

Maximising Every Child's Potential

Promoting Resilience After Trauma

Statewide Children's Resource Program

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BE THE DIFFERENCE
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Who are we

Statewide Children's Resource Program

- Unique to Victoria
- Advocate for children experiencing homelessness and family violence
- Provide support to organisations & practitioners
- Network with sectors to improve outcomes



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Children experiencing homelessness and family violence

- Children are the largest client group in the homelessness and Family Violence sector.
- Children affected by homelessness and violence experience significant negative impacts to their physical, psychological, emotional, social, behavioural, developmental and cognitive well-being and functioning. (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse: 2011; Barker, et al., 2013).



How this affects early years

- Lack of opportunity to play (due to loss of play-space, loss of toys)
- Limited interaction with primary caregivers,
- Limited ability to 'check-in', co-regulate emotion, seek security
- Disruption to early education
- Caregivers are less emotionally 'available'
- Ongoing violence or transience can lead to distress and toxic stress

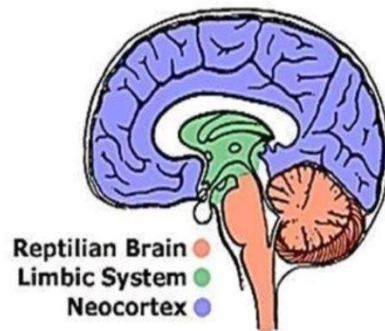


Homelessness and Family Violence is traumatic

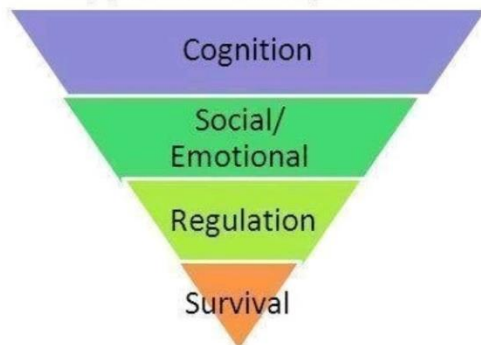
- Trauma can be defined as a psychological, emotional response to an event or an experience that is deeply distressing or disturbing.
- Complex trauma is the traumatic experience frequently transpiring within a particular time frame or within a specific relationship, and often in a specific setting.



Trauma & Brain Development



Typical Development



Developmental Trauma



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How do we move from Risk to Resilience?



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Play and Trauma

- Unstructured play allows children to experience and explore their surroundings, and which allows greater sense of empowerment
- Unstructured play facilitates social interaction, negotiation and relationship building



Children who have experienced trauma are sensitive to:

- Problems affecting their caregivers, which may include fear, sadness or being overwhelmed.
- Disruption to the development of a bond or close relationship with their caregiver or lack of parental understanding.



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Children who have experienced trauma may exhibit:

- Unusually high levels of distress when separated from their caregiver
- A kind of 'frozen watchfulness' – the child may have a 'shocked' look
- Avoid eye contact
- Regression...



Regression:

- A loss of age appropriate skills or behaviours
- Young children may stop being able to: Walk, sit, crawl, feed themselves or may experience greater difficulty getting to sleep
- Older children may exhibit:
Loss of fine motor skills,
loss of social skills,
spatial/balance skills
- Heightened emotional reactions



Trauma Informed Practice – at Centre, Room and Educator level

Links to Services	Professional Development	Policy	Recruitment
Routines	Independence on their terms	Primary Carer Model	Unstructured Play
Be a strong attachment figure	Give children success	Be prepared for trauma responses	



How to support Children in your centre

- Offer consistent and up-to-date contacts for support orgs frequently (Newsletter ads are good for this)
- Set an expectation for unstructured play to be programmed for
- Have a champion in your centre who can support other staff to care for children displaying symptoms of trauma
- Consider the needs of children with histories of trauma in policy



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How to support children in your room

- Maintain a strong routine, and smooth transition between activities
- Routine on 'their' terms
- Have routines on display and provide extra support during the change of activities
- Ensure distressed children are comforted quickly and consistently



How you can support children as a early educator

- Maintain the child's routines around being held, sleeping and feeding *if they're healthy ones*.
- Support caregivers to understand attachment and its importance
- Strong relationships build independence.
- Be prepared for trauma-related responses

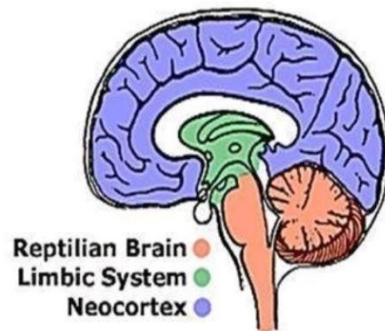


Play and Trauma

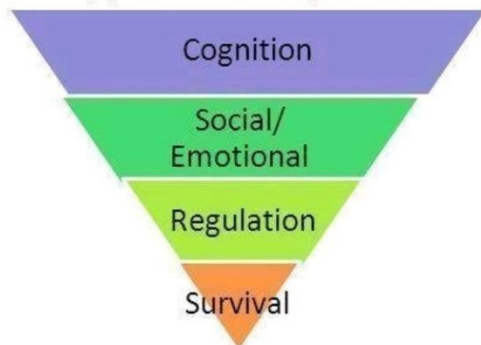
- Trauma may come out in play
- Appropriate responses are vital
- Discuss how the child is feeling
- Maintain the emotional relationship
- Do not make the child feel ashamed or at fault for displaying these behaviours.
- If need be, have a second educator redirect other children's play away



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