



Supporting children's social and emotional development through a whole school Relationships Policy

*A Trauma and Attachment Aware, Sensory Informed, Restorative and
Relational Approach*

What's included...



Bibliography



The Brain



Window of Tolerance



Trauma and Attachment Aware



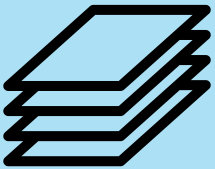
Restorative Practice and Language



Sensory Informed



Neurodiversity



Resources - online via server or OneDrive link.



Classroom Environment checklist



This document been fully researched through various texts and platforms. It is based on scientific evidence as well as the experiences of educators.

Bibliography

These texts were used to inform our policy and may have been referenced to.

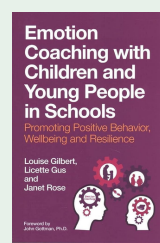
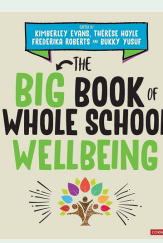
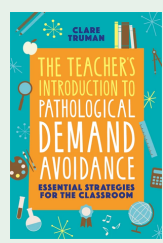
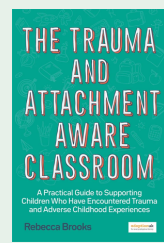
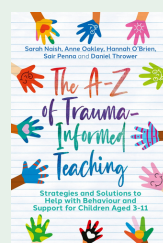
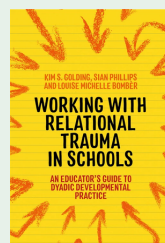
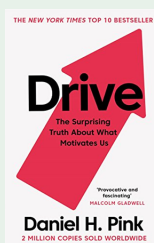
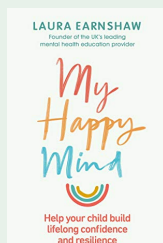
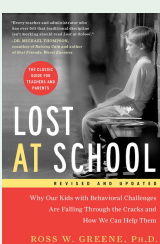
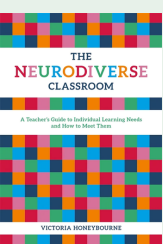
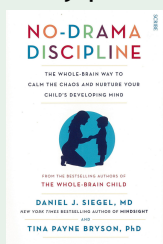
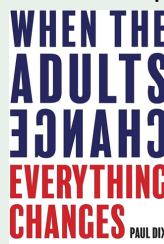
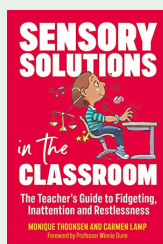
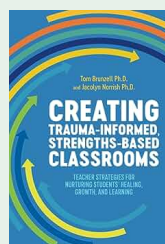
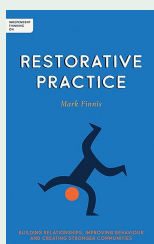
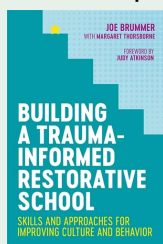
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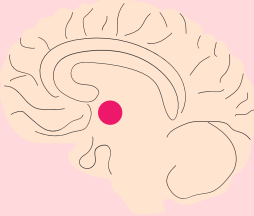
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The Brain

As educators, it is crucially important that we understand how the brain works and what the impact of trauma is on the brain. There are five areas that we need focus on and understand so that we can effectively support the learners in our classroom.

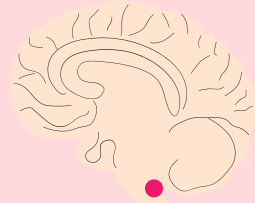


The Amygdala

This responds to threat/danger or perceived threat/danger. It exists from the times of the stone age where humans would need to respond to danger from a predator. When the amygdala is fired up, all logical thinking subsides and instinctive behaviours emerge. The responses will be: Flight, Fight, Freeze or Fawn. For the children, we refer to this part of our brain as our Head of Safety - Dexter who lives in the downstairs brain.

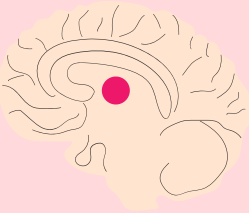
Reticular Formation

This responds to sensory input. It makes decisions on what information goes into our brain from our eight senses. Think of it like a security guard, making decisions about who is allowed entry. The Reticular Formation can let in too much or too little information, as such, children can become under or over responsive to sensory input and in dangerous or perceived dangerous situations, it lets in all sensory input to engage with the amygdala for survival purposes. For the children, we refer to this part of our brain as our security guard - Audrey, who lives in the downstairs brain.



The Limbic System

This is the system that looks after our emotions. The limbic system is responsible for behavioural and emotional responses and is very much informed by the amygdala and reticular formation. When dysregulated, a child will be functioning from an emotional response not a logical response - you cannot engage in restorative conversation until the child is regulated. For the children, we refer to this part of our brain as our Head of Emotions - Gary, who lives in the downstairs brain.



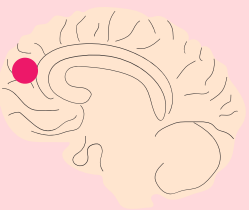
Hippocampus

This is the part of the brain that is responsible for learning and memories. The hippocampus allows us to remember familiar places, directions to places, passwords we use regularly etc. The hippocampus also allows us to learn new things and keeps what is important and sends it to long term memory. Another function is spatial memory, keeping track of objects and where they are in relation to the body. The hippocampus is part of the limbic system, but as it can only engage when regulated, it is part of the upstairs brain as well. It is incredibly important to know that chronic toxic stress can cause long-term damage to the hippocampus. For the children, we refer to this part of our brain as our Head of Memories and Learning - Elena, who lives in the upstairs brain.



Pre-frontal Cortex

The pre-frontal cortex is not fully developed until the age of 25 and so for our children, this part is very much developing and not at all established. The pre-frontal cortex is responsible for problem solving and making plans. It can only engage when a child is regulated. When the amygdala is reacting, this part of the brain shuts down. You cannot expect a logical response from a child unless they are engaging their pre-frontal cortex and remember, this is far from developed! For the children, we refer to this part of our brain as our Head of Wisdom - Oswald, who lives in the upstairs brain.





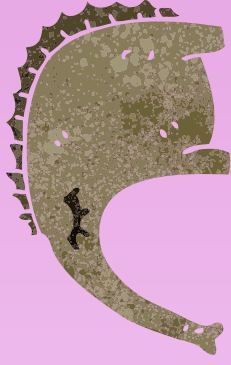
Brains and Behaviour

Our brains are very complex organs and they control everything we do. There are key parts of our brains that impact on our behaviour. The animals below represent different parts of our brains and what they do!



