

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA AND HELPING RECOVERY FOR CARE-EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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**Children's
Health Scotland**

1

What do we mean by trauma and how can we define it?

2

What has the brain got to do with it?

3

Identify some of the challenges and behaviours connected with trauma

4

What helps recovery?

5

Find out about other resources of help

SESSION AIMS

CONNECTED

It is now accepted that a baby's emotional environment will influence the neurobiology that is the basis of mind..... the most vital part is the emotional connection with the care giver.



Positive attachment

Relationships provide children with a secure base from which to explore their world.

Insecurely attached

Children have to concentrate on safety and survival and are less able to explore freely.

This has an impact on children's ability to learn.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

A trauma is a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience. Trauma often involves a sense of intense fear, terror, and helplessness.



UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

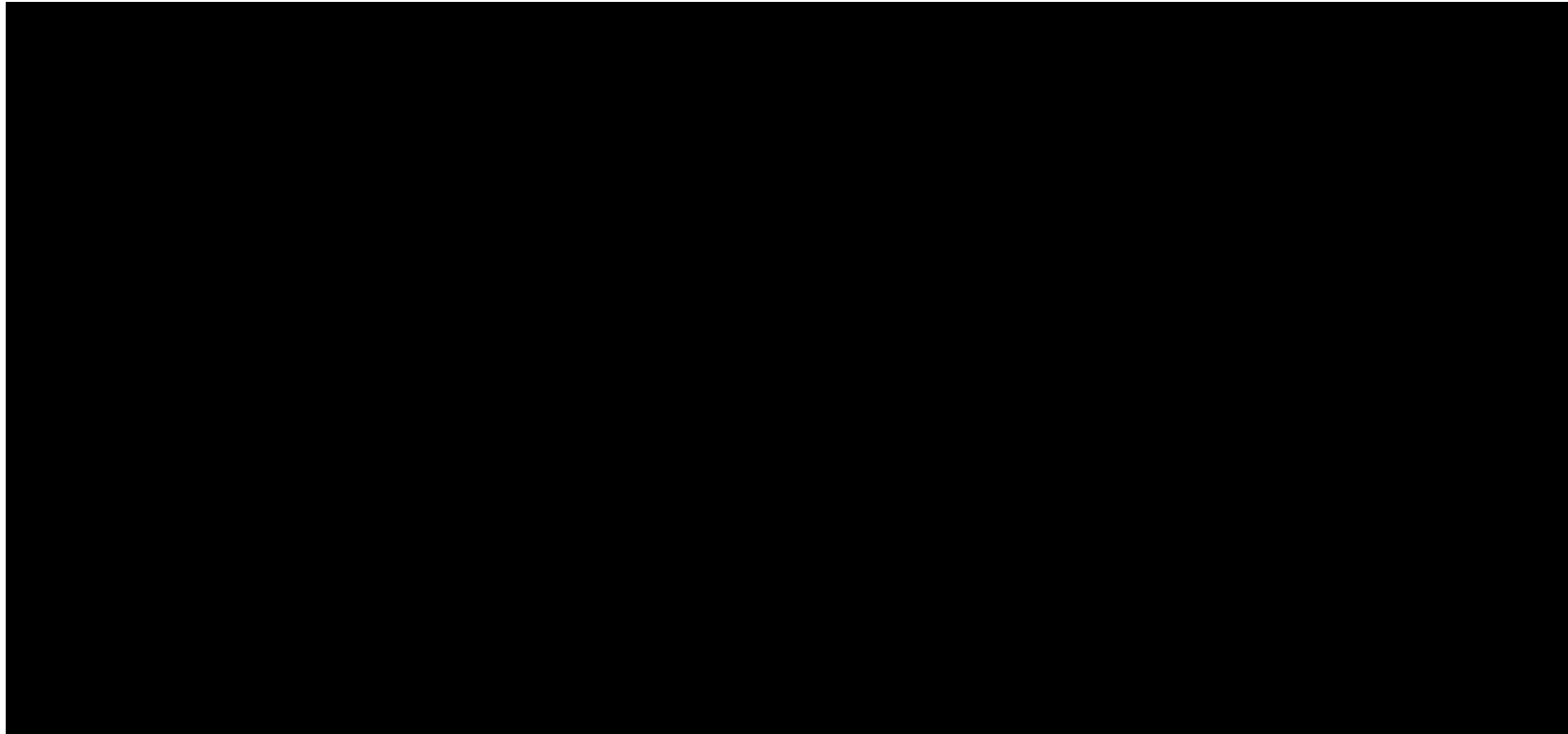
- A child or a young person can be traumatised by one overpowering event or many events over time.
- Children in vulnerable situations are commonly traumatised by living in chronically chaotic and violent households with few adult-child boundaries and neglectful parenting.
- In addition, they often suffer specific incidents of abuse from an early age. This type of traumatisation is different from reactions caused by single overpowering events though there are similarities in both the emotional and physiological response to threat.
- Children and young people (CYP) with poor attachments prior to traumatic experiences are more severely affected by trauma.
- CYP affected in this way, often have no understanding that experiences of chronic trauma, which have been commonplace to them, are out of the ordinary.
- They also often cannot remember the details. Seemingly benign events in the present (such as a perfume smell or a voice) can trigger trauma memories when the child experiences emotional and physiological responses similar to those experienced when the trauma first occurred, such as flashbacks or sudden panic attacks.



