice how they may be feeling
- Provide language: "I notice that you are/ have... (ie tears in your eyes, yawning...)"
- Be curious "I wonder if you are feeling..."
- Use emotion cards/worksheets
- See "Amygdala" for more ideas

Physically

- Have activities that cross the "imaginary midline" in the body
- Clapping games
- Doing physical activities and sport activities – ie playing tennis
- Play games and sing songs such as "The Hokey Pokey"
- Desktop drumming activities
- Cup song games



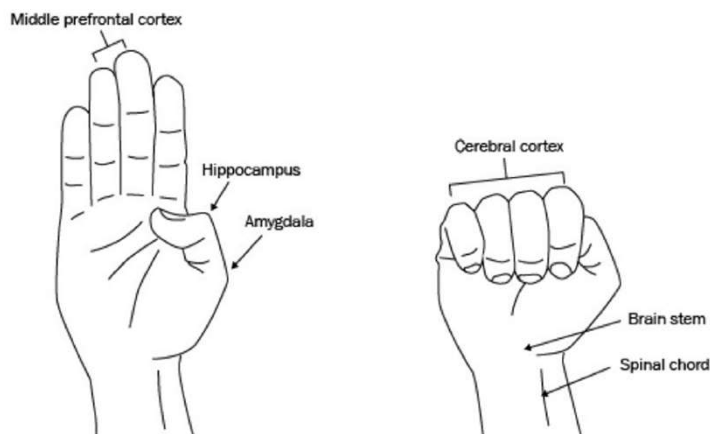
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Adolescent Brain Development



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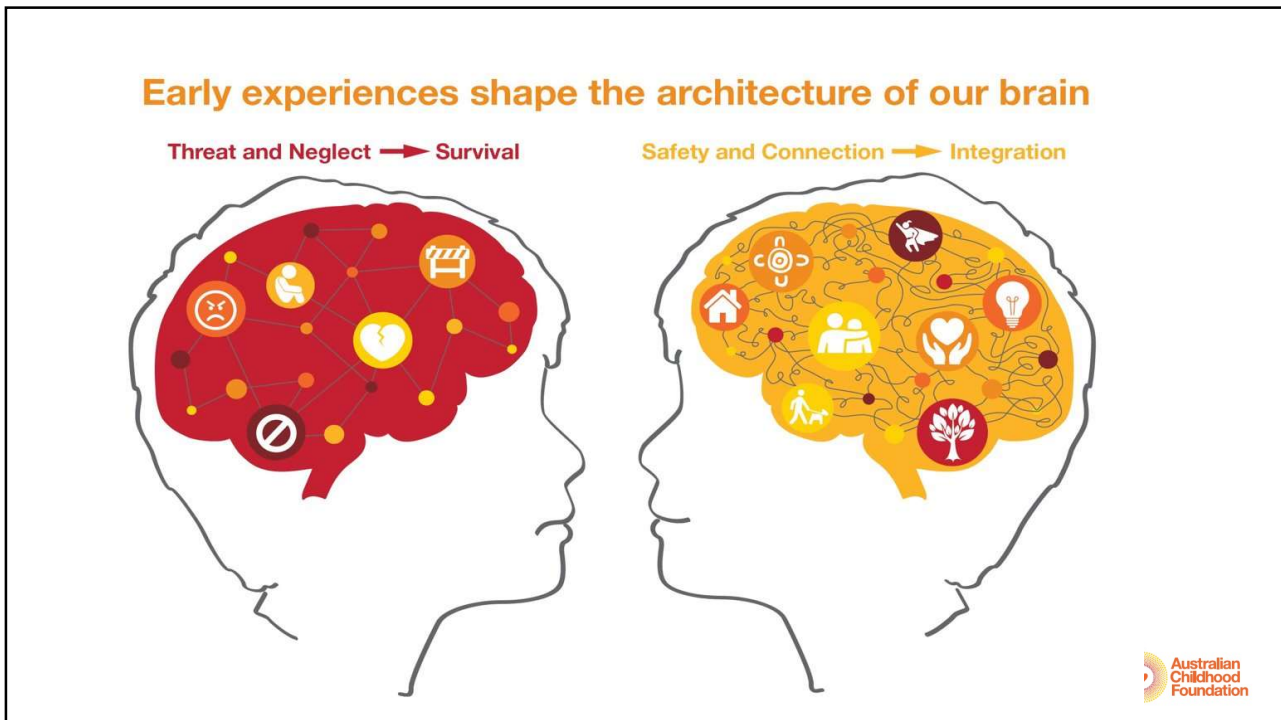
Hand Model of the Brain



