

School's In for Refugees Workshop

Impacts of Trauma on Learning and Behaviour
VicTESOL Symposium, 20 November 24

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VICTORIA Department of Education
Foundation House
The National Partnership for Refugees of Torture (NPT)

1

Map of Australia showing various Indigenous names and symbols. Key locations include: CASERILUN (GARRAMILLA (GORNW) BATSJ), BUNDAL / MALCOURKABA (TOUK, CAKES WATA / GURRUMILBARRA (TOWNVILLE) WANDA MOBLI), TURABAL (MELANJIN (BISCHING) PALANG NGURUNDBAU), EORAO (MARENG (SYDNEY) BUVYERU KAMARU), NOUNNANIAL / NOUMERI (CANBEERA (CANBEERA) YUMALLUNDI), KULIN (NAMA (MELBOURNE) WOMINZKA), PALAWA (NIPALLUNA (HOBART) YA), YAMATIJI (JAMBENI (GERALDTON) YOMA), NOONGAR, DOORLOO (PERTH) KAYA, YAMUURU (RUBI (BROOME) NGAJI CURAJIN).

♥ NATION / CLAN / MOB
📍 CAPITAL CITY TRADITIONAL PLACENAME
🗨️ GREETING

2

Sharing the space

- Respect for each other
- Confidentiality
- Look after self
- Many voices; allow for others
- A little tech patience

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3

Workshop goals

1. **Understand** refugee experiences and the impact of trauma on learning, wellbeing and development
2. **Identify** strategies to support recovery and learning

4

How Foundation House works with schools

- Counselling for children, young people, individuals and families
- Professional and organisational development
- Secondary consultation
- Refugee Education Support Program
- Schools Support Program
- Resources for teachers
- Statewide MEA network

Our Mission
To advance the health, wellbeing and human rights of people from refugee backgrounds who have experienced torture or other traumatic events
VFST 1987

These services are funded by Department of Education and are free for all schools

VICTORIA Department of Education

5

Youth Voice

"When someone came here last year, it's like a baby is born. They're one year old and when they try to walk, his mum is going to take their hand and walk them through slowly.

Same with teachers. If you help your students and explain to them, they'll improve in one month maybe because they're motivated. In any class, everything depends on the teachers.


The way they teach the students matters." Student participant

School is where you need to be equal and learn – Foundation House School Support Program 2017

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6

Students from Refugee Backgrounds:



- Arrived in Australia on Humanitarian visas and are legally defined as **refugees** (according to UNHCR)
- Arrived in Australia and are **seeking asylum** (waiting for their protection claim to be processed)
- Arrived in Australia under other migration programs with **refugee-like experiences**
- Were born in Australia but have immediate family members who fled as refugees, so come from **intergenerational refugee backgrounds**

7

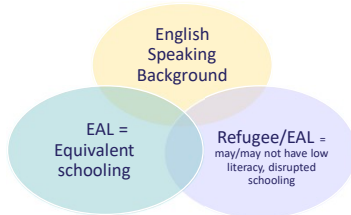
Diverse impacts on education

Children and youth may have very few or no options for education once they are forced to leave their homes and some may have been impacted prior to flight.



8

Learning, wellbeing & social needs of the refugee/EAL group compared to other groups



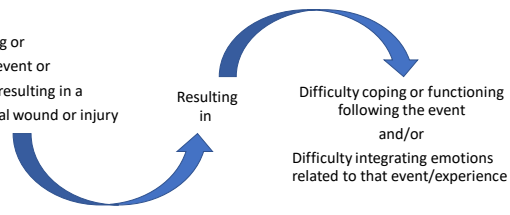
9

Defining Trauma

A frightening or distressing event or experience resulting in a psychological wound or injury


Resulting in

Difficulty coping or functioning following the event and/or
Difficulty integrating emotions related to that event/experience



10

Types of Trauma




Acute/single Trauma Complex Trauma Intergenerational Trauma

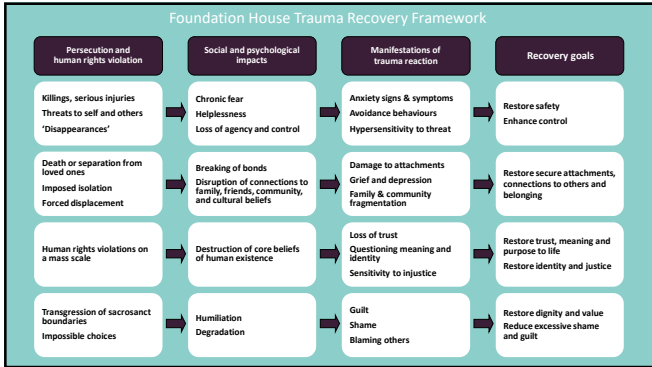
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Not all of your students or their families will have witnessed trauma first-hand. Some may also be second or third generation Australians.