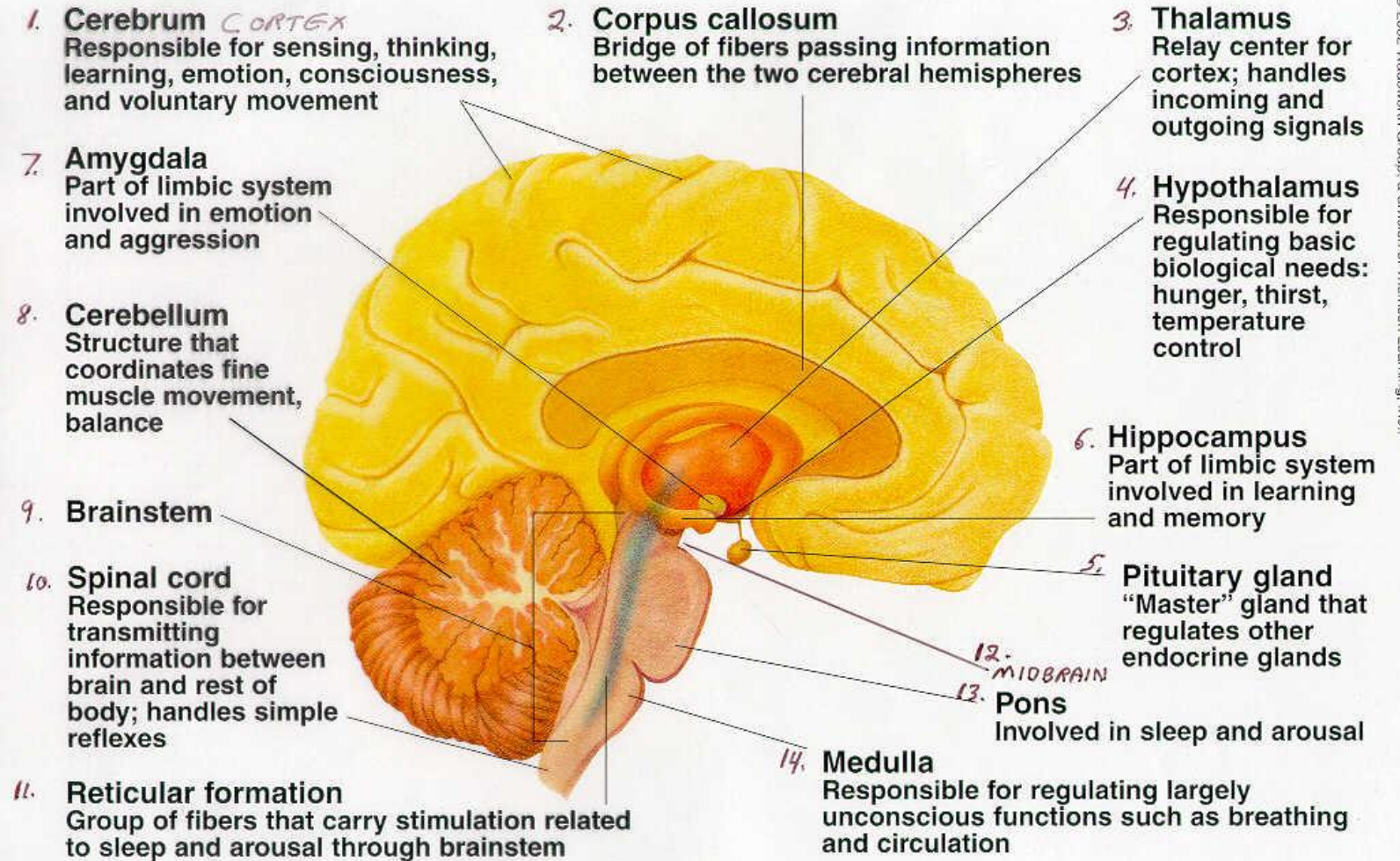
WHAT IS WORSE THAN AN INSECURE ATTACHMENT?