Hand model courtesy of Dan Siegel




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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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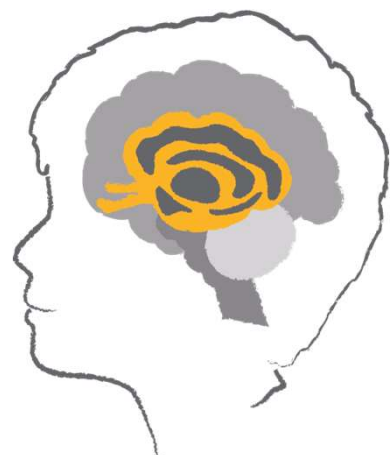
Cerebellum- movement and balance

- 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



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



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



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



Staged in the Classroom

From a Teacher:

“Always meet the student where they are at (not where they 'should be' and work up from there)”

Action:

Breathing Exercises- Use breathing exercise such as 5 Finger Breathing (2 mins) at beginning and end of each lesson.
Finding ourselves in the space, connecting to self.



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Staged



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Predictable

- Changes to routines and uncertainty can be a source of stress to student
- Predictability in students' relationships and activities modulates their stress systems
- This then promotes flexibility and adaptability



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Predictable

“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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Predictable

What might predictability look like in practice?

- For students
- For families
- For all staff
- Systemically

relationships

physical
activities

routines

instructions

learning
tasks

behavioural
expectations



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Predictable in the Classroom

From a Teacher:

“Think about routines and patterns on macro and micro levels”

Action:

Planned transitions- Use images representing structure of current lesson or when moving from one activity to another. Have images for Individual Work, Pair Work, Small Group Work, Reflective Activity, Using Materials, Putting Materials Away etc.



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Adaptive

- Most of us have a set of behavioural routines that we draw from to respond to challenges when they emerge. These routines are likely based in what has helped us get by in the past and the experiences of relationships through which these routines were interpreted and responded to.
- To broaden children's behavioural repertoires and promote increased adaptability we need to maintain multiple meanings for the behaviour and remain open to multiple options for interventions.

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Adaptive

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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Words Matter

How behaviours are perceived/understood in the classroom



DEFIANT

FORGETFUL OR DISORGANISED

WORDS MATTER

DISRUPTIVE

CONTROLLING

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School Refusal

Factors that can contribute to school refusal include:

- stressful life events
- major **transitions** such as starting primary or secondary school
- moving or other **big change**
- fear of harm coming to a parent**
- illness in the family
- separation and divorce
- academic problems
- overprotective parenting
- friendship difficulties
- separation anxiety.

School refusal seen 'as signals that all is not well in the young person's world'.



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What does safety look like at school?

“Before we can engage in social behaviour and learning we must first feel safe”

Dr Steven Porges



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Safe & Unsafe States of Being

MOBILISATION

In this state we feel unsafe

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

We feel Safe in these states

IMMOBILISATION

In this state we feel unsafe

We are active and mobilised without a sense of safety

- We fight, or flee, or our bodies actively freeze with tensed muscles.

We are active and mobilised with a sense of safety


We are socially engaged

- Sometimes known as the 'Play Zone' in this state our bodies are active as we socially engage with others.
- Our bodies feel calm and relaxed.
- We feel in synch and connected with others.
- We are orientated towards each other with welcoming voices & open faces.
- We find pleasure in stillness.

We come to be still with a sense of safety

Our body slows into an immobilised state without a sense of safety

- We are withdrawn, submissive, collapsed, numb.



