

Welcome to:
Impacts of Trauma on learning and behaviour
A Foundation House School Support Program workshop

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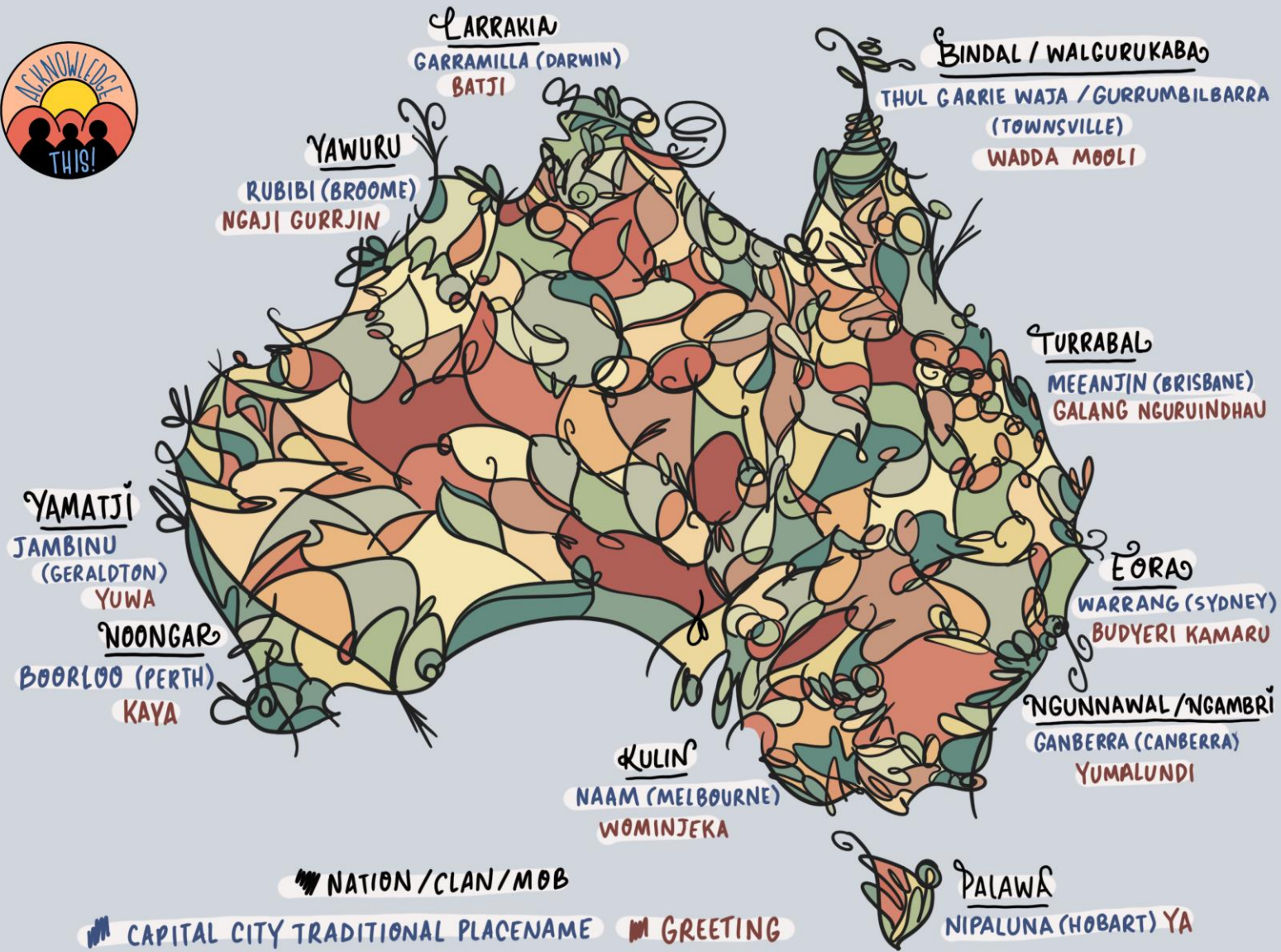
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Sharing the space

- Respect for each other
- Confidentiality
- Look after self
- Many voices; allow for others
- A learning space



Workshop goals

- 1. Review** the refugee experience and Foundation House trauma recovery goals
- 2. Understand** the impact of trauma on student learning, wellbeing and development
- 3. Identify** strategies to support recovery and learning





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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





School's In for Refugees

- HOME
- ABOUT US ▾
- REFUGEE EXPERIENCES ▾
- PRIMARY SCHOOL ▾
- SECONDARY SCHOOL ▾
- NEWS
- RESOURCES ▾

You can support students of refugee backgrounds to thrive at school.