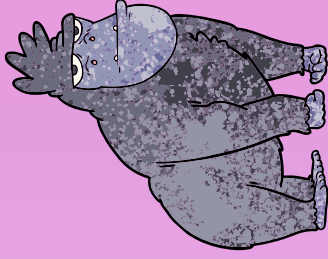
Dexter

Dexter is our guard dog - Head of Safety. He watches out for danger. He just needs to keep us safe! He represents our Amygdala.



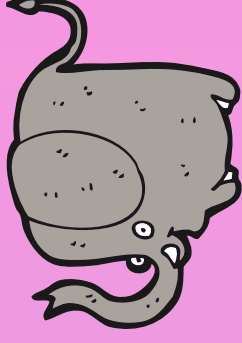
Audrey

Audrey is our bouncer - Head of Security. She makes decisions about what information goes into our brains through our senses. She represents our Reticular Formation.



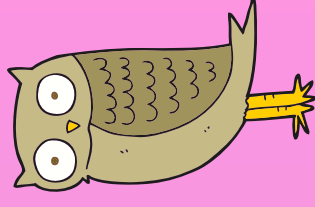
Gary

Gary is our Head of Emotions. When he takes over, we are all in our feels! He represents our overall Limbic System.



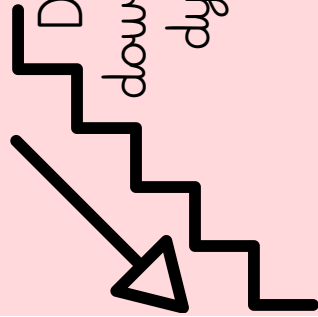
Elena

Elena is Head of Memories and Learning. She helps us learn new skills and remember them. She represents our Hippocampus.

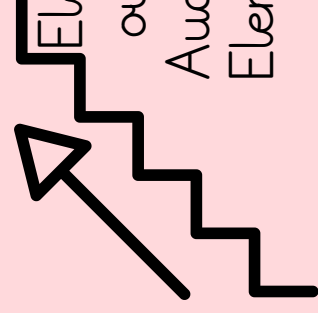


Oswald

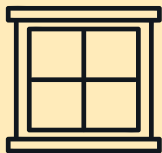
Oswald is our Head of Wisdom. He helps us make plans and solve problems. He represents our Pre-frontal Cortex.



Dexter, Audrey and Gary live downstairs in our brain. If they are dysregulated, the upstairs brain cannot be accessed.

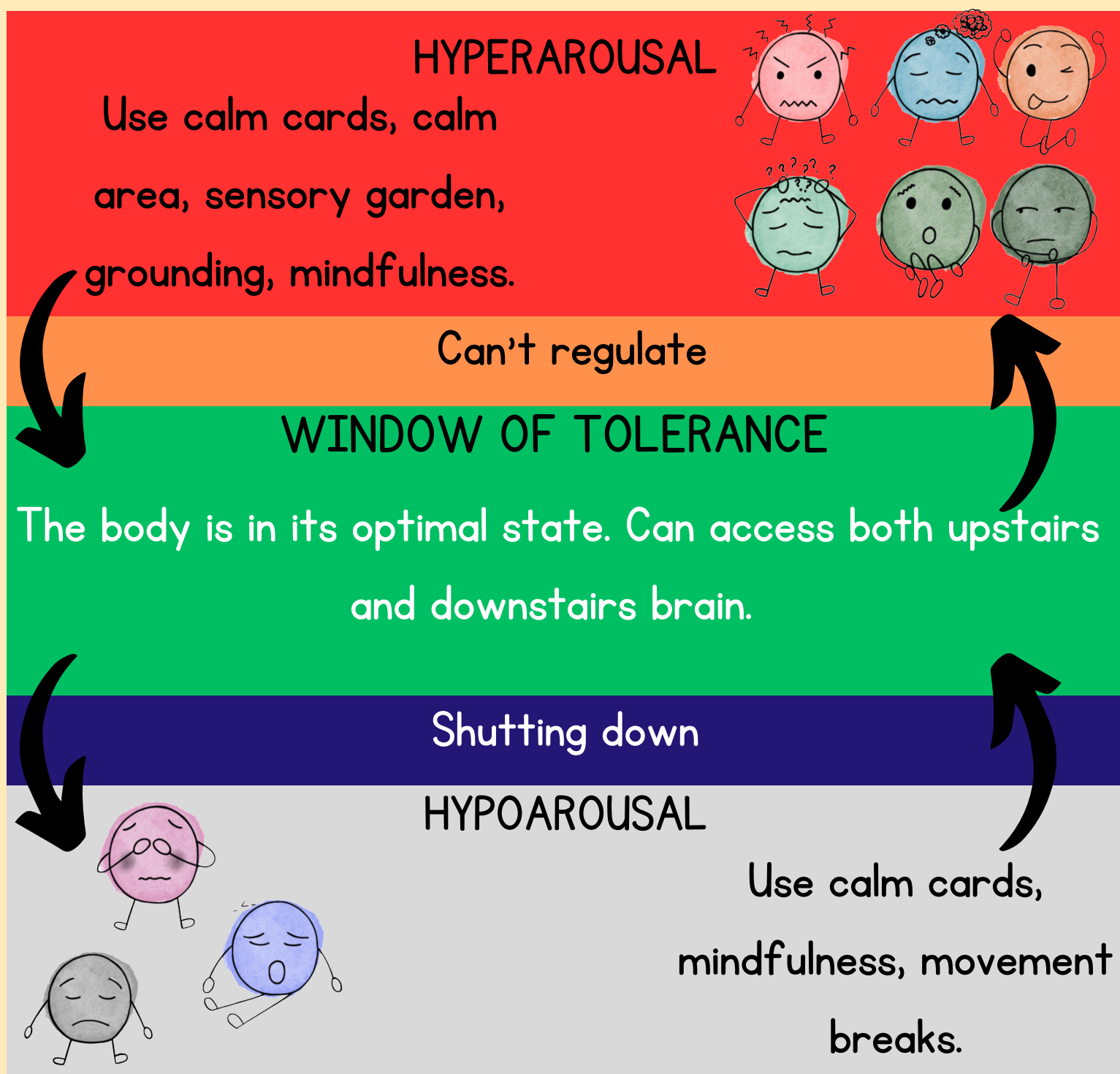


Elena and Oswald live upstairs in our brain. If Dexter is barking or Audrey lets too much information in, Elena sleeps and Oswald flies away.



Window of Tolerance

This refers to the state of the brain and body. Children with a history of trauma often have a narrower window of tolerance. If a child is out of their window of tolerance we see dysregulation. This will either be high energy (hyperarousal) with feelings such as anger, jealousy, anxiety, silly or low energy (hypoarousal) with feelings such as tiredness, sadness, embarrassment. To help the child regulate these emotions, it is important to engage in breath work, grounding, mindfulness. In addition, for those in hypoarousal, they need movement breaks to re-engage in connection.





Trauma and Attachment Aware

What is trauma?

