

TRAUMA INFORMED SCHOOLS UK

The practical implementation of trauma and mental health informed approaches



About the notes

In this handout, you will find the full text of the slides presented on the training and accompanying references. We regret, that due to complex copyright and parental permission issues we cannot provide all the images.

The presentation notes have been clearly sectioned for ease of reference. There is more material here that we can possibly present on the day. We do hope you find the notes useful.

YEF WST Part 2 Implementation Handout

The Practical Implementation of trauma and mental health informed approaches

What are the key features of a trauma informed organisation?

- Collaboration - all voices from within the school community are heard, acknowledged and contributions valued
- Psychological safety - honesty and openness without fear of judgment or retribution
- Inclusion
- Valuing the whole individual
- Reflective practice
- Emotional regulation is prioritised
- The health and wellbeing of staff and students is prioritised
- Approaches to behaviour that seek to accept, empathise, connect and 'support' rather than 'manage', punish, or shame

Supporting Implementation

Please see TISUK Implementation Checklist and RAG Rating document

Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect...

PROTECT

Trauma Informed Approaches in The Classroom: Becoming The Emotionally Available Adult in Your Role in School

Creating psychological safety

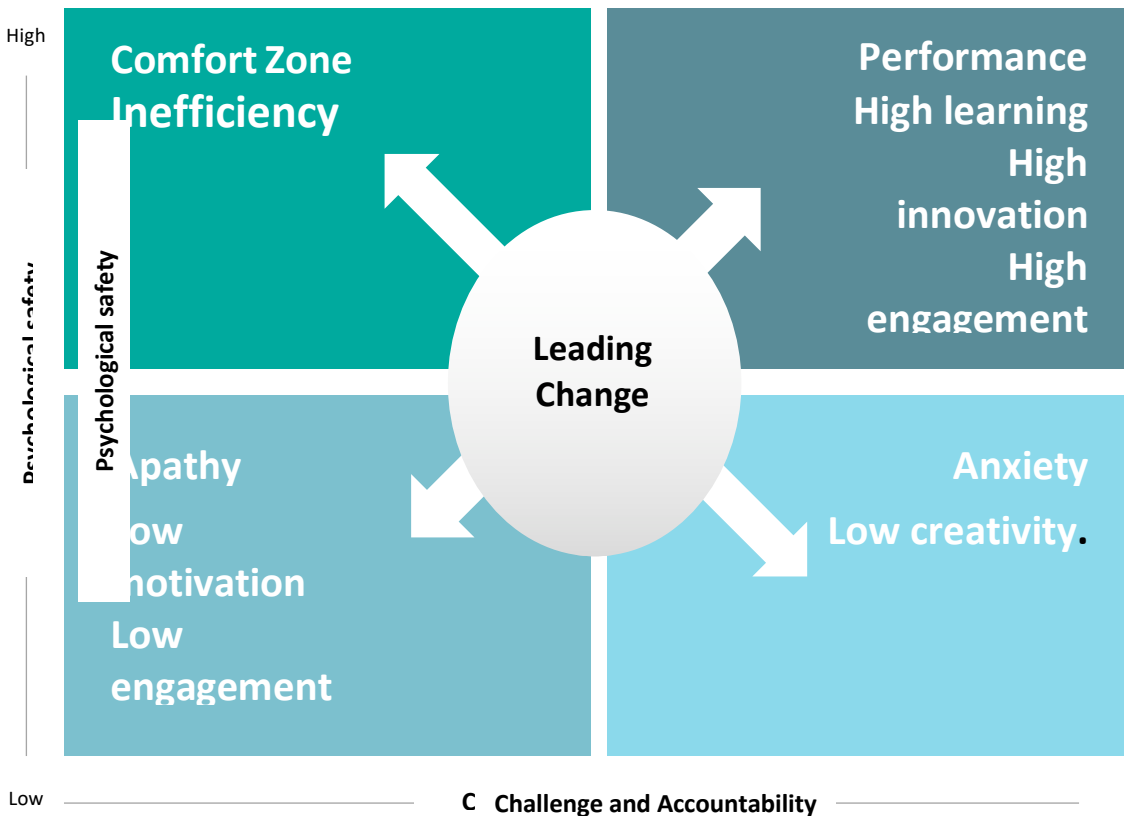
- Safety through connection and relationship – the law of propinquity
- Creating a sense of belonging
- Activating the CARE, SEEKING and PLAY systems
- Reducing toxic stress
- Satisfying structure hunger

What is psychological safety?