School's In for Refugees is here to help.



sifr.foundationhouse.org.au



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Our whole-school approach



Teaching and Learning



Families



School Climate



Transitions



Partnerships



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We cannot change the past for our students but we can support recovery to help reduce it's impact on the present

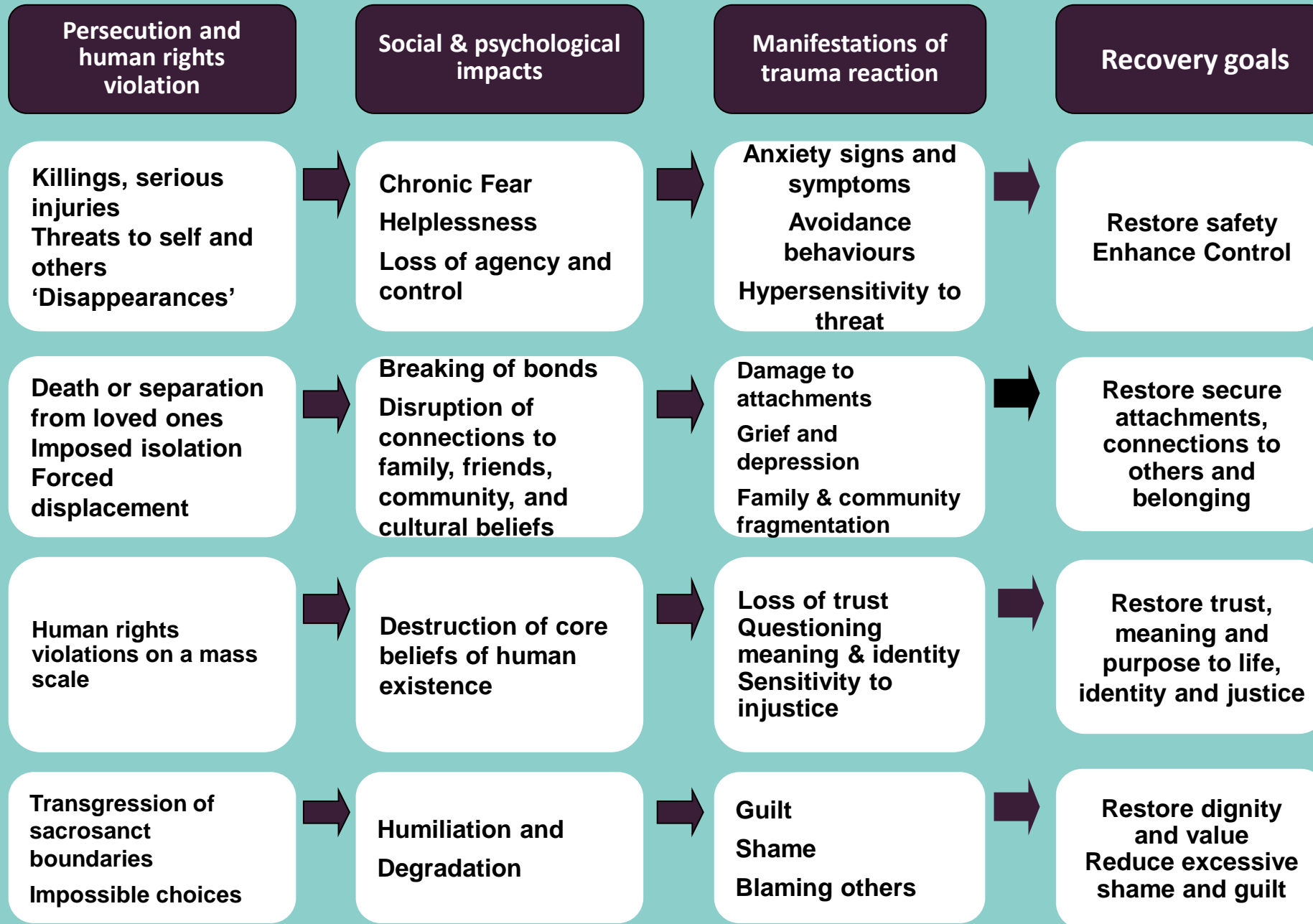
Because of this timeless and unintegrated nature of traumatic memories, victims remain embedded in the trauma as a contemporary experience, instead of being able to accept it as something belonging to the past.