TRAUMA MEMORIES?

CRAIG'S STORY: CLASSROOM

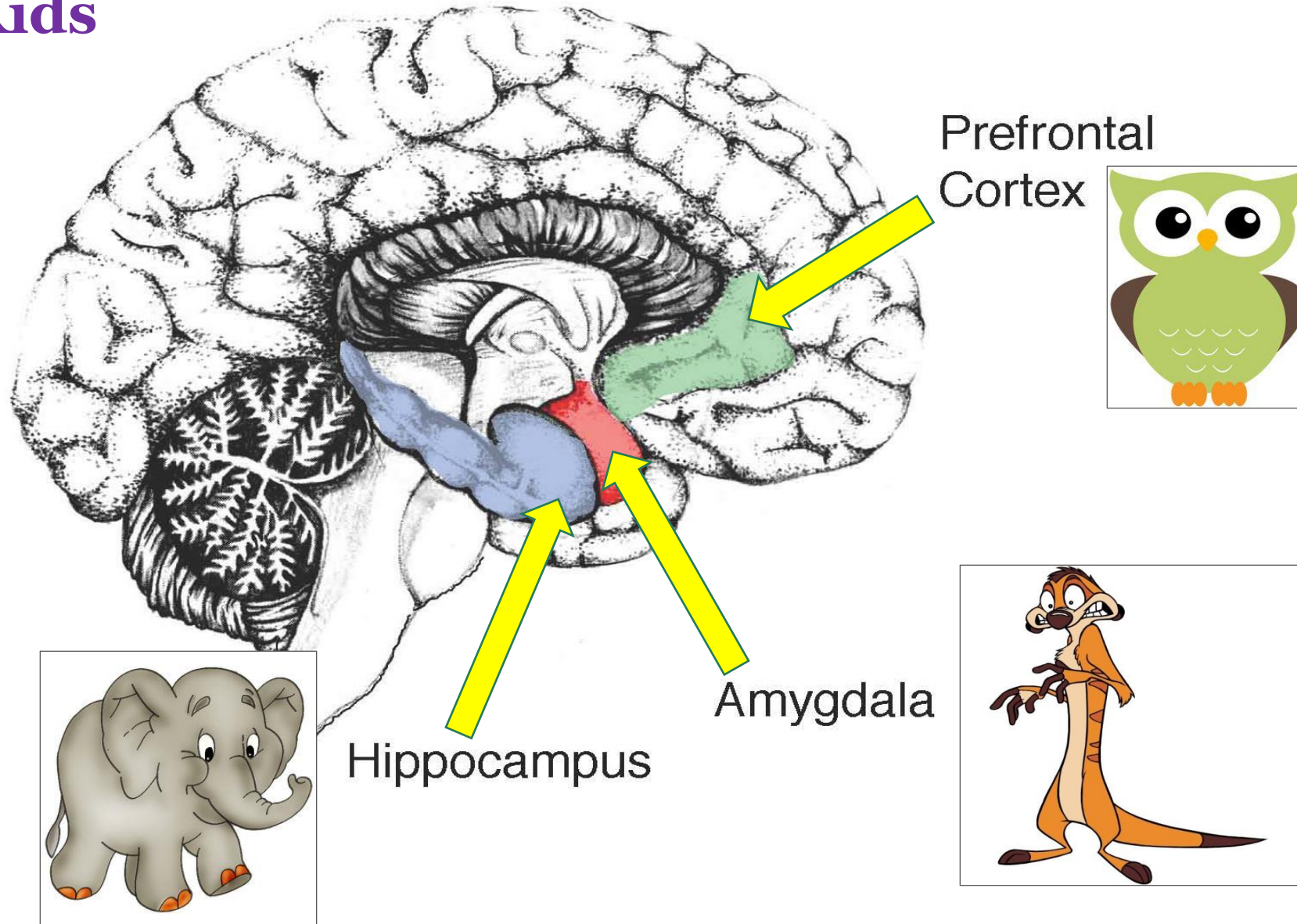


STRUCTURES AND AREAS IN THE HUMAN BRAIN



Structures and areas in the human brain

The Relax Kids Brain Story



Adapted by RK Coaches and Jane Evans from her beautiful book: Little Meerkat's Big Panic



THE BRAIN AS A DRUG BOX

When children and young people experience persistent stress they are likely to produce toxic amounts of cortisol which can have a detrimental effect on:

- Brain function
- All major body systems
- Social functioning

CORTISOL

Puts a **brake** on all body systems as the body thinks it is in crisis:

- Relaxation
- Immune system
- Learning





OXYTOCIN

Otherwise known as the love hormone:

- Receptive to others.
- Welcoming.
- Calmer physical system.



WHAT HELPS SPONTANEOUS RECOVERY FROM TRAUMA?



Let's
rethink

CHANGING THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

Change:

*"What's wrong
with you?"*

to

*"What's happened
to you?"*

Sandra Bloom

THE RIGHT TO RECOVERY

- States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of:
 - any form of neglect, exploitation or abuse
 - torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
 - armed conflicts.
- Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.



illustration : alex leonard

If you have been treated badly, you should be helped to recover

U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 39

