

STARTING POINT FOR THINKING ABOUT SAFETY AND TRAUMA

Reflect on how we can feel safe when facing the challenges of our work supporting children and families with a history or trauma of facing ongoing trauma. How can we think about conveying safety to our clients and how can we attend to ensuring safety in the settings & relationships in which we work? Attend to the physical environment, the relational setting and freedom from harm.

WHAT IS TRAUMA? [HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/AWX8YMXI3-W](https://youtu.be/AWX8YMXI3-W)

Refers to: The impact of traumatic events. The impact of ongoing harm, threats and neglect at stages of life. The impact of overwhelming failures to meet the emotional and social physical needs of infants and children. The lack of loving and playful relationships over long periods of time. The experience of adverse experiences. Ongoing threats which cannot be processed. Growing up in fear and shame, terror and anxiety.

TRAUMA DEVELOPS IN THE CONTEXT OF LACK OF SAFETY

Humans are extremely vulnerable and highly dependent upon the safe care of others to survive. The period and extent of dependency in human infants and young children is extensive. Enough safety is vital for healthy brain development, emotional and social development and cognitive development (including language development). Safety is vital for secure attachment development (secure base); for exploration and social understanding (including playful interactions); freedom from shame and mental health.

TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE- SAFETY PART 1

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL FUNCTIONS OF SAFETY

The importance of safety and secure loving relationships are vital in supporting all aspects of human development, including trust, resilience and the capacity to manage emotional and social challenges in healthy ways throughout life. Secures survival. Facilitates restoration (biological, psychological and social). Promotes emotion regulation. Supports access to 'safe base'. Supports development of secure relationships and trust. Supports playful and social atmosphere. Promotes exploration. Sustains healthy risk taking. Enables integration.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERNAL WORKING MODELS

When traumatised children move to safe environments the survival responses may not turn off. Child may remain in survival mode (e.g., moving from one classroom to the next or a slightly raised voice may signal life or death danger). Child may be stuck in primitive brain and little information may be passed to prefrontal cortex where thinking and reflecting takes place. All resources are used up in surviving (remain vigilant) there is little left over for information processing, reflection, mentalisation, reasoning, sharing, turn taking, co-operating, empathy and concern and understanding the intentions of others. (Safety focus).

SUPPORTING SAFETY IN OUR THERAPEUTIC WORK

Promote physical safety (safe settings), relational safety (reliability; consistency; empathy & compassion, emotional safety (supporting emotional regulation; emotion literacy connecting with emotions and the emotion of others; connecting and co-regulation) and the safety in the development of coping skills (supporting grounding techniques; sense of internal safety and internal safe imagery).