Kolk & Newman (2007)

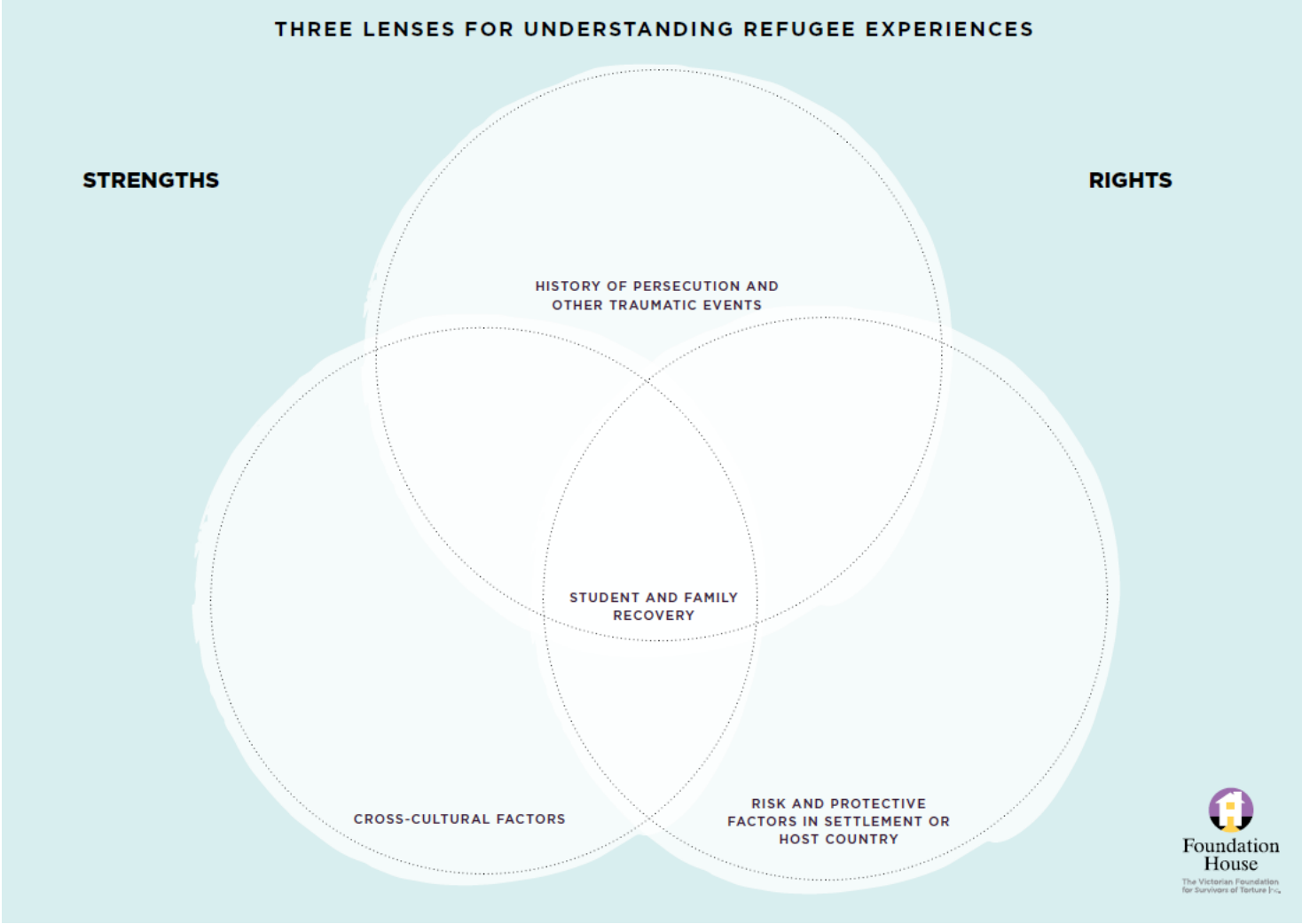


Standard 4 -Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

Foundation House Trauma Recovery Framework



Three lenses for understanding refugee experiences – case study Ngun





Case study Activity

In your groups discuss:

What are some concerns you can identify regarding the students' learning and engagement?

What might be the triggers or reasons behind these?

Chol:

- 12 Years old
- Lives with mum and four siblings, mum is not engaging with the school
- Involved in physical altercations in yard and when lining up
- Loves soccer/sport
- Popular with his friends and likes group work
- Disruptive and agitated during quiet reading/independent work

Ngun

- 10 years old
- Very disrupted education
- Many family responsibilities
- Few peer relationships
- Likes being read to and opportunities for play
- Prefers not to participate in groups and sometimes appears to be 'spaced out' in class



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Possible implications of refugee experiences upon learning and behaviour

- Low literacy/no literacy in first language
- Misunderstandings about behaviour
- Unfamiliarity with skills, environment and expectations
- Extent of time required to gain academic English proficiency required for schoolwork
- Anxiety about the classroom and catching up
- Children may be without or have limited parent/carer learning support
- Children may be juggling school and family roles and responsibilities

Many factors influence the extent and nature of the impact of the refugee experience on a child's learning and development



- the nature and extent of exposure to traumatic events
- the child's age at time of maximum disruption
- the degree to which the family has remained intact and the health, wellbeing and settlement trajectory of family members
- the degree of safety in the first country of asylum