Trauma can be separated into three categories; natural, manmade or historical. Natural could be earthquakes, fires, flooding for example. Manmade includes abuse, neglect, war and examples of historical trauma are slavery, racism, gender violence. It is important that we assume that all children and adults we come across will have experienced trauma. We never truly know what is happening in another person's life or what has happened in their past. Trauma is not the experience itself but the way it is processed. If not processed effectively, it will continue to impact on the individual.

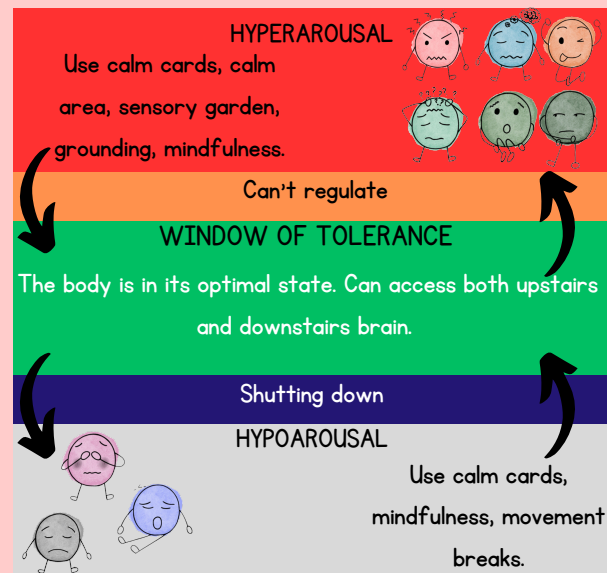


How does it affect development?

Trauma in young children, particularly within their first five years can cause long lasting damage on their development. Children who are exposed to constant and prolonged trauma can leave the child in a constant state of stress, specifically toxic-stress. This results in chronic dysregulation. Children are hypervigilant of their surroundings, they don't feel safe and therefore their basic needs are not met. Trauma can also lead to children struggling to create attachments and connections with adults. It is important to note that there is evidence to show that trauma leads to long lasting changes to the brain specifically the hippocampus, amygdala and pre-frontal cortex.

Trauma and Behaviour

Children who do not have their basic needs met cannot possibly be in a space to learn effectively. We should remember that behaviours are a communication of an unmet need. Children are not choosing behaviour. They cannot be manipulative or choose to disrupt others. Children who are living in their downstairs brain - experiencing toxic stress and reacting to their amygdala - cannot access their pre-frontal cortex and therefore are not thinking logically enough to choose their behaviour. We must stop using this phrase. Children who have experienced or continue to experience trauma have a narrower window of tolerance. This links to whether a human being becomes hyperaroused or hypoaroused.



The brain

It is crucial that we learn how the brain works as this allows us to come from a place of science and understanding when addressing behaviours we see in the classroom. This is for all children. Children do not choose their behaviour. When a child becomes dysregulated, it is because the amygdala has received a threat from the cerebellum. This is most often a perceived threat rather than a physical threat. This can also be linked to unmet needs. A child will seek to have their needs met through their limbic system. This purely based on emotion. Their prefrontal cortex is offline. They are unable to access logical thinking and behaviours will look like: Flight, fight, freeze or fawn. We cannot have a restorative conversation during this time.

Brains and Behaviour

Our brains are very complex organs and they control everything we do. There are key parts of our brains that impact on our behaviour. The animals below represent different parts of our brains and what they do!



Dexter, Audrey and Gary live downstairs in our brain. If they are dysregulated, the upstairs brain cannot be accessed.

Elena and Oswald live upstairs in our brain. If Dexter is barking or Audrey lets too much information in, Elena sleeps and Oswald flies away.



Trauma Responses

This are some behaviours that might present when a child is on alert.

FIGHT

- Aggression.
- Arguing.
- Threats.
- Silliness.
- Defiance.
- Yelling.
- Hitting.
- Biting.
- Spitting.
- Swearing.
- Sudden outbursts.
- Pacing.
- Provoking adults.
- Throwing objects.
- Talking back.
- Slamming doors.
- Hands in fists.
- Refusal to sit at a desk.

FLIGHT

- Walking/running out of the classroom.
- Ignoring.
- Head down.
- Hovering.
- Purposely getting kicked out.
- Withdrawing.
- Daydreaming.
- Hiding under desks.

FREEZE

- Blank stares.
- Shrug
- Disassociation.
- Head on desk.
- Refusal to answer questions/follow instructions.
- Appears forgetful.
- Inability to move.
- Avoids tasks.

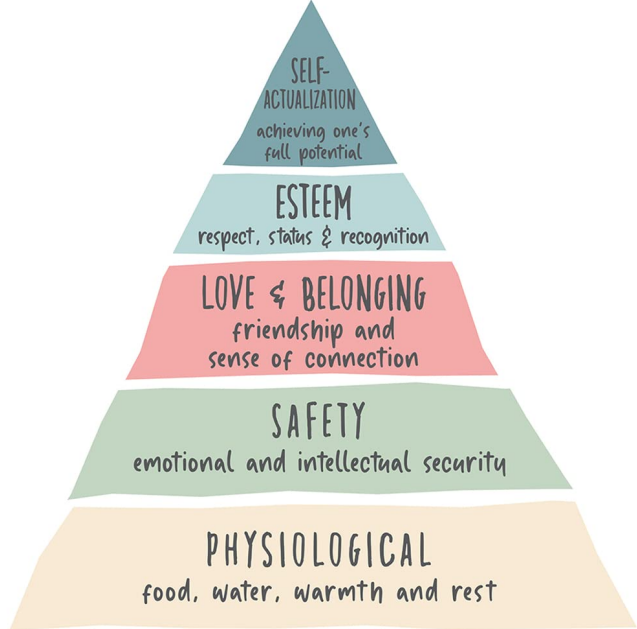
FAWN

- Perfectionism.
- Over-preparing.
- Overly helpful.
- Befriends stronger characters.
- Submits to pressure easily.
- Lacks boundaries.
- Exaggerated people pleasing.

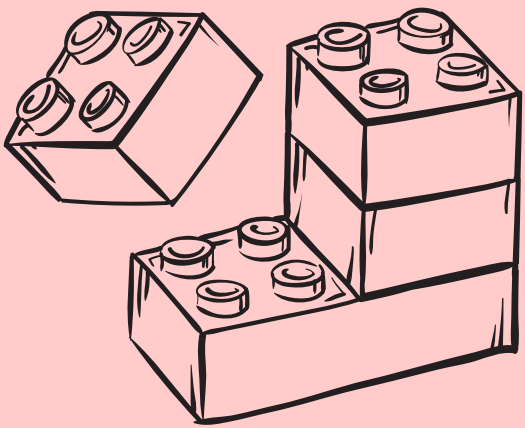


Relational Approach: Connection and attachment

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Attachment and Connection is absolutely essential for learning, if children don't feel a connection or they don't feel safe with an adult, they cannot reach the top two tiers of learning.



