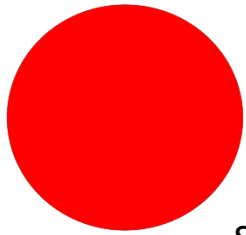


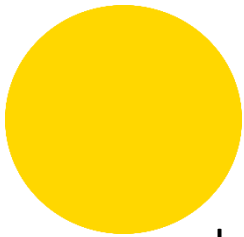
The 3 Rs: Reaching the Learning Brain

Dr Bruce Perry, a pioneering neuroscientist in the field of trauma, has shown us that to help a vulnerable child to learn, think & reflect, we need to intervene in a simple sequence.



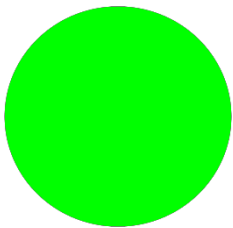
Firstly, **REGULATE**: help the child to regulate & calm their flight/fight/freeze responses.

How? Soothing but limited language, a safe space to go, stepping back and allowing them time to process. Don't add to the feelings by shouting or 'adding fuel to the fire'.



Secondly, **RELATE**: we need to connect with and relate to the child.

How? Develop a calm, sensitive dialogue, acknowledging how they feel and how that is hard for them. "Wow, you must have felt really angry then. That must have been hard for you..."



Thirdly, **REASON**: we can support the child reflect, learn, remember, articulate and self-regulate their emotions.

How? Teach them the language of emotions, strategies for regulating them, use story to explore emotions and remind them of their safe places and safe people.

This is explained in more detail below.

What to do – Trauma informed support for children

1

Create Safety

If the child is overwhelmed perhaps guide them to a quiet corner and give them the space they need to calm themselves. They need to feel comfortable with a trusted adult who they know has their welfare at the forefront of their mind.

Regulate the nervous system

Stress brings a pattern of psychological responses: hyper-arousal (jumpy, agitated, explosive) or hypo-arousal (depressed, withdrawn, frozen). The child needs to explore strategies to find what helps them to find calm.

2

3

Connect

This is the most effective way to calm the nervous system. When we are around people we care about & trust, our bodies produce oxytocin, the hormone responsible for calming our nervous system after stress.

Support a coherent narrative

Structure, routine & a reliable calm adult helps reduce the chaos and supports the child create logical sequential connections that help them understand their own narrative. They need to hear a simple explanation of what is happening & will happen next.

4

5

Practice power-with strategies

Trauma comes with a loss of power & control. When someone/thing wields power over you with disregard for your feelings or thoughts it triggers toxic stress, bringing back previous traumas. Maintain dignity & respect for the child and be with them without dominating them.

Build skills of social & emotional resilience

When the brain is preoccupied with survival it does not devote energy to building & developing relationships. Model the skills and actions of a caring, kind and supportive person for them to observe, copy & practice so they become more skilled.

6

7

Foster post-traumatic growth

We know that there are qualities that allow people not just to survive trauma, but to find new meaning & purpose. Problem solving, planning & maintaining focus despite discomfort, self-control, emotional regulation and seeking support are skills that enable this.

STRATEGIES

STEP 1 - STRATEGIES FOR REGULATION:

- Provide a safe & comfortable space.
- Remain calm yourself.
- Use limited yet soothing language.
- If possible, provide a source of physical comfort (blanket, toy, stress toy).
- Talk through regulating breathing e.g. rectangle breathing (breath in on the short side, breath out on the long side), or trace your finger of one hand up & down the fingers of the other hand tracing the outline of the hand breathing in as you go up and breathing out as you go down.
- Identify things you can see, smell, hear, feel, taste.

Once the child has become calm move to step 2...

STEP 2 - STRATEGIES FOR RELATING:

- Identify how they are feeling, 'You look/seem angry/frustrated/sad...' mirroring the emotion with your tone of voice.
- Acknowledge that this is unpleasant, 'That must be really tough/difficult...'
- Reassure them that you are there to help or can get someone to help, 'I am here to help you when you are ready' or 'Who would you like me to get for you to help you?'
- Accept that even though they may appear calmer now, they are still processing & are still in a place of slightly heightened arousal. This is not the time to teach them anything.
- Share your own experiences to let them know it is normal to feel these emotions, 'I get really frustrated when I find something difficult too...' or 'I feel angry when I am not listened to as well...'

Once the child has moved back to a normal state move to step 3...

STRATEGIES FOR REASONING:

- Teach the language of emotions by naming them with the child when they experience them.
- Teach strategies for self-regulation (breathing techniques, going for a walk, moving away from the situation, finding help from a trusted adult or friend, talking, counting to 20, read through an appropriate story together (listed in the back of the PSHRE policy), therapeutic sand tray play, self-talk...)
- Identifying things that we can control, things we could control with help, and things that are beyond our control.
- Delivery of PSHRE curriculum & Five Ways to Wellbeing with whole class.