“Psychological safety takes off the brakes that keep people from achieving what’s possible. But it’s not the fuel that powers the car. We must build psychological safety to spur learning and we must set high standards and inspire and enable people to achieve them”

Amy Edmundson Harvard Business School

Psychological Safety

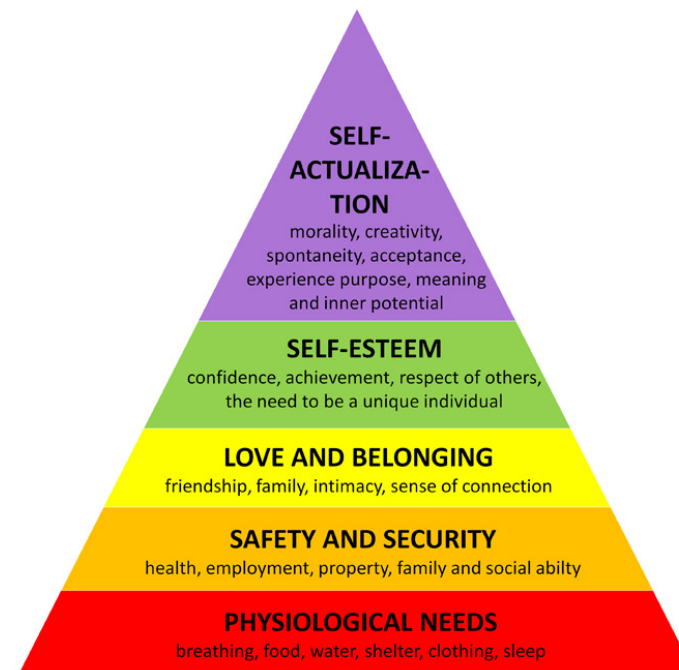


Satisfying Structure Hunger

Psychological Safety: Structure

- Establish, explicitly teach and revisit routines and expectations
- Visual and apparent and clearly defined - visual timetables, now and next
- Gently held and modelled by the adults
- Be predictable, highlight certainty – rooms/spaces/adults/daily routine

- The same place in space –seating plans that are shared across subjects – proprioception
- Predictable adult responses across the school



Connection and Belonging

Do you See Me? Do I Matter? Every student wants to feel VALUED

How Do We Provide What Is Missing In A Child's Life?

- Basic needs
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Resources

- Psychological safety
- Health
- A sense of value and self esteem
 - Opportunities to succeed and achieve
 - Recognition
 - Responsibility
- Love and Belonging
 - opportunities to get to know their peers and the adults in setting
 - A sense of purpose
 - Identity
 - Community
 - A sense of place

Meet and Greet: Evidence Based Research

Compared with the control group, when teachers started class by welcoming students at the door:

- Academic engagement increased by 20 percentage points
- Disruptive behaviour decreased by 9 percentage points
- Potentially adding an additional hour of engagement over the course of a five-hour instructional day

Cook, R, Flat A, Larson, M e (2018) Positive Greetings at the Door: Evaluation of a Low-Cost, High-Yield Proactive Classroom Management Strategy 2018 Feb 19 Journal of Positive behaviour interventions

Creating safety through the Law of Propinquity

- The **law of propinquity** states that the greater the physical or psychological proximity between individuals, the greater the chance that they will form friendships

- The more we interact with someone, the more we find we have in common, the greater our psychological safety
- Less likely to fall out, less likely to argue, less likely to bully each other

Activities to promote the law of propinquity and psychological safety

- Random pairs
- Short
- Shared activity
- Shared information
- Structured
- Playful
- Not personally exposing
- Regular and repeated
- Can be curriculum related

Some ideas...