Finally, once all this building blocks are in place, children can start to achieve and fulfil their potential.

Now children are ready to learn. They feel wanted, connected and safe. To build recognition and esteem, it is important to recognise children's strengths and accomplishments - this is why rewards don't work. When the rewards go, the motivation goes and so does esteem.

Once the children feel safe, we have to create a sense of belonging, build relationships with each child, get to know them and also build the team/class family through shared goals, games, oracy etc. It is also crucial that all children feel seen and heard as well as represented in the classroom. Think about the books you have in the book corner, the display materials you use - do you represent each child positively? Pathways creates connection, the recognition board also does this as well as movement breaks, emotional literacy, class novel - it is already built into our every day.

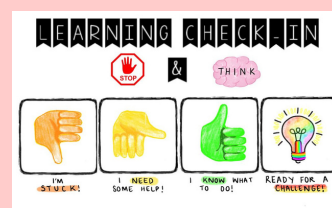
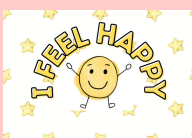
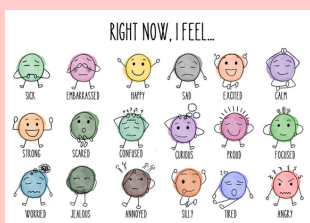
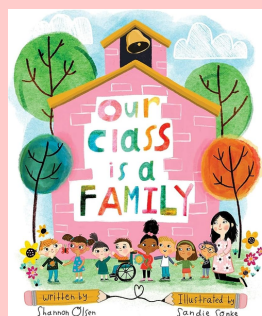
They need to feel safe. Children who are not treated with unconditional positive regard (see restorative) will not feel safe. We communicate unconditional positive regard through our body language, facial expression, tone of voice - we must be aware of this to ensure we create a secure environment for our children. Human beings know, through neuroception, when they are not wanted in a room or by another person - it is a subconscious danger sensor.

Humans need connection. In order to engage in connection, basic needs must be met and this is tricky for children with a history of trauma. We should always assume that there is trauma behind every child because we never know the full story. Our classrooms must reflect this understanding. Children need their physiological needs met first - often children are dysregulated or withdrawn in the morning if they haven't had breakfast or a drink, this is where the emotion check in and morning greeting is essential.



Strategies and resources to support a relational classroom

**In our class
we promise to...**



Reflect and Reset

Name: _____

What happened?

I felt... They felt...

What now?

Talk about it ☐ Solve a problem ☐ Write a letter ☐

Say sorry ☐ Make a plan ☐ Something else ☐

SOBBY ☐

Stamina thermometers

Children often struggle with stamina, especially during an independent task. This can be linked to connection seeking or trauma related needs. These thermometers encourage children to set their own goals, which in turn, promotes internal motivation WITHOUT the need for reward. For example, daily reading is 20 minutes. This is not going to happen straight away, a child may only realistically read independently for three minutes. Each child has a stamina tracker. They set a goal of how many minutes they will read for. The teacher puts a timer on the board and then the child engages with the reading. They then record their actual stamina as it may be longer or shorter. This is not a stick to beat them with - 'You've only read for two minutes! Come on!' It must lead to reflective discussion, with unconditional positive regard, to plan ahead for the next day and what could be put in place to support the learner in their stamina. This should apply the CPS approach (see restorative practice). To ensure that the resource is sustainable, it is best kept in a dry erase pocket, rather than laminated.

My Stamina Tracker

My predicted stamina for independent daily reading is...

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

My actual stamina for independent daily reading was...

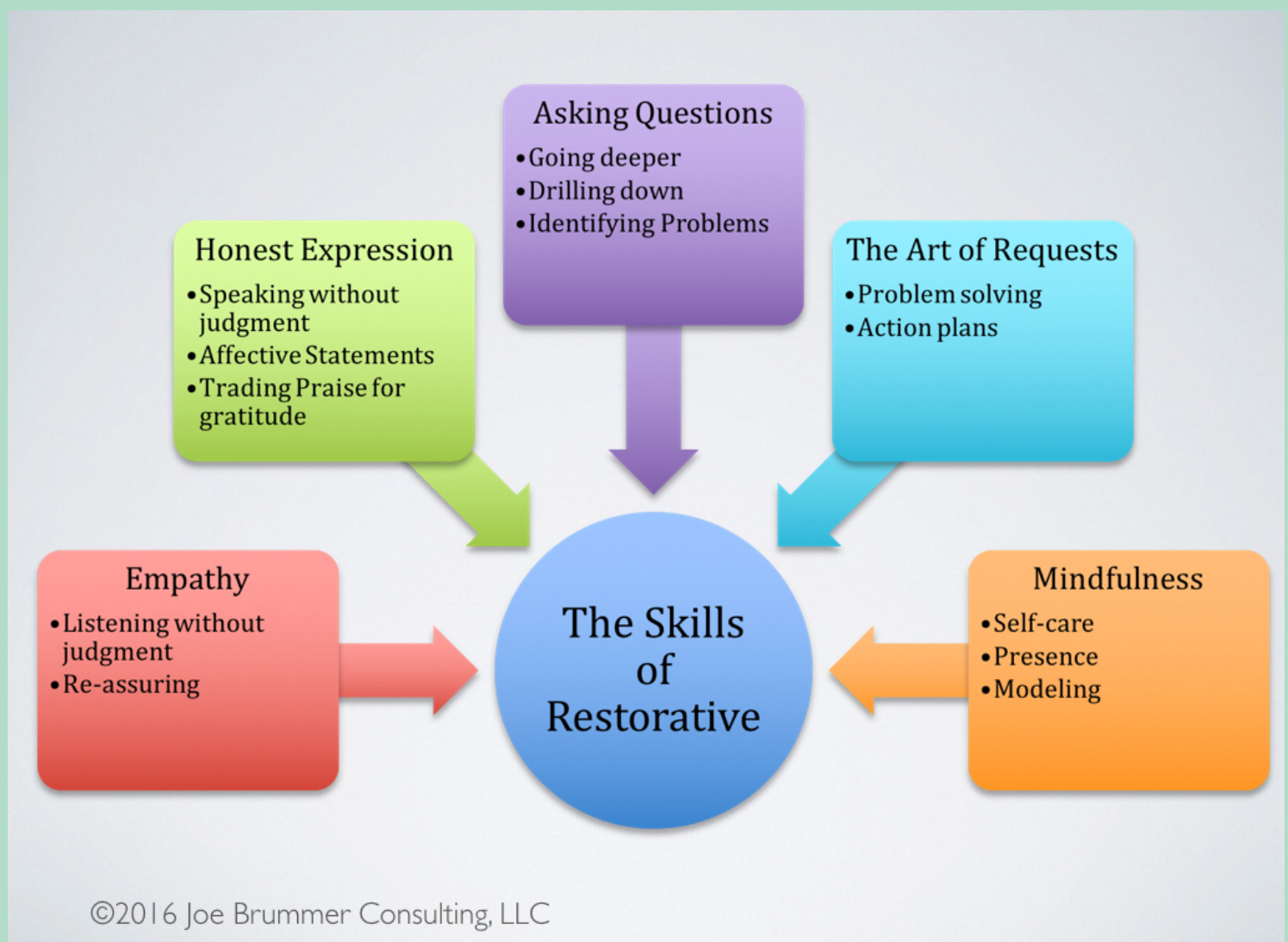
Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