**CHILDREN &
YOUNG PEOPLE'S**
Commissioner
Scotland

 **Children's
Health Scotland**

UNCRC ARTICLE 39

HOW CAN WE HELP RECOVERY?

HOW CAN WE HELP RECOVERY?

- 1. Comfort Compliments hugs and smiles** – sometimes in the confusion of family life and especially if there is tension or challenge of any sort, it can be difficult to always remember to practise some of these.
- 2. Blankets and hankies** – these should perhaps be separate. They refer to wrapping a child up tight so that they feel held and safe and comforted as you used to do a baby. You can even buy heavy blankets weighted to promote sensory integration. Hankies – could be one which you give to the child as they leave you to go to school as a transitional object. It reminds them of you till you are reunited.
- 3. Partings and reunions** are also important (see above) – always make a thing of them and celebrate when you get back together again.
- 4. Balloons** – after a bereavement, launch a helium balloon with a little ticket attached to the string with a message to the loved one on it.
- 5. Mindfulness** – Hands on Scotland has a good article. Lots of children do this in school. <https://www.handsonscotland.co.uk/mindfulness/>
- 6. Breathing** – see CHS eNews for March 2021. I'm forever blowing bubbles. <https://mk0childrensheafm4fc.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/210308-CHS-SPRING-MAGAZINE-FINAL.pdf>

HOW CAN WE HELP RECOVERY?

