



BEING A TRAUMA INFORMED COMMUNITY

HEALING IN THE CONTEXT OF RELATIONSHIPS

Of all the factors that operate in a young child's environment, the single most important determinant is the quality of the child's relationships with parents and caregivers. It is the relationship that the young child has with their caregiver(s) that literally sculpts the brain and determines the development of its circuits.

Infants require attunement, co-regulation and safety cues (calm voice, holding, rocking, responsiveness, predictable feeding/sleeping times, etc.) for the development of a regulated and well organised brain. Relationships that encompass predictability, honesty, safety, nurture and play help the infant develop into a child, adolescent and adult who can regulate their emotions, engage in abstract thought and participate in healthy attachment relationships.

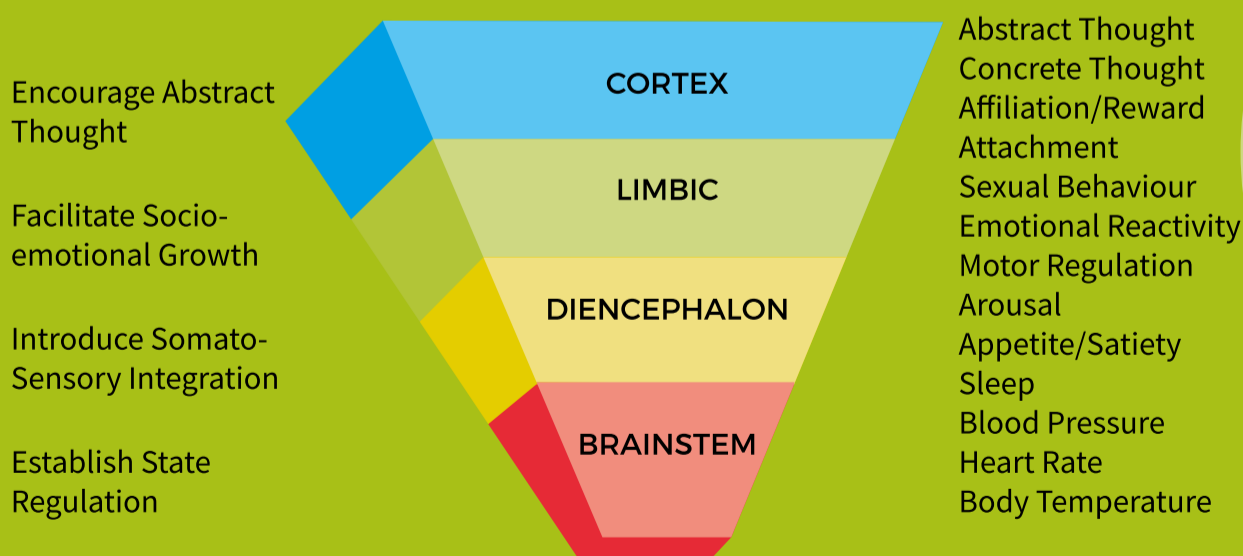
The capacity to be co-regulating and attuned in interactions with traumatised children is fundamental and at the heart of trauma recovery. To co-regulate a child, an adult must be attuned to the child and understand their emotional states.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- ✔ Provide opportunities for children to talk about what happened or play out their feelings about the trauma can start the healing process.
- ✔ Allow a child to tell their story without pressuring them to talk.
- ✔ Children need to hear that it's not their fault. Children blame themselves when bad things happen, so they need lots of reassurance from you. Acknowledge their feelings with statements such as: 'That sounds like it was really scary for you' or 'It sounds like you were very worried when the police came'.

- ✔ Ask a child what he or she is most worried about.
- ✔ Be watchful for cues of emotional distress and thoughtful in relation to emotional triggers and varying emotional and mental states. Empathise with the distress of the child rather than getting frustrated with the child's behaviour.
- ✔ Help a child to find ways to express their feelings such as drawing or journaling.
- ✔ Engage the child in rhythmic and developmentally appropriate activities for co-regulation, sensory integration and emotional regulation. These activities could include play, deep breathing, massage, art, dance, music, journaling, drumming, swimming, bike riding, rocking in a chair, cooking together, brushing hair, jumping on the trampoline, gardening together, etc.
- ✔ Provide lots of structure for daily activities such as meals, homework, and bedtime so a child knows what to expect and prepare them for any changes in their daily routines.
- ✔ Help other caregivers to understand how trauma can affect a child and how to respond.

BRAIN FUNCTION



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...with human relationships we can both create and destroy, nurture and terrorise, traumatise and heal each other.

Ultimately, what determines how children survive trauma, physically, emotionally or psychologically, is whether the people around them – particularly the adults they should be able to trust and rely upon – stand by them with love, support and encouragement.

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– Dr Bruce Perry (2006).

Here to help! Come and talk to us if you'd like more practical ways you can be trauma informed.

Sources:

> This poster is based on information from Michelle Taylor's 2013 report for the Creswick Foundation Fellowship, *Not in Isolation: The Importance of Relationships and Healing in Childhood Trauma*



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