- the degree of prior schooling and first language academic proficiency
- the child's self-esteem, disposition and temperament
- opportunities for recovery in Australia
- the nature and extent of impacts on the child's physical health or medical needs



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Trauma

“An experience we have, that overwhelms our capacity to cope. A traumatic experience for one person may not be traumatising for another.”

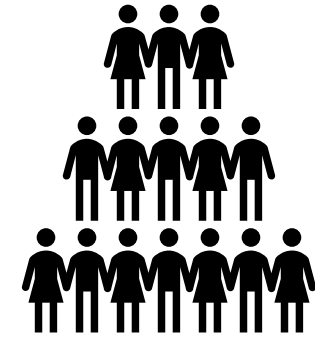
-Dan Siegal



Acute/single Trauma



Complex Trauma



Intergenerational Trauma



Individual cognitive functions that underpin learning

- Attention and concentration
- Comprehension
- Understanding instructions and input
- Working memory (including the holding of information and instructions in the process of problem solving),
- Committing knowledge to long term memory
- Organization of information and category formation,
- Shifting from abstract to concrete and from concrete to the abstract
- Generating a range of strategies to solve a problem,
- Flexibility and demonstrating a solution to others



Trauma can detrimentally affect most of these functions

(Elliot, 2000; Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC), 2005)
Ida Kaplan, *The Australian Psychologist*, March 2009, 44(1): 6



What sort of behaviour might present?

- reactive, defensive, angry patterns of interacting at school (with themselves and others)
- inability to tolerate frustration
- withdrawal and disengagement in the classroom, not progressing, and unable to pay attention in class
- an apparent inability to form relationships with other children (teachers may comment about the student not having empathy or ability to play)
- child unable to be calmed, to self-regulate or co-regulate with a known teacher or their parent/carer
- sensitivity to injustice or perceived injustice