7. Music – Sally Magnusson developed the concept of a play list of their favourite tracks or ones which had special meaning for people who had lost their memory.

Link – <https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk/sally-magnusson/>

8. Imagery – you can do a guided activity where you take someone back in their imagination to a favourite place etc.

9. Memories – you may have heard of a Memory Box – it does not have to be for someone who has died and can in fact be for the missing parent or anyone else. It can contain anything from a football ticket to a photo of the person, an object which reminds you of them. FC and the photo memory of her and her boy in the sea on holiday – a moment of perfect joy and can bring that feeling back.

10. Kites and Leaves – From Seasons For Growth

<http://www.seasonsforgrowth.org.uk/>

11. Stories – there are even themed books now for Foster and Kinship carers/friendship/loss/worry etc. See CHS website for story with Rory from CBBs -

<https://www.childrenshealthscotland.org/childrens-health-scotland-celebrates-kinship-care-week-with-another-storywithrory/>

12. Boxes and Jars – the example on the slide is for a family kindness jar – people put suggestions for what they would like done for them or offer to do something e,g, make tea, clear up, go shopping. Family members take it in turns to pick a card from the jar and either request that or offer to do that for someone in the family.

SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

- Attachment/trauma aware schools
- Safe base teams – team Noah – attachment figures
- Separate playgrounds
- Nurture groups
- Mindfulness
- Calm the body first – before engaging
- Emotional Literacy - Feeling weather maps
- Case conferences
- Child Centred Planning
- Life story work – via other agencies
- Season for Growth Programme
- Place to be

RESILIENCE ALPHABET

FROM EDUCATION SCOTLAND

The Resilience Alphabet has been designed to help primary aged children build inner strength and wellbeing as part of the development of personal resilience.

Each of the letters offer an opportunity for children to explore a word linked to resilience through the use of a Think, Say and Do cycle.

There are a range of activities so that children can choose the one that works best for them.

It can be accessed for free online or printed off and there are useful PowerPoints to support the activity:
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/scotland-learns/health-and-wellbeing-activities/resilience-alphabet/>



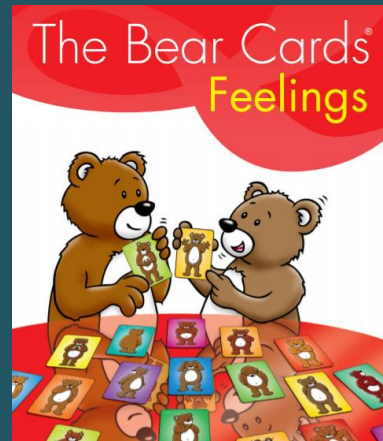
Emotional literacy resources

There are lots of tools that school staff tell us they have found useful to help children and young people identify and express their emotions.

Emotional blob tree



Bear Cards



RCPCH Emoji Card Game



Kitbags, International Futures Forum




Links in References and further learning at the end of the topic

KEY MESSAGES

- Know the story and learn the child
- Who is in your support bubble?
- **Resilience and recovery has to be built up over time.** There are no quick fixes.
- Catch them in a receptive calm moment
- Repair and reconnect to get back to connectedness
- Have **moments of shared joy**
- Remember self-care for you
- therapy with a small t – good enough normal home life is the therapy

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

-  Information
-  Resources
-  Campaigns
-  Training
-  Join our Family Participation Group
-  Follow us on Social Media
-  Join our mailing list
-  Get in touch

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICES

We operate health and wellbeing services for children and young people

THANK YOU

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