

Calm the Chaos:

Sensory and Trauma Informed Strategies for School Success

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 www.tothestars.ca



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EVERYBODY HAS A STORY.
listen with your heart
TO HEAR IT.

made with TYPORA

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Goals for Today

- Define trauma
- Learn about prevalence and types of trauma
- Understand the neurobiology of trauma
- Address the outcomes of complex developmental trauma
- Explore strategies to support students who have experienced trauma
- Work through case studies together to explore student needs, strategies and supports
- Give my best teachers a voice

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Agreements

- *I will respect my own boundaries and comfort in this topic.*
- *I will respect this is a sensitive topic and will support others in the group to set their own limits.*
- *I will respect the full confidentiality of all group members.*

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Core Values: Diminishes Capacity

ADULT BELIEF	STUDENT BELIEF
▪ They are damaged, bad, broken.	▪ I am damaged.
▪ The damage is done and cannot be changed	▪ I am bad.
▪ Focus on areas of weakness	▪ It will never get better.
▪ They "seem fine."	▪ I am stupid and lazy.
	▪ I am fine.
	▪ I don't need you.

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ADULT BELIEFS: Builds Capacity

- Recognize they have had a **normal reaction to an abnormal situation**
- Believe in the Power of plasticity
- Recognize their strengths and capacities

▪ Relationships	Talents
▪ Personal strengths	Interests

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STUDENT RESPONSE: Create Hope

- I am having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.
- I can learn and grow.
- I can depend on others and they can depend on me.
- I have strengths, talents and support.

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What is Trauma?

- Trauma is the response to the perceived life threatening or overwhelming experiences.
- We become *traumatized* when our ability to respond to a perceived threat is in some way overwhelmed.
- It results in a loss of connection to ourselves, to our bodies, to our friends and family, to others and to the world around us.

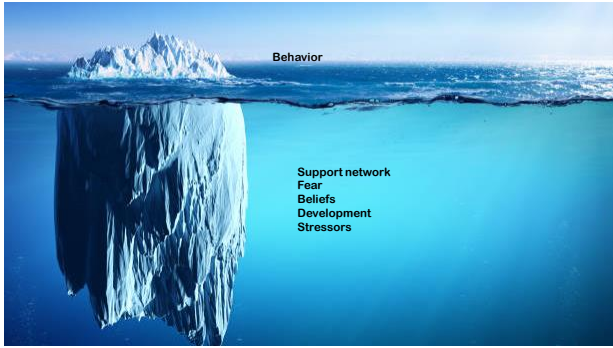
Peter Levine – Healing Trauma 2008

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I am more than my story.

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Beacon House
Therapeutic Services
and Trauma Team

Children's brain develop
from the bottom up

www.beaconhouse.org.uk

The diagram shows a cross-section of a human head with three colored regions representing different stages of brain development. From bottom to top, they are:

- Develops First (Primitive Brain):** Sensory motor input and survival.
- Develops Second (Limbic Brain):** Attachment and emotional development.
- Develops Third (Cortical Brain):** Thinking, learning, language and inhibiting.

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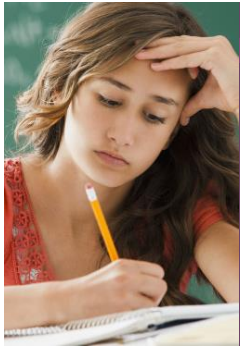
How trauma affects the brain

- Development may be interrupted or impacted by trauma
- Increased activity in brainstem and limbic system – hypersensitive arousal system
- Increased activity in amygdala
- Less activity in MPFC

The anatomical diagram shows a sagittal section of the brain with the following labels: Cranium, Cortex, Parietal Lobe, Frontal Lobe, Occipital Lobe, Temporal Lobe, Basal Ganglia, Brain Stem, Cerebellum, Dura, and Spinal Cord.

Van der Kolk (2014) *The Body Keeps the Score*

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In the classroom...

- Hypersensitive
- Low tolerance for stress - explosive
- Hyposensitive - shut down
- Challenges with attention and focus
- Difficulty with relationships
- Learning difficulties
- Executive functioning challenges
- Aggression
- Controlling

Koomar, J. A. (2008, December). Trauma- and attachment-informed sensory integration assessment and intervention. *Sensory Integration Special Interest Section Quarterly*, 32(4), 1-4.


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The Brain: Vertical Integration

Upstairs Brain

Allows us to think before we act

- Decision-making
- Control over emotions & body
- Focus/concentration
- Empathy
- Self awareness



Downstairs Brain

Allows us to act before we think

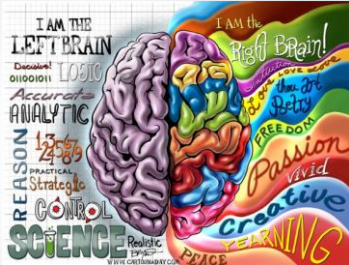
- Fight/Flight response
- Emotional reactions
- Bodily functions

Source: Siegel & Bryson "The Whole Brain Child"

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Lateral Integration

- Not one neural fibre runs from the amygdala to the left side of the brain.
- Right side develops first before language



It isn't what we say but how we say it.