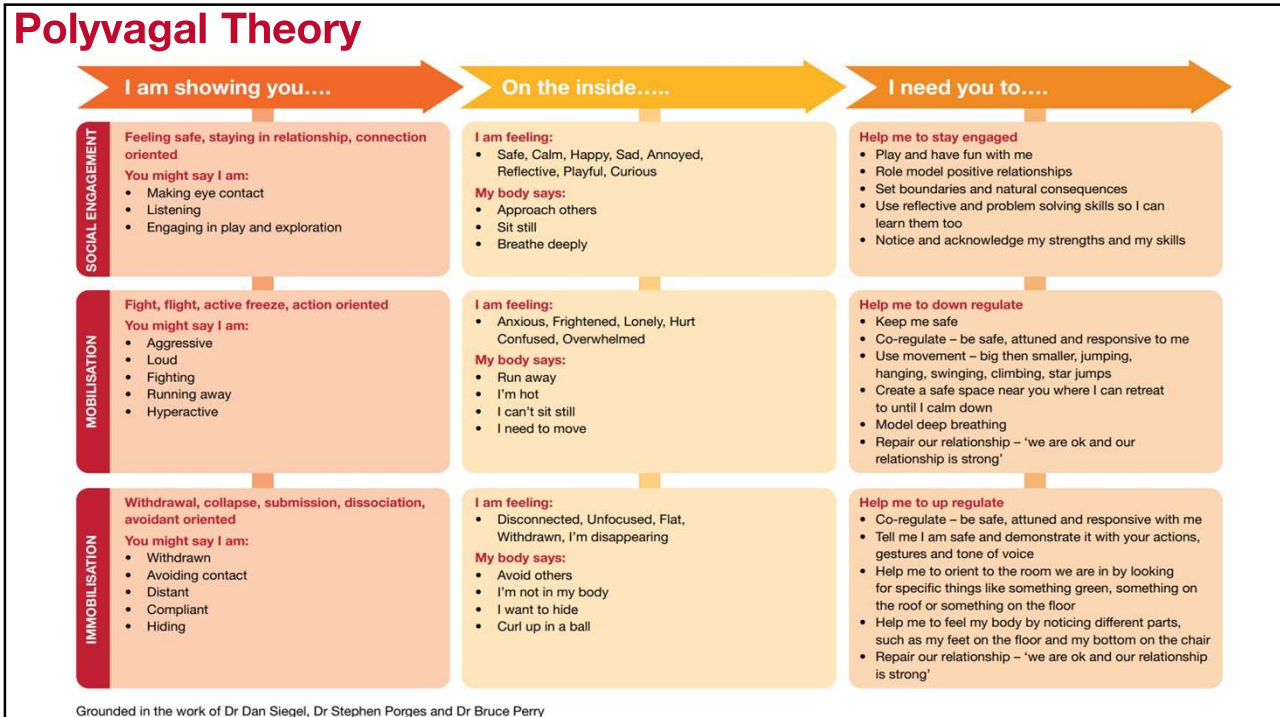
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The Social Engagement System

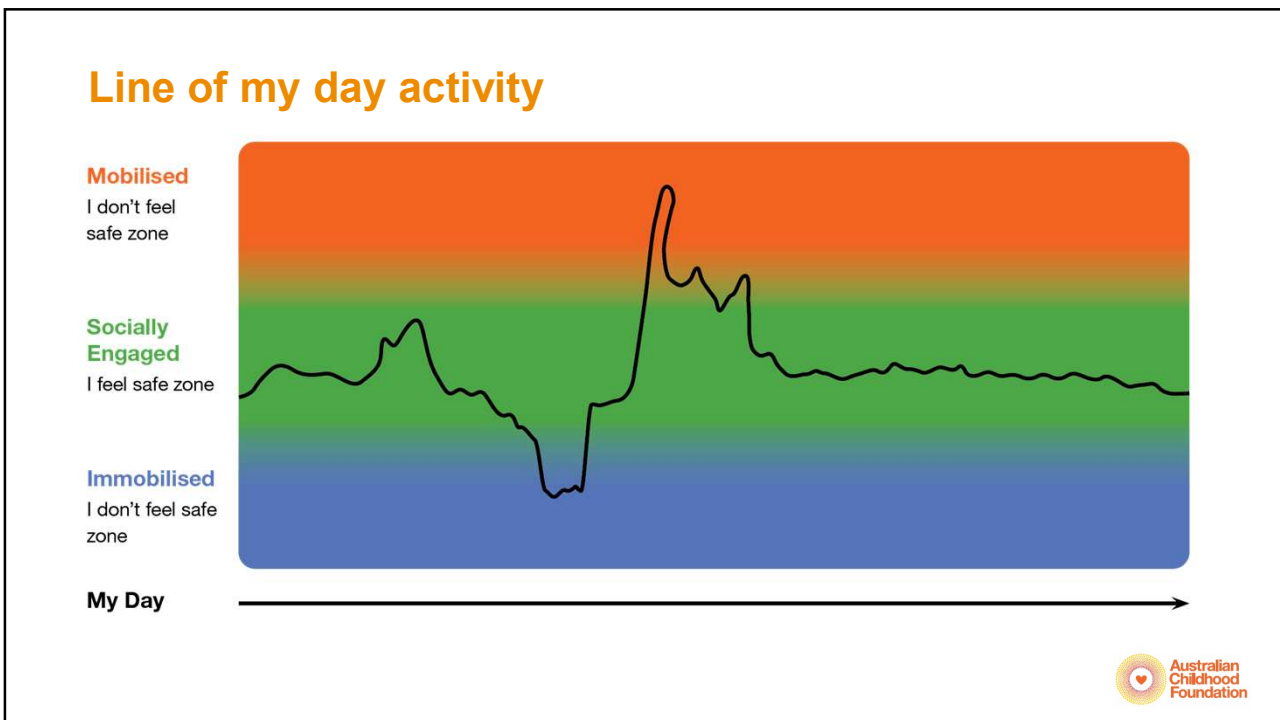




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The ability to engage and learn requires a sense of safety.