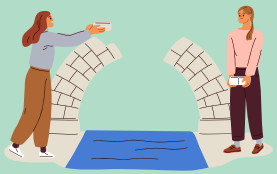


Restorative Practice and Language

Restorative practice is split into five areas. It is a universally recognised approach to support children, particularly those with trauma backgrounds. As we know, we should always assume that everyone has some history of trauma as we don't know the full story. The art of restorative practice requires preparation and for us to facilitate a supportive environment where a child can learn from situations rather than feel judged and shamed for behaviours that are a result of the brain responding to unmet needs. This is key. **Behaviour is a communication of an unmet need**, this includes interoceptive needs. Interception refers to the body knowing what it needs such as food, water, needing the toilet - it is always top of queue for the reticular formation - this sense takes priority as it is responsible for survival.

As educators, we need to think carefully about the way we approach behaviours. **A child is not choosing their behaviour**. Their brain is reacting to an unmet need. Connection can be an unmet need, so when a child is shouting out, their unmet need is to be heard and seek connection. If we respond by shouting or shaming or even with the 'teacher look' we are not responding to the child's need but shaming them for the way they seeking their needs to be met. We need to teach children appropriate ways to communicate their unmet needs using a collaborative and proactive approach, with unconditional positive regard.





Restorative Practice and Language

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is not just colouring. It is a state of being completely present in the moment. We can all get lost in our busy lives and miss out on key moments to savour and enjoy. Mindfulness takes practice, we have to model to our children. We want to build flexibility with our children, model it, we want to children to feel grounded and centered - model calm cards and co-regulation. Breath work, yoga, singing bowls etc, are tools to use to promote mindfulness in the classroom. It should be part of the culture in the classroom rather than timetabled in. Be mindful of language, body language, tone of voice, facial expressions when engaging with children. We have to practice mindfulness for the other four skills to of restorative to work.

Empathy

Empathy is a whole body demonstration. It is not just your words that count, it is your tone of voice, body language and facial expressions. We often listen to the first part of what someone is saying and then prepping our 'fix-it comment' rather than just being present and listening with empathy. A more effective approach would be to listen and be present and then reflecting back what the person has said.

For example: Child: 'I hate school, you never listen to me! You don't care what I think!'

Adult: 'Are you saying that you feel annoyed because you want to be heard and understood?'

You don't need to offer up a fix to this problem. You have listened. Take it on board. Think about how to show that you have taken it in when the next situation arises or use the CPS approach at a later 1-1 session.

Honest Expression

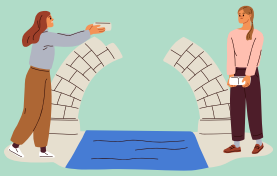
We want to move away from children feeling bad or shamed by behaviours they may present with as we know this will not lead to solution and that children and acting from their downstairs brain. That does not mean we do not call them out on their behaviour or hold them to account on their reaction - it is a teaching opportunity. We need to avoid phrases like 'You've made my heart sad by doing that.' 'I am so disappointed in you.' It's not about the adult and their feelings - it's about the child. We need to use non-violent communication - see page 15.

Asking Questions

In addition to unmet needs, for children who demonstrate consistently challenging behaviours, educators should analyse the skills the child has. This can be done using the ALSUP - Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (in resources) as it provides more insight than labelling a child as manipulative, attention-seeking, lazy etc. By asking questions and drilling down, with the lagging skills assessment to hand, you can work towards a CPS - Collaborative and Proactive Solution, see next page.

The Art of Requests

This is linked to consequences, what repairing harm looks like and how holds people to account. We need to focus more on solutions than punishments. Punishments are ineffective in most cases of children with trauma and almost always fracture the relationship as it is not collaborative but done to the child. Consequences are often natural occurrences - running next to the swimming pool, slip - consequence. In other cases, the consequence has to repair harm done, it has to be meaningful and voluntary - a child cannot be forced or it has no meaning. Action plans are useful here, more in-depth than a reflection sheet and are most useful for reoccurring behaviours or more serious incidents. See 'Effective Feedback.'



Restorative Practice and Language

The language we use regarding behaviour and children needs to change. Quite often, our language labels children in a negative light and prevents us from moving forward.

In trouble - a child is not in trouble, they are in **struggle**. Behaviours arise when needs are not met. We know that children do not have developed pre-frontal cortex's and therefore are not thinking when behaviours arise. In fact, children in struggle are most likely to have underdeveloped regulation skills and need the most support. By saying to a child 'you are in trouble' we do not have unconditional positive regard nor are we being judgement free. If we talk in a meeting, we wouldn't be told 'you're in so much trouble for talking now' it would cause shame and damage the relationship between the two people involved. We want to protect our connections and relationships with the children - they have to feel safe with us.

Attention seeking - this has become such a negative phrase and is often used to discuss a child's communication of an unmet need. Instead, we should think of these behaviours as **attachment or connection seeking**. Ask the question, what does this child need right now? Then teach them how to appropriately seek connection so that it is a positive experience for both.

Mindhooks - This refers to times when the mind gets stuck on something and prevents learning. For example - 'I am rubbish at times tables, I'll never be able to do it.' Instead of ignoring the mindhook or trying to 'fix it' for the child, listen with empathy, come up with a plan and build their resilience. Mindhook is a great term to use with the children and they need to build this language as well.

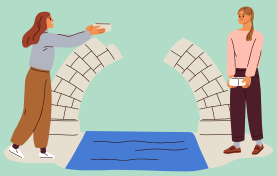
Stop fidgeting! Children fidget for lots of reasons and this is often linked to seeking sensory feedback (refer to sensory informed for more information). How many adults doodle in meetings or click their pen or tap their feet. Why do we stop children from fidgeting when it is doing no harm?

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions - The CPS approach is taken from Greene's work from 'Lost at School.' This approach is about removing the 'punishment' and 'sanctions' element of behaviour and working on creating a plan together linked to children's lagging skills. Instead of telling a child what they did was wrong and they have to miss a play time, we should be working with children before a behaviour can arise. Think of a child in your class who has been flagged - sent to another room, misses their playtime, often having to reflect after an event. We should be using our time to identify what the unmet need or lagging skill is to prevent a situation arising, where we can. For example, a child often throws his equipment on the floor in a 'tantrum' when writing is the focus. This happens every time. Following the situation, he misses his play time to the work and then the cycle begins the next time writing is the focus. However, if we know that the child has difficulty persisting on challenging tasks, we talk **WITH** them and create a road map for writing collaboratively, we break the cycle. It takes time and practice, but the consequence of the situation also takes time and often leads to disconnection & potentially damages the relationship that has been established.