"... the trauma that is transferred from the first generation of survivors that directly experienced or witnessed traumatic events to the second and further generations"
(Atkinson, Nelson & Atkinson, 2010)



12



13

Possible implications of refugee experiences on learning
it's not always trauma

- Low literacy/no literacy in first language
- Young People may have limited parent/carer learning support
- Unfamiliar with skills, environment and expectations
- Young People may be juggling school and family roles and responsibilities
- Slow progression in their learning or showing non-linear patterns of progress/regression

14

Brain and Body Break

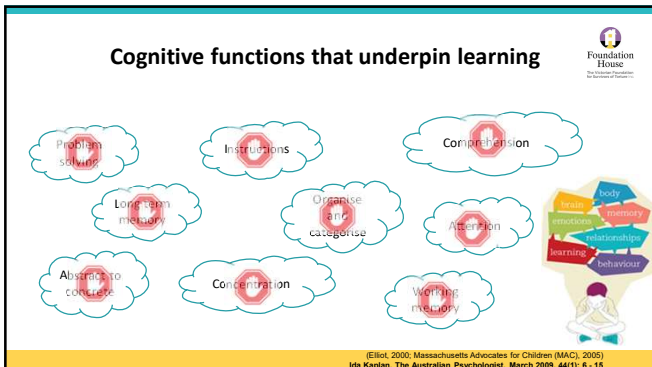
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Video: Trauma and the Brain

Trauma Training

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-tckYx24aA>

16



17

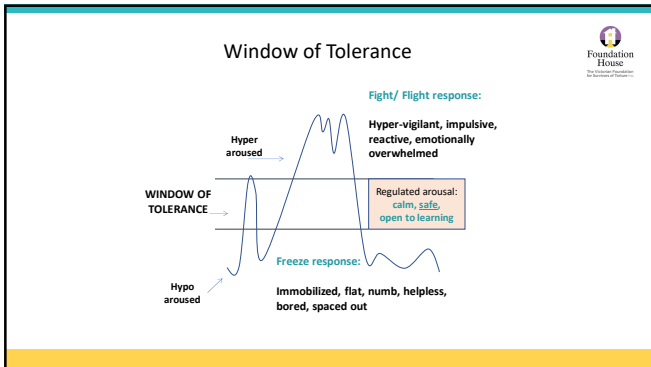
Our window of tolerance

The 'window of tolerance' illustrates the zone where we function most effectively in our lives.

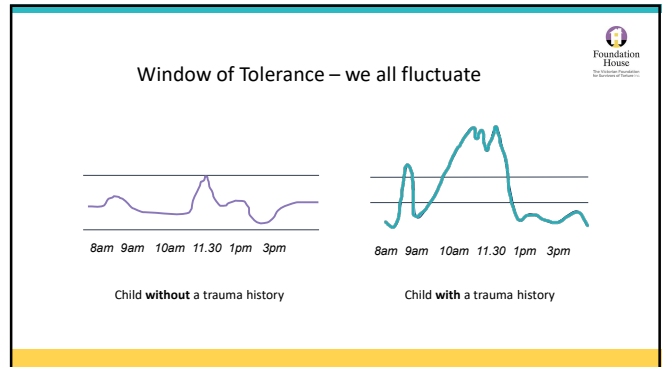
If overstretched and stressed, our response may be to fight, to run away or to freeze.

Whatever reaction we have shows that we have been pushed beyond our window of tolerance.

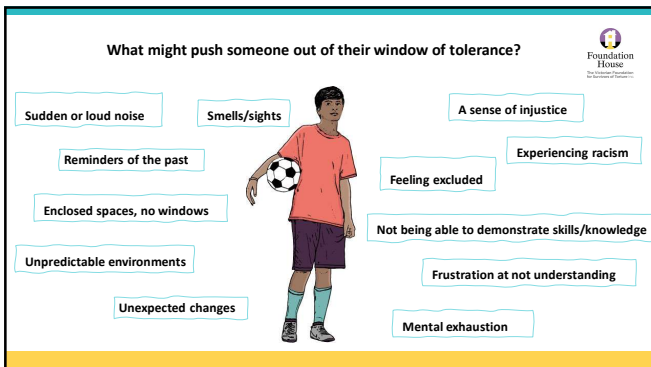
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19



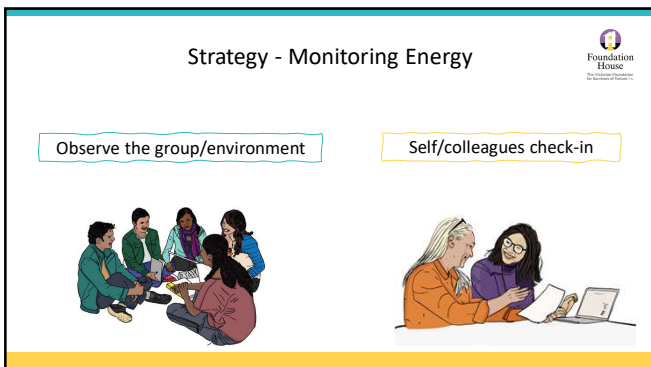
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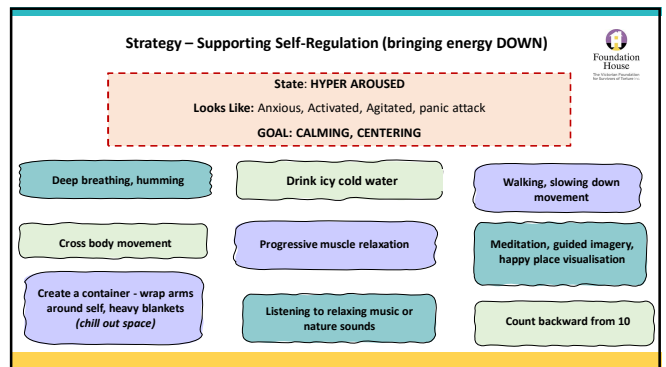
21