- 2 likes, 1 dislike
- Portraits on the head
- Social bingo – each person has a bingo card and are tasked to find someone to fit the category on each square
- Single word stories or proverbs
- Something about you –students have 30 seconds to find 1 thing they have in common and 1 thing that is different
- Cotton wool ball tennis or feather football
- Bubble Pop

Belonging: Seen, Accepted, Valued, Celebrated

- Student voice – not just some but all voices are heard
- School bonding questionnaire - where to start
- Adaptations and reasonable adjustments made based on identified needs – student passports
- Photos of young people in classrooms they used frequently
- Values that reflect what matters to students and are followed by all members of the school community – how do adults display the values, what are the consequences if not?
- Recognition – not just for academic skills or achievements
- School trips and after school activities – an opportunity for shared positive experiences – are they selective? A reward? Limited to those who behave well?
- How reflective of the school community are the resources used within school and within the staff team – race, religion, ethnicity, gender – are young people able to see images of themselves in books
- Uniform – can promote belonging but can highlight further difference
- Opportunities to be with others with the same shared experience – gender, bereavement, family separation, refugee/temporarily displaced, homeless
- Peer mentors /break time buddies– particularly for those who join mid-year, or are new arrivals to the country
- Quiet spaces for those who would prefer a less stimulating environment in unstructured times

Belonging for Parents

- Parent voice – is communication with parents one sided?
- PACE in your interactions with parents – Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathic

- Opportunities to develop the connection – what do you know about the family of your students?
- Recognition – noticed, valued, included, informed, invited
- No outsiders
- Is language or the written word a barrier to communication? Is communication with parents only digital?
- Opportunities to be with others with the same shared experience – gender, bereavement, family separation, refugee/temporarily displaced, homeless

How accessible are parents' events?

Delivering the Curriculum

- Optimally activating CARE, SEEKING and PLAY systems through teaching
- Reducing/regulating stress

Research shows learning through play improves students' brain function, motivation, perseverance, ownership, and academic outcomes.

What characterises playful learning?

- Joyful: shared joy states optimally activate the PLAY system; regulate mood, reduce stress
- Social and collaborative: increases safety, connection and belonging, improves oracy and communication
- Meaningful and relevant to the learners
- Active: supports regulation particularly for those with additional needs
- Iterative: an opportunity to reinforce learning

Creates a safe environment in which to take risks – social and academic

MAKING LEARNING PLAYFUL

How can you incorporate CARE, SEEKING and PLAY into your lessons?

- Which elements of the lesson are playful? Fun? Active? Participatory? Collaborative?
- What opportunities are there to develop curiosity, what happens if...?
- How can you demonstrate CARE?
 - Provide encouragement and equipment
 - Demonstrate and model
 - Accept and support failure
 - Empathic response

Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect...

RELATE

"No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship"

"It is the positive relationships and sense of belonging that a good school culture provides that give these children the comfort, confidence, competence, and motivation to learn."

Dr James P Comer Professor of Child Psychiatry, University of Yale 2005

'He changed my life. Just by recognizing that I needed more. And he gave it to me.'

Ian Wright on Mr Pigden

'(humans) don't flourish unless they are able to connect with others.'

Podcast: Michale Gervais with Stephen Porges: How Social Connection Combats Stress

Recognition Hunger

Every student wants to feel valued

- human beings have a psychological need to be noticed and acknowledged
- 'connection is a biological imperative' (Stephen Porges)
- need for belonging
- shapes sense of identity
- Biggest protective factor

Satisfying Recognition Hunger

E.G.