Unconditional Positive Regard - this refers to separating the behaviour from the child. You should always see the child first, showing them that no matter what, you will care for them and continue to support them. We cannot take things personally from children - it is hard - but it prevents us from moving forward with the child. If we show unconditional positive regard from children, they know they are safe to make mistakes and that we will not abandon them for it. It also links to not labelling children, if we label a child 'naughty' or 'manipulative' we are not having unconditional positive regard and children will pick up on this - neuroception! *Nurturing unconditional positive regard will create empathy, trust and acceptance.*

Conditional Positive Regard = if you behave, you will be loved.

Unconditional Positive Regard = you are loved.



Effective Feedback to children

Praise < Gratitude



There is evidence to suggest that when an adult praises a child with a 'well done' or 'good job' or 'you should be so proud' it can trigger children with trauma experience. If a child has experienced toxic stress their negative self-beliefs are embedded, by using praise, we are contradicting their sense of self and therefore the trust between you can be damaged - the child thinks you are lying to them. Instead, use gratitude. The model would be - observe, feeling, need - from your point of view.

THANK
YOU

Example 1

When I saw you walk down the corridor without talking (observation), I feel thankful (feeling) for your cooperation (need). Thank you!



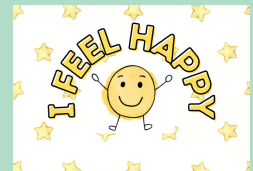
Example 2

When I saw you working collaboratively (observation), I felt happy (feeling) to see your confidence and progress (need) in group work.



Example 3

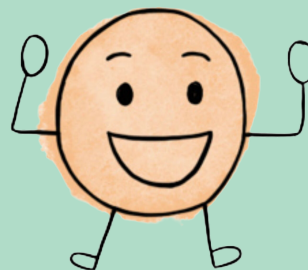
When I saw you hold the door for the adults (observation), I felt proud (feeling) of the respect you showed (need). Thank you for doing that.



Strengths based feedback (KS2)

Another way to give meaningful feedback is to base it on strengths the child has. This is not something you label them with but is actually through a survey online - VIA Character Strengths Survey. You register for free, complete the survey yourself to begin with - it is quite enlightening and then do this with the children on the youth survey. It generates their top five strengths and this is something that you can focus on when providing feedback to a child.

There is a classroom display of all 24 character strengths that you could put up in the classroom or a feedback mat for children to refer to for peer reviewing in writing and discussion.



I noticed your strength of persistence during writing today - great job!

NOTE: Whilst this contradicts the gratitude approach, it is important that use a range of strategies for feedback as this is what children will encounter - know your kids, get a balance!

WIN feedback approach

This approach allows you to give purposeful and specific feedback based around how the child feels as opposed to what the adult thinks.

W - Witness: Describe what you noticed and be specific on the positive element (a bit like observe from the gratitude approach).

I - Invite: Bring attention to their inner world, feelings and processes. Ask questions or 'wonder'.

N - Name: Label the skill or strength to build language and bring into focus the 'strengths based approach.'

W - Thanks for waiting until I could help you.

I - I wonder what helped you stay calm whilst you waited, I know that can be tricky.

N - It's good to show patience.



Effective Feedback to children

CALM Scripts

These are to be used to support children on the spot with connection-seeking behaviours, unsettled behaviours and are to be used as part of whole class behaviour support. They cannot be used when a child is highly distressed or dysregulated.

- C - Connect with the child, use their name.
- A - Acknowledge their feelings and experiences - I wonder...
- L - Limit the behaviour. Share the boundary with the child.
- M - Move the behaviour forward using next steps collaboratively.

A booklet of 12 examples of how a CALM script would look will be provided for each team

Non-violent communication

It is important that we are mindful with our words when addressing behaviours or making requests. A typical response of 'sit down and be quiet, I am trying to teach' is not going to address the behaviour because the unmet need continues to be unmet. Instead, we could try a non-violent communication approach, 1-1:

- Observation** - When I see you walking around the classroom when I am teaching.
- Feeling** - I feel angry.
- Need** - because I value your input in class.
- Request** - could I ask you how that sounds to you?

From here, you have started a conversation with unconditional positive regard and you can now be mindful and listen with empathy to what the child is experiencing. Most likely connection seeking or regulating sensory input through movement.

Action Planning

This is useful when there is a reoccurring pattern of behaviour or a more serious incident has taken place. The action plan has to address harm caused by a behaviour to protect relationships within the community. It has to have a SSMART: Specific, Strengths based, measurable, restorative and timely. This is most appropriate for KS2 children.

Action plan is part of resources.

Action Plan

When harm has been caused by our reactions to feelings, we have to repair the harm so that our family keeps thriving.

SPECIFIC	STRENGTHS	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	RESTORATIVE	TIMELY
Who, where, what, how. What will the action be?	What strengths do I have and how can I use them?	How will we know it has been completed?	Is it something I can do?	How can I heal the harm? What words can I use?	When will I act by? What is my timeline?

Better together.

What happened?

How were you feeling?

How do you think they felt?

What can happen next to make it right?

Reflect and Reset

What happened?

How were you feeling?

What was the impact of your choice?

What can you do to make it right?

It is ok to have big feelings. It is not ok to hit other people.

We can go to our calm space to keep you and everyone safe.

You can pick an activity.

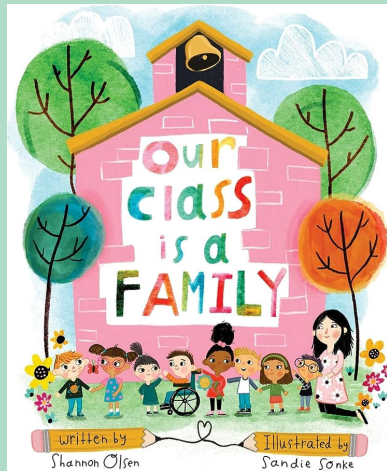
Someone will stay with you. We can leave when you are safe.

You are good.

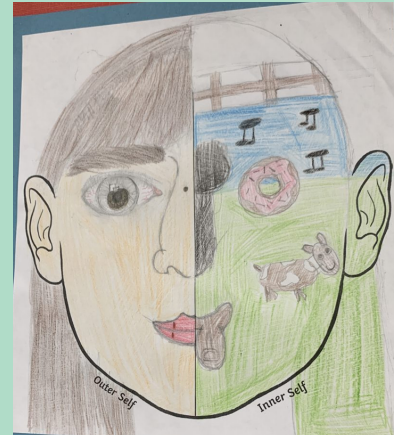
Alternatives to this could be a reflection sheet, better together or a visual support plan. What is important is that there is restorative practice in place to protect the community/class family. A consequence does not heal the harm and certainly does not teach the child appropriate ways to communicate unmet needs or feelings.