Our window of tolerance



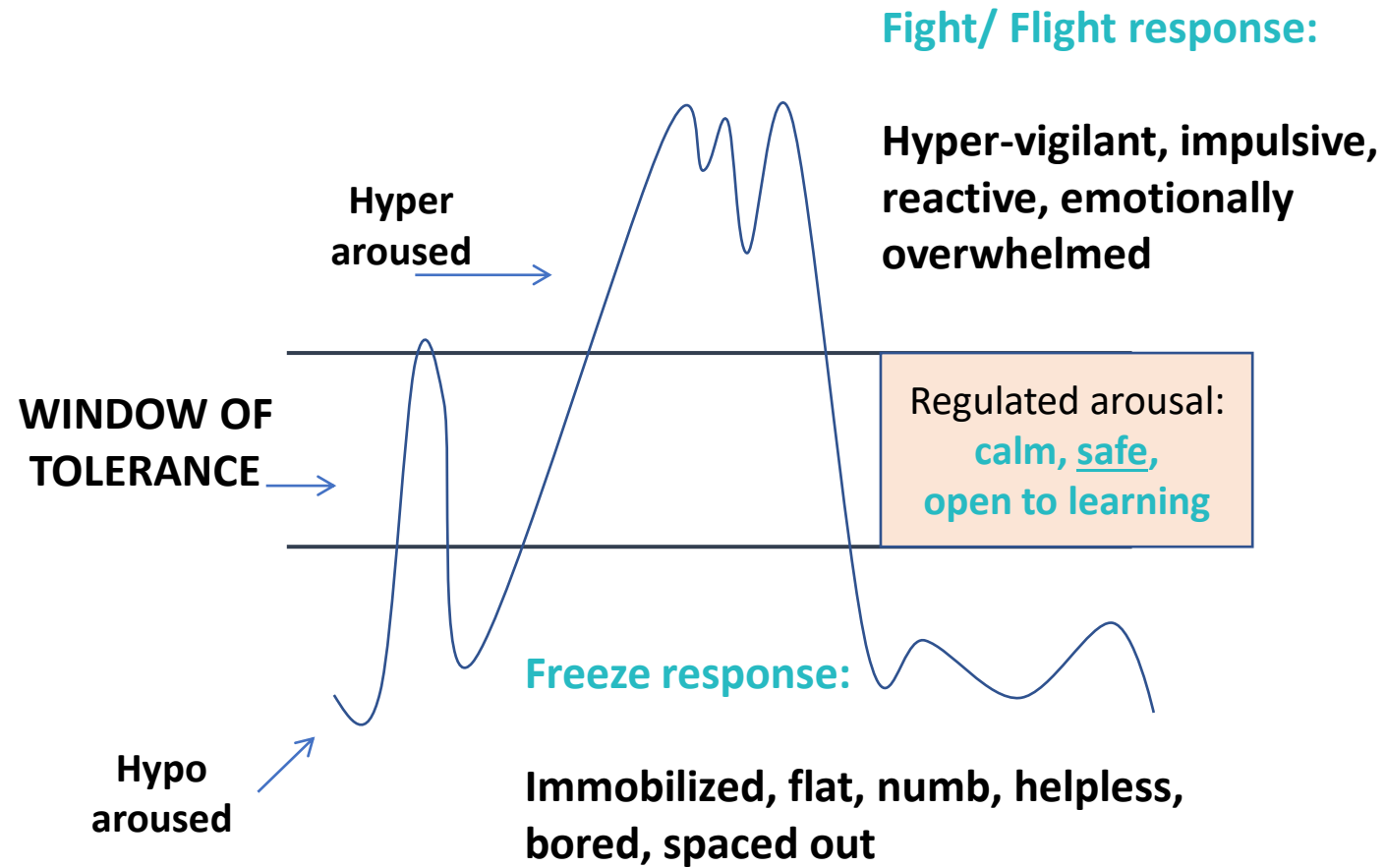
The 'window of tolerance' illustrates the zone where we function most effectively in our lives.