- get to know interests/hobbies/pastimes and make comment from time to time
- consistent, warm meet and greet to each student with a smile and their name as they enter the classroom
- over the course of a week/fortnight, have brief individual contact with each student as you move around the classroom
- consciously notice engagement and effort, ensuring you acknowledge it in a way that is manageable for the student: some prefer a quiet word, some may welcome public praise

PACE: to bring psychological safety and emotional responsiveness in connection, key for secure attachment (Handout)

PLAY, ACCEPTANCE, CURIOSITY, EMPATHY

Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect...

RELATE

Embodying a PACEful approach supports us to remain responsive to the child rather than to be reactive to the behaviour.

How to be...

- Playful
 - Accepting
 - Curious
 - Empathic
- (Dan Hughes)

PACE

What are your hotspot / raw nerve topics that trigger a reaction:

- your interests?
- sports teams you follow?
- your family?
- aspects of your appearance?

PACE: Playful

- Is humour appropriate?
- Will the young person feel patronised?
- Can you stay steady?
- Will it diffuse the situation or invite escalation?

If we can respond non-defensively, crossing the transaction, it can be transformational.

We can disconfirm what the young person believes about themselves and their beliefs of what adults think of them.

TED Talk: Rita Pierson: Every Child Needs a Champion

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzw_bEroAoM)

“Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be”

“Will you like all your children? Of course not. And you know your toughest kids are never absent. And the toughest ones show up for a reason. It’s the connection. It’s the relationship. You won’t like ‘em all. And while you won’t like ‘em all, the key is they must never, ever know it.”

So, how might they sense, feel and know whether we like them or not?

Whether we notice them and when we do:

- **through the sound of our** Voice
- **through the expression on our face** Face
- **through our gestures and stance:** Body

in our everyday connections with them.

Neuroception: Cues of Safety (Stephen Porges)

- ‘The cues of safety and threat are conveyed not only in the **muscles of the face** but also with the muscles that control **vocalisation.**’

- ‘We use **prosody in our voice** to communicate to the **biology** of the individual, not the cognition.’
- ‘These cues convey to the other individual whether we are safe to approach.’

The Pocket Guide to The Polyvagal Theory, Stephen W Porges

The Words to say it using PACE (handout)

‘I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.’

Maya Angelou

Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect...

REGULATE

REGULATE: the physical environment

In addition to the elements that support psychological safety, the classroom space that supports regulation and is conducive to engagement in learning should feel:

- clear and uncluttered
- natural and fresh, not cramped and stuffy
- Views of nature and green spaces from windows
- If you don’t have open spaces outside your window, you can bring in plants and other natural decorations so
- bring the outside in
- “students displayed stronger feelings of friendliness and comfort in the presence of the plants,” the researchers note.

Research: Associations between the naturalness of window and interior classroom views, subjective well-being of primary school children and their performance in an attention and concentration test:

Petra Lindemann-Matthies; Dorothee Benkowitz; Felix Hellinger.

October 2021

Bringing the outdoors in: images/displays/plants/objects

Bringing the outdoors in: Heraclitean Motion

- Comforting
- Calming and soothing
- Supporting us to feel safe
- Security in the ‘sameness’ of them

Have clips playing:

- as students enter form room/classroom/intervention room/assembly

during independent working times within lessons

REGULATE: the people in the physical environment

‘If they would just be calm and settled, we’d get along just fine.’

‘I have to shout to get them into line.’

‘They seem to know exactly how to wind me up.’

‘A dysregulated adult will never regulate a dysregulated child.’ *Bruce Perry*

‘It is when people can’t control their own emotions that they start trying to control the behaviour of others.’ *Paul Dix: When The Adults Change Everything Changes*

How do we contribute to the behaviour of our young people?
What are your hooks and triggers?

What is it in the behaviour of others (adults and children!) that really gets your goat/gets under your skin/ you cannot stand/makes your blood boil?

What **sensations** do you feel in your body?

What **feelings** do you have?