Promoting Community



Children should have a sense of belonging within the classroom. They should feel like part of a family. It is important that every child feels seen and heard as well as represented. Create a display together using this story - get to know each other's favourite things, their family, what they love about school and what they struggle with. Get the children to share with a partner. This is also a perfect opportunity to complete the VIA strengths survey for KS2 children. You could create a collaborative display of these strengths or the children could do a self-portrait to show who they are.

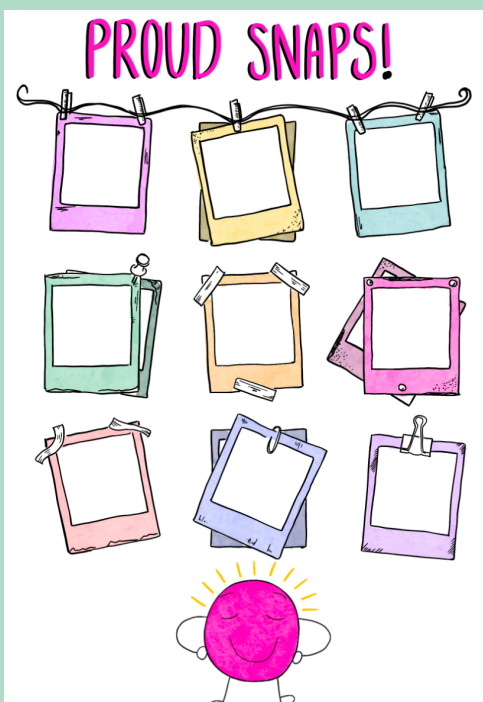


Talking circles are a brilliant way to create community and connection. This can be done as part of emotional literacy. Pick a topic, or a prompt. Each child has the opportunity to say something. Have a talking stick/teddy/object - participants can only talk with this. Set the mood with a roaring fire on the IWB or some fairy lights. You could start the circle with a breathing activity or yoga pose.



Set boundaries and expectations for talking circles. This has to be a collaborative effort. One idea is that each child has to have 10 seconds of thinking time before they choose to pass on sharing.

This strategy could also be used for Picture News, whole class issues or Positive Pathways.



Promoting positive experiences and savouring them is incredibly beneficial in developing 'emotional intelligence.' In the classroom, you could capture moments that the children have really enjoyed and want to savour. These could be displayed on a hoop or using this poster on your outside notice board so it is also shared with families. It will also help to build children's memories of good times and their journey at school. These experiences could be marked by souvenirs on trips out - something from nature for example or something to put in class like a postcard from a museum. Use talking circles to reflect on these positive experiences so it becomes a shared feeling.



Sensory Informed

Another element of ensuring our children can access learning is to be aware of their sensory needs. The reticular formation registers sensory input and decides whether to take it in or not. We have eight senses in total to be aware of.



Sight



Hearing



Taste



Touch



Smell



Movement



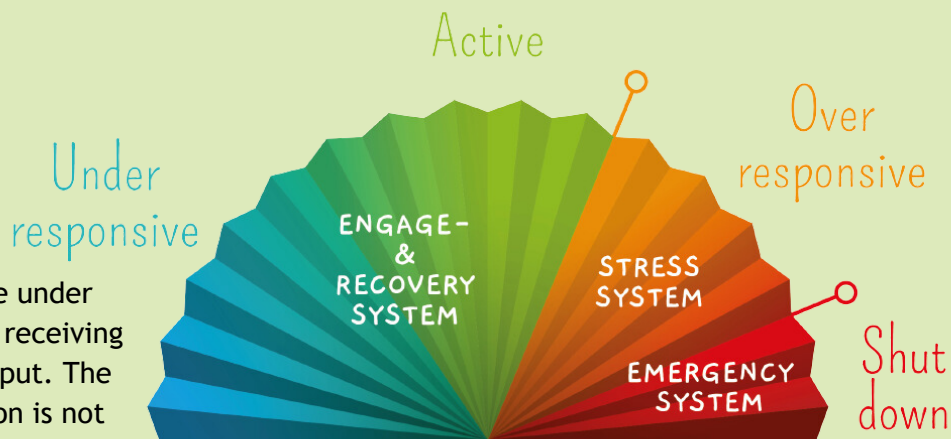
Balance



Interoception

Interoception means 'experiencing the inside.' It describes the sense that registers what we sense in organs and other tissues in the body. It tells us if we are hungry, thirsty, need the toilet, cold etc. This sense takes priority as it directly linked to survival.

By being sensory informed, we can better support learners in our classroom. When we look at behaviours being displayed, it may be communicating a sensory response.



Children who are under responsive are not receiving enough sensory input. The reticular formation is not allowing enough information into the brain to engage the learner.

Children who are over responsive are receiving too much sensory input. The reticular formation is allowing everything into the brain therefore preventing the learner from focusing.

It is important to note that this is not the same as window of tolerance - this feeds off senses being activated and how much sensory input can be processed.






There are five different categories that a person can be identified as. Please note that this is not a perfect science, it may just be that a person is more in one category. Being aware of our children and where they may fit is important for planning and adaptive teaching. It is also crucial to bear in mind that children do not choose any of these characteristics, it is a natural process linked to the brain and how the reticular formation is functioning.

Neutral	Actively under-responsive	Passively under-responsive	Actively over-responsive	Passively over-responsive



Sensory Informed

What does this look like then?

	Neutral	Actively under-responsive	Passively under-responsive	Actively over-responsive	Passively over-responsive
					
<i>Response to the amount of input</i>	Can deal with the amount of input they encounter <i>It's not too much and not too little</i>	Receives too little input or input that is too weak <i>Needs extra input</i>	Receives too little input or input that is too weak <i>Needs extra input</i>	Receives too much input or input that is too intense <i>Is bothered by input</i>	Receives too much input or input that is too intense <i>Is bothered by input</i>
<i>Does something or nothing</i>	Usually does what is required or asked for	Seeks extra input	Doesn't seek extra input	Avoids input	Doesn't avoid input
<i>What emotion is present?</i>	Emotions suit the situation	Is (too) enthusiastic and (too) active	Is sluggish/sleepy and (too) relaxed	Is tense and controlling	Is nervous and tense
<i>Behaviour</i>	Suits the situation, not too active and not too quiet, and relatively flexible	Wants <i>more</i> : come on, come on, it's never enough	Is flexible Is indifferent/absent	Takes care of things Wants to be in control	Grumbles, cries, is withdrawn

Under responsive

Generally, children who are under responsive need more input and therefore they need more activating strategies - movement breaks are essential. Also, resources need to be more vibrant for them as their reticular formation needs to register the input. Other strategies would include - allowing children to stand to complete tasks, bands on chairs, wobble cushions, weighted items etc.