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Pause and Reflect

Julie was late for school again. When the teacher asked if she had a late slip, she ignored the question, rolled her eyes and sat in the back row (not where she was in the seating arrangement.) Julie put her head down on the desk and started picking at her nails. The teacher carried on with the lesson and then called on Julie to answer a question. Julie jumped up, told the teacher to “go _____ herself” and walked out.

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Responses -

- a) Ignore the behaviour. I assume she is having a tough day and we will try again tomorrow.
- b) Ask Julie to come chat with me at lunch. Let her know I don't feel great about how things went and I want to make it better.
- c) Call Julie's parents and let them know about her behavior. This is a bigger issue than the school can handle.
- d) Give Julie additional assignments before she is allowed back in class. I know that she has missed so much school and her grades are falling.
- e) Talk to administration and suggest an in school suspension. I am tired of this student disrupting my class, swearing at me and being disrespectful.

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Think of as many reasons as possible why Julie might be late.

Reflect on Julie's actions – do you see hints of downstairs brain?

Reflect on the teacher's actions – what might be triggering for the teacher? What might be her worries, fears or frustrations?

How might the teacher have adjusted her reaction to support Julie?

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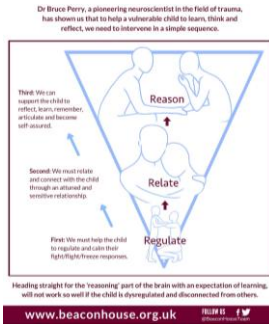


The 3 Rs: Reaching the Learning Brain

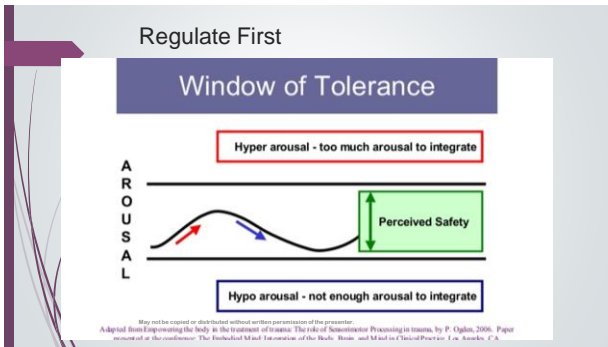
Beacon House Therapeutic Services and Trauma Team

Dr. B. Perry

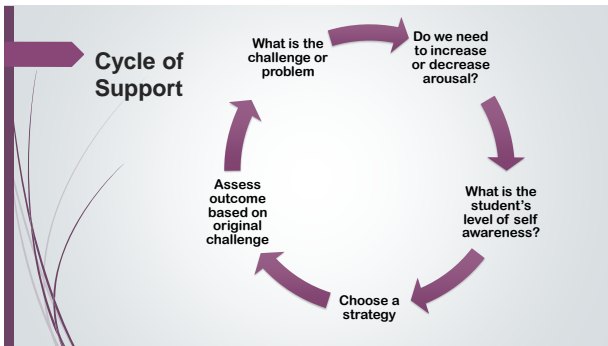
Goal of Regulation:
To enter and remain in the Window of Tolerance



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Routines and Regulation

Myhomeworkapp Choiceworks

My nighttime schedule

First I need to All done

Then I can

or

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Balance Structure and Nurture

- If you give structure when they need nurture... they lose TRUST
- If you give nurture when they need structure...we limit learning and GROWTH

Compassion and structure are not exclusive.

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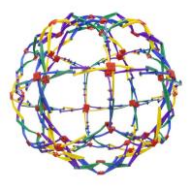
Environment

- Safe spaces – chill corner
- Lighting
- Seating
- Position in the room
- Environmental noise
- Smells

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Take a deep breath...

- 5 finger breathing
- Blow out the candles
- Ping pong blow
- Light as a feather
- Bubbles
- Hoberman sphere



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Sound

Reset

- Guess that sound game
- Sound memory game
- Mom and baby game
- Pass a sound
- Listen to a story and focus on a certain word or sound

Adapt

- Background noise
- Music through headphones
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Familiar music or sounds



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Visual Supports

Reset

- Memory games
- Noticing your surroundings
- I spy Games
- Silent ball
- Charades/silent movies
- Calming jar

Adapt

- Highlighters to organize visual input
- Visual schedules and lists
- Seating location
- Color coded materials
- Routines for organization
- Comforting, familiar pictures