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

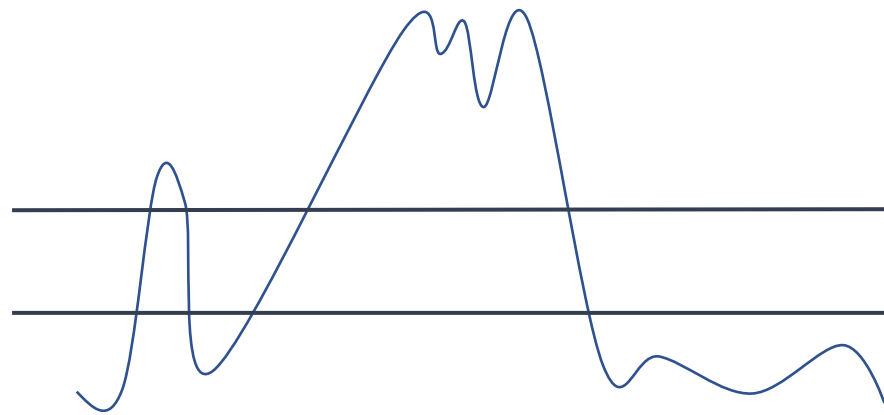
Whatever reaction we have shows that we have been pushed beyond our window of tolerance.

retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Crack_in_the_window_of_St._Augustus_\(Beverly_houses\)_tower.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Crack_in_the_window_of_St._Augustus_(Beverly_houses)_tower.jpg)

Window of Tolerance



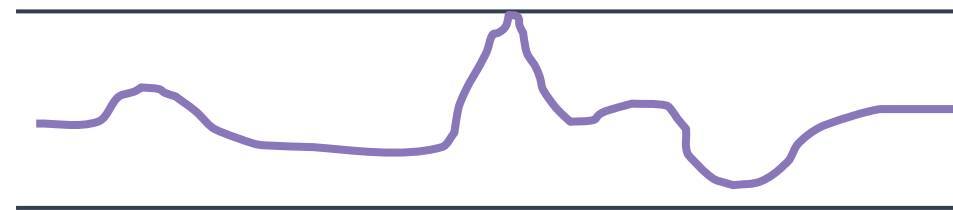
Window of Tolerance – we all fluctuate



Child with a trauma history

8am 9am 10am 11.30 1pm 3pm

Child without a trauma history



8am 9am 10am 11.30 1pm 3pm

What might push students out of their window of tolerance?

- Sudden noise/ loud noise
- Smell/sight which reminds student of the past
- Transitions/unexpected changes to the day
- Unpredictable environments
- Disagreements with peers
- Lack of friends
- Experiencing racism
- Not feeling included
- A sense of injustice
- Persistent low-level achievement
- Frustration at not understanding
- Mental exhaustion
- Not being able to work independently
- Not being able to demonstrate skills/knowledge



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What does overshooting the window look like?

What you might observe (or what the student might feel)

- Dilated pupils (to let light in to see better)
- Dry mouth
- Shallow breathing
- Butterflies in stomach
- Faster heartbeat
- Excessive sweating
- Tense muscles (ready for action)
- Agitated movement
- Trouble finding stillness

How you can help

- Allow time and space for child to calm down
- Assist them to understand what has happened
- Help them to reflect on what has happened
- Natural consequences (if they have broken something, ask them to fix it, if they have upset someone, ask them to apologise etc)

What does undershooting the window look like?

What you might observe (or what the student might feel)

- Slumped body parts
- Collapsed body
- Endless stare with pin like pupils
- Loose muscles
- Slowed heart rate
- Blank face

How you can help

- Create a sensory break or short mindfulness activity
- Bring all students back into their bodies e.g. pat your head and rub your belly, push your big toes into your shoes



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Prevention strategies & Trauma informed practices

- Plan movement breaks or brain breaks
- Get to know the child and their triggers/warning signs
- Be consistent and predictable with daily routines
- Give early warning about changes to routine/transitions
- Create a withdrawal space/protocol e.g. chill out pass
- Provide appropriate support for learning activities
- Give students options and agency (maximise control)
- Be Genuine, warm and caring
- Listen and validate emotions
- Maintain respect and confidentiality
- Be aware of your own reactions
- Teach students about self-regulation

APST: 3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

APST: 4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments



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Case study: Ngun



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In your groups discuss:

What strategies might you use to support learning and engagement for the student?

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Your feedback please

Stop- something that maybe wasn't all that useful

Start- something you'd like to see included

Keep- something you thought was particularly worthwhile

Thank you 😊



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.