What does your **face** look like? Your **voice** sound like? What does your **physical stance** look like?

How do you then behave?

So, we need to be alert to our own physiological signs and signals of dysregulation and we need to:

- Notice it
- Check it
- Reflect on it
- Stop it.

Dan Hughes

Social engagement:

- responsive to the child
- supports regulation

*** VOICE**

*** FACE**

*** BODY**

Social defence:

- reactive to the behaviour
- triggers dysregulation

Therapeutic presence and establishing a 'face to heart connection'
Greenburg 2023

To know that the person in front of you is truly emotionally regulated, and able to 'get their mind around infinite pain and not wince and therefore tolerate the experience'. *James Grostein 2005*

Language that harms or language that heals?

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/lisacherryauthor_our-latest-graphic-on-language-that-harms-activity-7092521157676994561-a31c?trk=public_profile_like_view

**Research found that empathic listening leads to good vagal tone ...
Children/Teenagers were better able:**

To learn

To use life well

To concentrate

To enjoy relationships

To be kind to others

Gottman, J, Katz, L, Hoover, C (1996) Parental Meta-Emotion Philosophy and the Emotional Life of Families: Theoretical Models and Preliminary Data. Journal of Family Psychology. 1996, Vol. 10, No. 3, 243-268

In relationship with an EAA, it's never too late to develop top-down, stress regulatory systems in the brain.

4 Ways to Help Teens Strengthen Social and Emotional Literacy (Clip)

Top-down inhibitory pathways forming in the child's brain, vital to be able to respond to stress well (Clip)

Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect...

REFLECT

The frontal lobes are key for emotional, social and cognitive Intelligence. The frontal lobes hold our higher order thinking skills: planning, sequencing, problem solving, cause and effect thinking. They develop in the context of our closest care giving relationships and through co-regulation.

- Ability to learn,
- Ability to concentrate
- Good Impulse control
- Emotional regulation
- Empathy
- Ability to reflect
- Emotional and social intelligence.

(Clip)

Mentalization

The capacity to read one's own and others' thoughts and feelings, reflect on them and use them to understand and interpret human behaviours. It is the driver of successful relationships.

It involves the identifying, management and regulation of thoughts, feelings, intentions and emotional states. *Allen & Fonagy, 2006*

Alexithymia

The inability to recognise or describe one's own or another's emotions

There are many ways we can support affect labelling within the school day

- Check ins at the beginning of the day/lesson – linking sensations in the body to thoughts and feelings and to what may be underneath those feelings
- Discussions around the thoughts and feelings of characters in books, through drama lessons
- Modelling and talking about our own feelings and emotions
- Using the language of possibility to support a young person to become aware of how they may be feeling – I'm wondering if, maybe you feel, some people in your situation have felt...
- Building and teaching emotional vocabulary and sophistication though degrees of intensity

KEY SKILL

Don't use too small words for their big feelings. If they don't know the right word – teach it

The Benefits...

- Represents the first steps in emotional regulation and reducing emotional reactivity.
- Proven to calm the amygdala and supports regulation
- Helps them to feel seen, heard and understood.
- Young people who lack the vocabulary to articulate how they feel will behave it
- Once the specific emotion is identified, we can work on collaborative problem solving and guide them towards an appropriate strategy.
- Able to identify what those emotions look and feel like in themselves and in others – increasing the capacity for empathy

KEY SKILL

Children and teenagers don't want to be fixed, they want to be listened to and understood, try to avoid problem solving or 'silver-lining' their situation.