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Adaptive in the Classroom

From a Teacher:

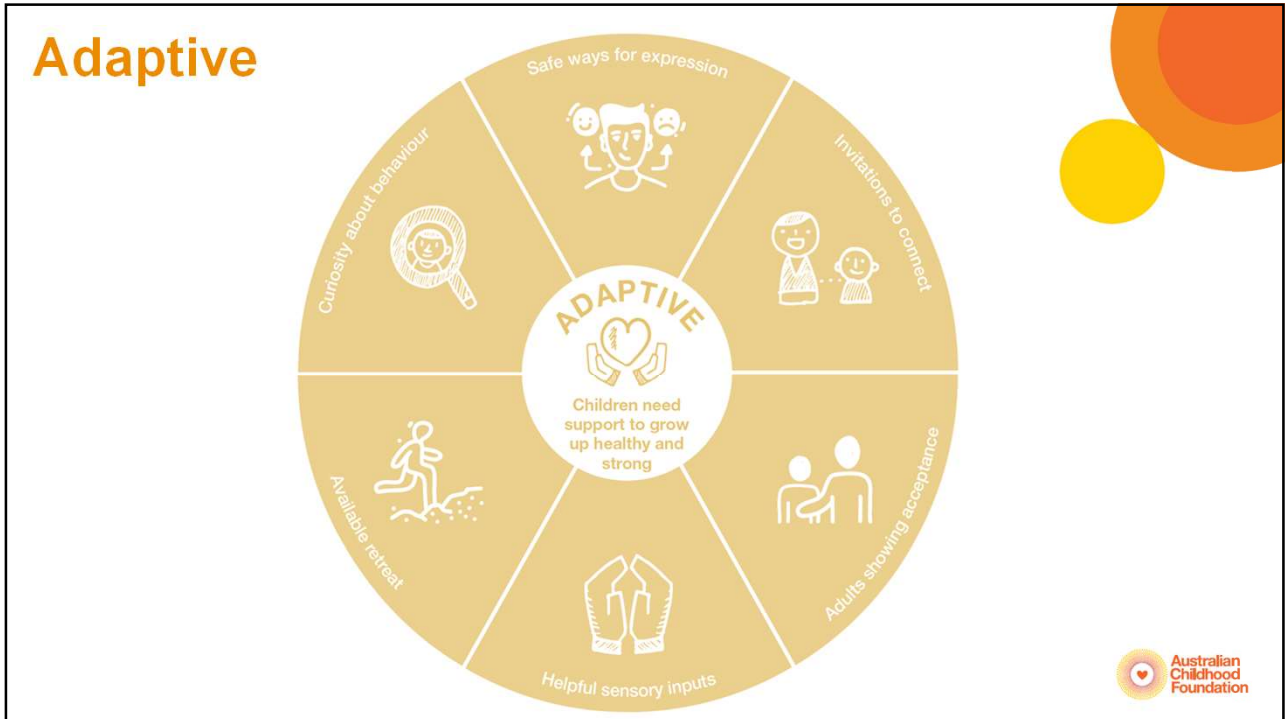
“ground yourself ALWAYS in order to be adaptive and build adaptability in the students”

Action:

Prioritising Behaviour as Communication in being curious about what is happening for the student



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Connected

- Children's relational templates for forming and being in relationships take shape as they grow. They learn what to expect and how to navigate relationships through their experiences of connection with those around them.
- We tend to expect things from relationships based on what we have known from past connections.
- Strategies to support children as their relational templates continue to develop emphasise relationships with safe and consistent adults and peers as the foundation for healthy, strong social and emotional functioning.



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Connected- Relational Safety

“ Safety and healing gives us back to ourselves. Not to hide or fight any more.

But to sit still calm our minds, listen to the universe and allow our spirits to dance on the wind. It lets us enjoy the sunshine and be bathed by the golden glow of the moon as we drift into our dreamtime...

Safety in relationships gives us back to our country.

To stand once again in our rightful place, eternal and generational.