Strategies to support regulation and learning

22



23



24

Strategy – Supporting Self-Regulation (bringing energy up)

State: HYPO AROUSED
 Looks like: Dissociated “spacey” Disconnected, Numb
 GOAL: CONNECTING, ENERGISING, reorientating to present moment

Drink cold water	Cool air on face/body	Tapping/Squeezing, Patting (waking up body)
Gradually increase movement: eg wriggling, moving, walking, stretching	Stand up and move around (brain/body breaks)	Stand on tip toes, balance on one foot
Sensory Activities: • Bouncing a ball • Sensory toys/spinners	5,4,3,2,1	Listen to upbeat music

25

The Three R's: Reaching The Learning Brain

Dr Bruce Perry, a pioneering neuroscientist in the field of trauma, has shown us that to help a vulnerable child to learn, think and reflect, we need to support them in a sequence which prioritises regulation first so that the brainstem can be calmed.

Heading straight for the “reasoning” part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work so well if the child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.

Copyright Dr Bruce Perry

26

Case Study - Iryna

- What are Iryna’s strengths?
- Where in the window of tolerance is she presenting?
- What might be triggering a trauma response/state?
- What strategies could you use to support her to shift back into the learning zone?

27

Reflection - recovery goals

What other strategies might be used to support Iryna at school more broadly?

Restore safety Enhance control	Restore secure attachments, connections to others & belonging	Restore trust, meaning & purpose to life, identity & justice	Restore dignity & value Reduce excessive shame & guilt
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28

Youth Voice

*“The first time I came to Australia, I never made a friend, but I loved to talk to my teachers.
They understand how hard it is for us when we are new to this country.”*

*“In Year 9, I had an EAL teacher ... she was very helpful for me ... she found this engineering camp and asked me if I wanted to join.
She helped me write up the application, send it in and everything. It was helpful for someone to look at that for me. I didn't know anything at the time.”*

School is where you need to be equal and learn – Foundation House Research Project, 2017

29

Summary: Supportive classroom climate & trauma informed practices

What you bring:

- Be genuine, warm and caring
- Be aware of your own reactions
- Collaborate with MEAs to determine successful strategies


Strategies to support all students:

- Plan movement breaks or brain breaks
- Be consistent and predictable with daily routines
- Give early warning about changes to routine/transitions
- Provide appropriate support for learning activities

Supporting emotional regulation:

- Give students options and agency (maximise control)
- Create a withdrawal space/protocol e.g. chill out pass
- Listen and validate emotions
- Get to know the child and their triggers/warning signs
- Maintain respect and confidentiality


30



Indicators that a report to Student Wellbeing and/or external referral may be needed

- Crying a lot / persistent emotional distress
- Aggressive behaviour or persistent anger
- Severe social withdrawal or appears uncommunicative
- Overreacting to noises in environment
- Expresses threat to harm self or others
- Reported sleep problems
- Re-telling of traumatic events in stories or conversation
- Lots of worries
- Frequent absences
- Persistent headaches or other aches and pains

31



Counselling & Advocacy – Eligibility and Referrals

Foundation House services are accessible to individuals who meet the following criteria:

- Have a [refugee or refugee-like backgrounds](#)
- Have a history of torture and/or other traumatic events prior to arrival in Australia or be an immediate family member of such a person (Impact on day-to-day functionality)

Schools can make referrals:

- Primary school students who meet the eligibility criteria
- Secondary school students who meet the eligibility criteria
- Family members of students who meet the eligibility criteria


<https://foundationhouse.org.au/for-clients/make-a-referral/>

32


We cannot change the past for our students
but **we can support recovery**
to help reduce its impact on the present

“Because of this timeless and unintegrated nature of traumatic memories, victims remain embedded in the trauma as a contemporary experience, instead of being able to accept it as something belonging to the past”
(Kolk & Newman, 2007)

33




Your feedback please




Link is also provided in the chat


34




Reflection



Head: Something today got you thinking




Heart: Something today made you feel




Hand: An action you wish to take

35



Follow Schools In
for Refugees to
keep in touch!



36



For upcoming learning regarding **classroom strategies**

Visit www.sifr.foundationhouse.org.au

Contact EducationandEarlyYears@foundationhouse.org.au

The School's In for Refugees program is supported by the Victorian Government.



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