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Scent


- Scent and the amygdala
- Scent and memory
 - Food smells
 - Lotion
 - Soaps/fragrances
- Scent and emotional memory



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Movement

- Repetitive
- Rhythmical
- Relational
- Rewarding
- Respectful
- Relevant
- Resisted



Dr. B. Perry

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Brainstem Regulation

- Drumming
- Music
- Walking, hiking
- Dancing
- Yoga
- Catch
- Swimming
- Wave games
- Weight lifting
- Heavy work – sweeping, shovelling
- Sensory play – dump, pour, scoop

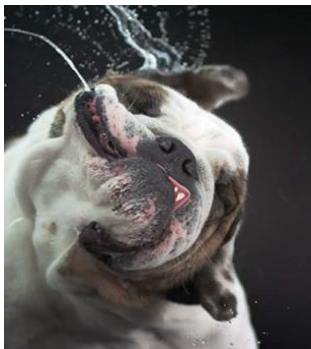
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Touch and pressure

- Relationship and touch
- Light touch and deep pressure
- Lycra
- Weighted blankets and toys




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Discharge physical energy

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Learn the Language of Your Body



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RELATIONSHIP

- Connect... to our bodies
- Connect... to our surroundings
- Connect... to the present
- Connect... to others



Connection is the key to healing

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"I am Crazy about that kid! But it isn't enough..."

- Rejection
- Anger
- Chaos
- Hurting others
- Stealing
- Damaging property




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Build Relationship

Precious Movie Clip




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Coregulate

- Recognize your own cues and responses to stress
 - Body language
 - Tone of voice
 - Facial expression
 - Posture
 - Breathing
 - Triggers
 - Reactions
- Explore techniques that work for you to reset or relax – mini breaks, routines, brain dump, exercise, yoga, meditation, time with friends

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Attuning and Coregulating

- Get to the same physical level or slightly lower
- Lean in
- Open posture
- Relaxed muscle tone
- Slow rate of speech
- Lower tone of voice (take a breath, gently hum or sigh to release)
- Mirror gestures and expressions

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Ben is in kindergarten. He started the school year late. He says that his dad left and he has a new dad now and a baby sister but he doesn't remember her name. He has a really hard time with any sort of play where he is around other kids. He will take toys and will hit or bite when others come close. In the hallway he randomly hits other kids that he doesn't even know that aren't doing anything at all. He will apologize but it doesn't seem sincere because he will go back and do it again. We have tried time outs, loss of recess and tell him that other kids won't want to be his friend. Kids are scared of him, parents are complaining and I feel at a loss. Some days I just hope they move away.

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- **REGULATE:** Do you see where Ben might be showing sensory sensitivities? What are the clues? Think of 2-3 strategies to help support Ben's regulation
- **RELATE:** How can we support the development of positive relationships while keeping Ben and the other students safe?
- **REASON:** What messages might Ben be getting from the current approaches to his behaviour?

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Chloe

Chloe is a 10 year old girl who was adopted at birth. She has been participating in a social skills group to help her make friends. In the group, we often make crafts and play group games. Sara often rushes through the activity and teases the other kids about being slow or says hers is better than theirs. When this has resulted in tears or anger in the other students, she tells them to stop being a baby and laughs.

What might be some initial goal areas and strategies to support Chloe

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Tools to support us

- Time to reflect and debrief
 - Connected and nonjudgemental team
 - Time to understand and get others ideas
- Regulation for yourself
 - Understand triggers
 - Have a plan ahead of time
- Relaxation
 - Get away from the job and stress
 - Time to reset



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Roles and Occupations

- To have a sense of purpose gives our lives meaning.
- What are the roles and occupations of your student
 - Athlete - team
 - Artist
 - Caregiver
 - Musician
 - Assistant
- Share stories of empathy and resilience
- Build community – sports, clubs, follow their strengths and interests
- [Karen Purvis TBRI](#)

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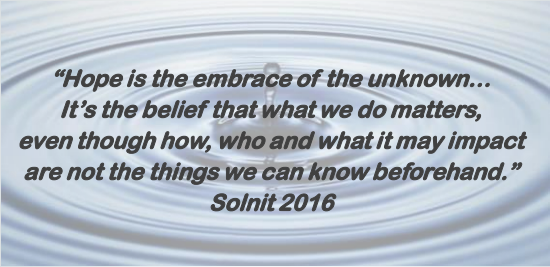
Summary of Strategies

- Provide HOPE
- Coregulate – Bottom up
- Connect before you correct
- Focus on the state *before* the behavior
- Provide safety and stability
- Ensure basic needs are met (sleep, food, connection)
- Nurture yourself



Look for strengths and encourage meaningful roles and occupations

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***“Hope is the embrace of the unknown...
It’s the belief that what we do matters,
even though how, who and what it may impact
are not the things we can know beforehand.”
Solnit 2016***

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