It keeps us strong and gentle at the same time.”

Helen Milroy (2018)

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Connected

Safety is a central whilst complex concept in this training.
It holds a range of meanings for us and for the children, families and communities that we work with.

What does a safe space feel like for you?

How do you inhabit it?

What do you bring to it to make it feel safe?

What/ who else is inside the space that contributes to the safe nature of it?



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Connected

Accompaniment is an experience for a child that offers emotional reciprocity, validation, care and comfort. In this experience they feel heard, met, felt and understood.

“ Children internalise the people who understand and comfort them, so that they often have the felt sense of accompaniment when they are alone.”

Bonnie Badenoch



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Connected in the Classroom

From a Teacher:

“connect connect connect”

Action:

Getting to know one another rituals, saying goodbye, celebrations



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Connected



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Enabled

- Engaging students in the process of understanding themselves can build social and emotional learning.
- 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.



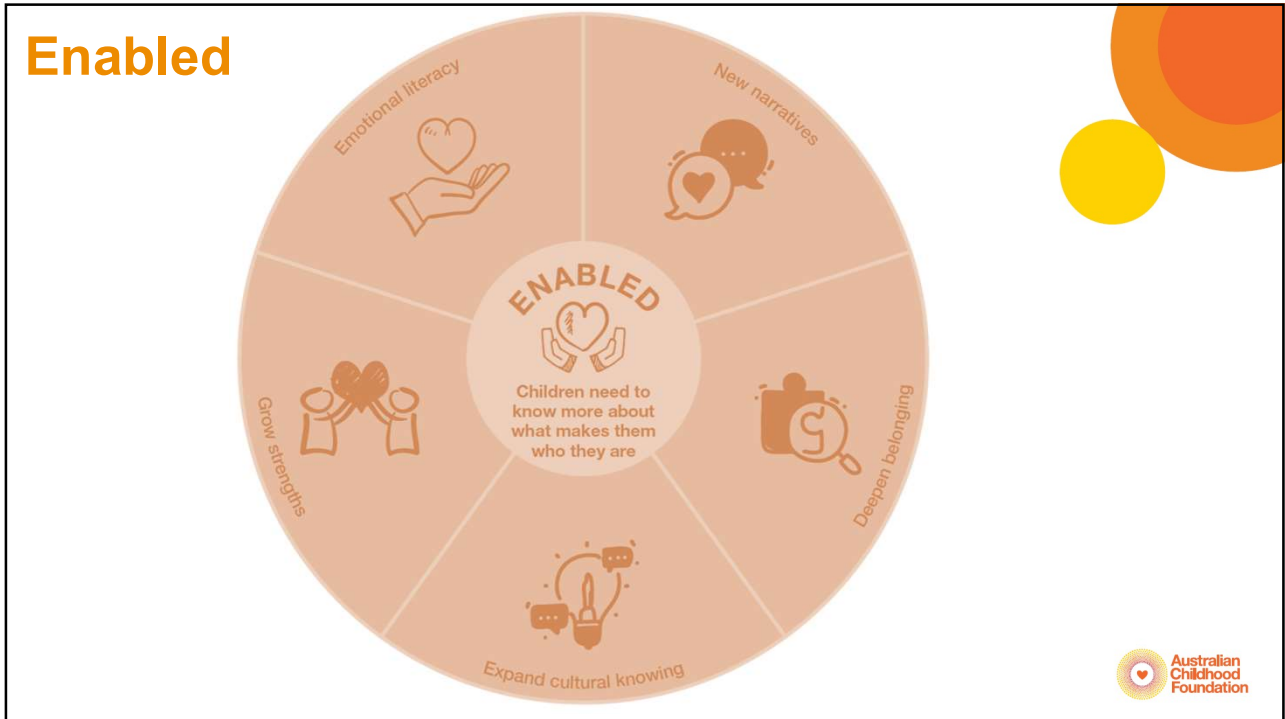
Enabled in the Classroom

From a Teacher:

“See the strengths and potential in every student and reflect that back to them in bucket loads so that they come to know themselves as possessing those strengths and sense of worthiness”

Action:

As above



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Making SPACE for Learning – Site Audit Tool

This audit tool can be used to evaluate the policies and initiatives of a school that resource and equip different levels of the school structure to undertake trauma informed practice. In the following table, list strategies, policies or other processes currently undertaken that support traumatised students at your school.

	Whole Site	Staff	Classroom / Group	Small Group	Individual Student / Child
S Staged					
P Predictable					
A Adaptive					
C Connected					
E Enabled					

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