REFLECT: when things go wrong

- Time in with an emotionally available adult to make sense of experiences, thoughts and feelings
- Mental state talk – making sense of how emotions feel in our body, how they affect our thoughts and actions, how the world works
- Exploring what lies beneath the feelings – 'help me understand'
- Supportive not punitive interventions for those children who have displayed behaviours that are problematic
- Show me rather than tell me – using the arts and creativity – draw, write, act

An alternative to punitive Sanctions

PROTECT

Remove the child/young person from the situation – non shaming, protecting dignity, lessening the stress load. *'somewhere with someone'*

RELATE

'Connection before correction'. Non-judgmental, accepting, validating, curious, empathic

REGULATE

Activity to bring down stress levels – this may be play-based. *Emphasis on use of voice, prosody, breathing, skilled verbal responsiveness*

REFLECT

Collaborative sense-making, mental state talk, show me rather than tell me, exploring ways to respond differently in the future. *'Would you help me understand?'*

REPAIR

What needs to happen to put this right, instigated with support by the child/young person at an appropriate time. *Restorative, reconnection, recovery*

REFLECT: The healing power of talking about feelings and making sense of painful life experience

KEY SKILL

Ask open not closed questions. The latter take children/teenagers away from what they are feeling. Closed questions are those which require a yes or no answer.

~~Why do you feel that?~~

Will you help me understand what that was like for you?

~~Why do you feel anger?~~

Will you draw/write graffiti what makes you angry about it.

~~Why do you feel scared?~~

What did you imagine could happen?

Sentence Stems to Support Reflection

Can you help me understand...

Can you show me what happened?

Can you help me understand what you were thinking/feeling at the time?

I imagine that was...

I wonder if that was because you maybe felt...

I wonder what we could do differently to support you

What I see/hear is that when x happens you do y...did you know that?

Do you remember what we do here when...

What do you need from me now to help you to manage this?

Sentence stems to respond to challenging behaviour

I hear just how angry you are about xxx it's understandable... and it's not ok to

I am not for spitting at, I need you to stop, I'm imagining I am too close to you, you can tell me that and I will listen

I hear what you are saying, it feels xxx for you

I can see/hear that you think I am being xxx I'm really sorry that is how you feel about it...

Collaborative Sense-Making

Emotion Clouds

- Any work around REFLECT can only happen once the young person is calm and regulated.
- The adult imagines into the experience of the young person, saying "I'm going to try and imagine what might be going on for you, I'm likely not to get it right, but you can show me what doesn't feel right for you"
- The adult then draws clouds of various sizes and writes in, in the voice of the young person, what they imagine they may be thinking and feeling, leaving some empty.
- The pen is then handed over to the young person with the instruction to change/cross out/write in anything they feel is incorrect or missing

An Example: Recently, Ben is disruptive in maths. He is a popular member of the group. He is confrontational and argumentative and plays up to the rest of the class until he is removed from class. He is bright and has previously engaged well. He has been absent for a period of time due to a close family bereavement.



How Ben responded...



Regulation of under-regulated emotion occurs through the ability to symbolize emotion. [words/images] so that the person is having the emotion rather than the emotion having the person.' *Angus and Greenberg 2011*

Helping teenagers/children/people talk about their lives cards – a vital resource for supporting others through meaningful conversation (available from TISUK)

Ways To Support Reflective Skills

- Philosophy for Children – positive, negative, interesting
- What happened next scenarios
- Story telling cubes
- Collaborative storytelling, what's in the bag?
- Thinking challenges – if you were stranded on a desert island what 3 objects would you have with you?
- Character profiles from stories, thoughts, feelings, actions
- Stories, poems, games for thinking

Reflective Practice

- Opportunities in a safe space to reflect on how the work with young people/ classes impacts personally
- Reflective supervision
- Support to reflect after difficult situations – what happened, how did our approach contribute, what could've been done differently
- Curiosity to look beyond behaviour in young people to identify unmet needs and improve provision (ARTE resource)

And a final word on your role as an educator...

- Dr Katriona O'Sullivan – raised in poverty in Coventry, the daughter of two heroin addicts

- Doctorate in psychology from Trinity College, Dublin, passionate about equality and education. and a lecturer at Maynooth University
- Author of 'Poor'

'Somewhere between two human beings is the power to deal with the problem'. *Madge Bray 1997:34*