Over responsive

Generally, children who are over responsive need less input and therefore they need more calming strategies - breath work is essential. Also, resources need to be neutral and minimal for them as their reticular formation cannot cope with too much going on. Other strategies would include - privacy shields, access to the calm space, sensory tools to focus, dimmed lights, ear defenders, regular brain breaks and mindfulness moments.



Sensory Informed

Sensory tools

Every class should have a range of tools to support learners. Once you have established which learners are generally over responsive and under responsive, you are then able to plan effectively for the tools you need in the classroom. Children should not be prevented from using these tools and we should absolutely not expect children to have empty hands to listen - they are not able to focus if they haven't got the tools they need! A sensory profile needs to be added to the child's passport if they are on the SEND register or added to notes on Target Tracker so that all adults are in the know.

Aqua bubble stars.
Quiet regulation, small
and effective.

Massage balls - for under the
feet. Particularly useful for
the actively under
responsive learner.



Marbles in a mesh
- discreet, quiet
and small.

Stretchy fidget - quiet
regulation, different
textures for different
learners.

Kneadable erasers -
quiet regulation,
similar to playdough
or putty but in a
handy box.

Movement Breaks

These should be built in across the day. Science tells us that for the brain to work effectively, we need to move our bodies - human beings literally think better on their feet. Linking movement breaks to sensory characteristics, we know that our under responsive learners need more movement to gain more sensory input. Movement breaks also brings focus to over responsive learners. Movement breaks do not have to be high-energy. A mix of high energy movement, outside is best and low energy movement such as yoga will support all learners in the classroom.



Warrior Pose



Strong Pose



Bird Pose



Boat Pose



Strong Pose



Bird Pose

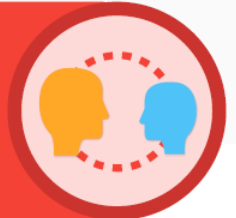


Neurodiversity

It is important that our policy is fully inclusive. Children with SEND sometimes need specific approaches that are recommended by a specialist. However, we have a responsibility to ensure that quality first teaching is effective. The strategies in our policy encapsulate QFT. In addition, the EEF 5 a day principle must be applied to the strategies being used as well as in our everyday teaching and learning.

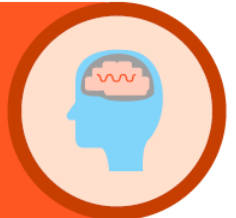
1 Explicit instruction

Teacher-led approaches with a focus on clear explanations, modelling and frequent checks for understanding. This is then followed by guided practice, before independent practice.



2 Cognitive and metacognitive strategies

Managing cognitive load is crucial if new content is to be transferred into students' long-term memory. Provide opportunities for students to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning.



3 Scaffolding

When students are working on a written task, provide a supportive tool or resource such as a writing frame or a partially completed example. Aim to provide less support of this nature throughout the course of the lesson, week or term.



4 Flexible grouping

Allocate groups temporarily, based on current level of mastery. This could, for example, be a group that comes together to get some additional spelling instruction based on current need, before re-joining the main class.



5 Using technology

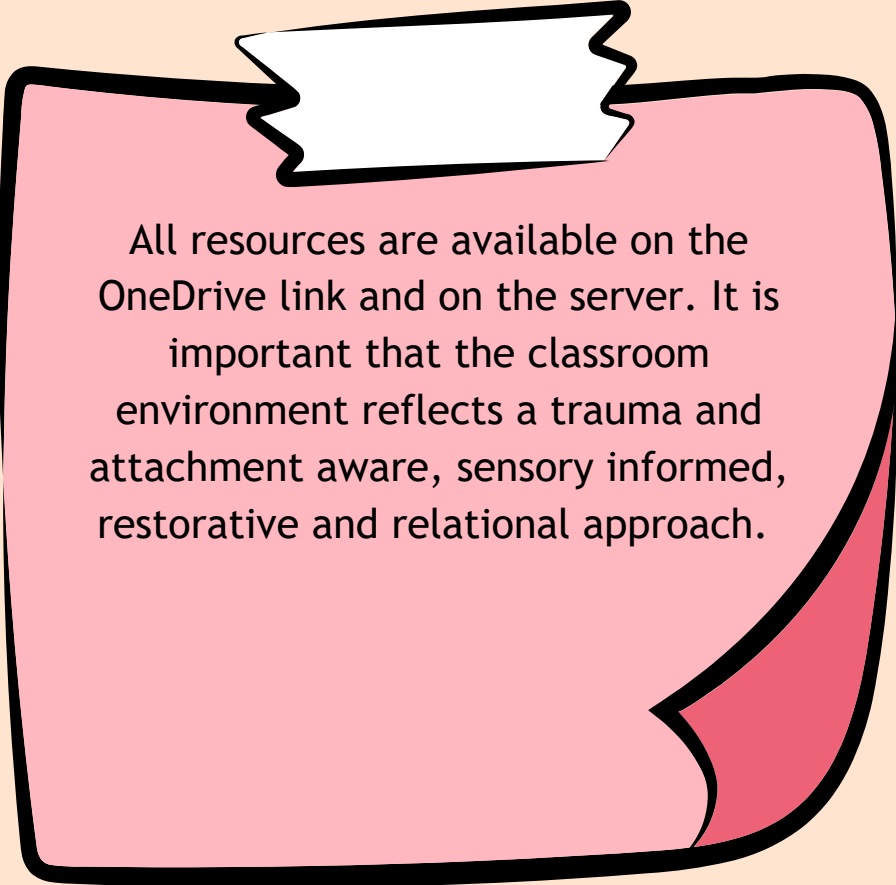
Technology can be used by a teacher to model worked examples; it can be used by a student to help them to learn, to practice and to record their learning. For instance, you might use a class visualiser to share students' work or to jointly rework an incorrect model.





Classroom Environment checklist

- Balls of Emotions displayed.
- Emotion check in (individual or whole class).
- Whisper box, worry monster, muddle monster.
- Calm Space.
- Sensory toolkits - once you have established what you need for your cohort.
- Positive postcards, bookmarks on hand.
- Restorative reflection/action plan on hand.
- Emotional literacy books.
- Stamina thermometer sheets (optional).
- Character strengths display (optional).
- Morning greeting.
- The Brain poster - individual animals are optional to display.
- Recognition board - for those without positive pathways.
- Positive Pathways (optional in UKS2).
- Visual timetable.
- Calm script booklet on hand - will be provided as a print out.
- Collaborative display (optional).

A large, pink, rounded rectangular graphic with a thick black border, resembling a sticky note. It has a white, torn-edge tab at the top center and a folded corner at the bottom right. The text is centered within the note.

All resources are available on the OneDrive link and on the server. It is important that the classroom environment reflects a trauma and attachment aware, sensory informed, restorative and relational approach.