

Trauma Informed Practice

Dr. Leanne Johnson, Consultant Clinical Psychologist & Head of Trauma Informed Practice introduces the developing Trauma Informed Practice Strategy at Outcomes First Group.

“ One of the most professionally and personally challenging aspects of our work is supporting young people in their recovery from trauma. It is also one of the most stimulating and rewarding outcomes one can experience in partnership with resilient, inspiring young people and those exceptional colleagues who support them. ”





What is Complex Developmental Trauma?

Young people with lived experience of early developmental trauma have experienced a number of traumatic experiences in early relationships and a lack of protection in their early lives. This creates a barrier in developing trust in others and young people develop survival skills to keep themselves safe.

The Impact of Trauma on Young People

Developmental trauma impacts a young person's psyche on a number of levels, including on a relational, emotional and behavioural level, negatively impacting self-concept and body biology. Young people might develop survival skills that push others away as they have learnt they must survive and cope on their own. Some young people may feel emotions faster and more intensely, and struggle to re-regulate. The trauma therefore impacts others closest to the young person.

The Impact upon You

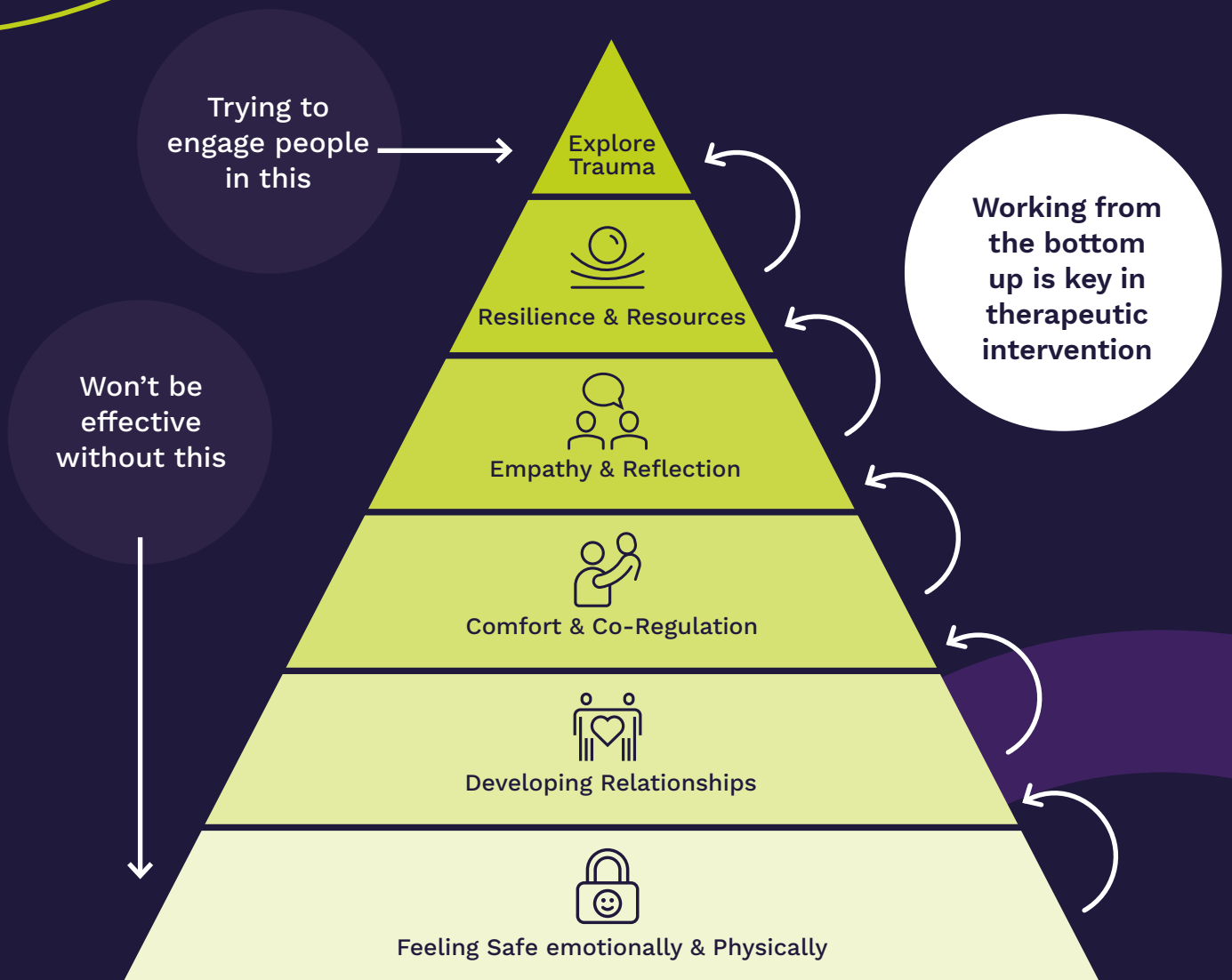
For colleagues who come into their career to help others, it can be very frustrating to feel blocked from developing relationships. It requires huge persistence in developing positive and meaningful relationships with those with lived experience of trauma. Young people may also be drawn to re-enacting their early trauma subconsciously. We recognise the challenges this can bring, and a big part of our approach is colleague well-being. We embed reflective practice groups within teams and services to provide protected time to press the pause button together. This enables us to recognise some of these complex relational processes in the endeavour of developing and protecting a responsive, reflective and positive culture. We also work to embed the Healthy Mind Platter (Dan Siegel) to support well-being.



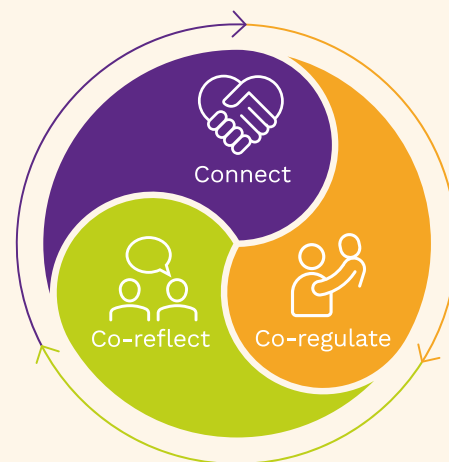
How can we help?

Our approach supports colleagues in understanding the impact of trauma on a child's early experiences, the subsequent internal world they have developed, and how this relates to the survival skills (or behaviour) they have developed. This helps us to meet and respond thoughtfully to the underlying need, rather than respond to behaviour.

We use Kim Golding's Pyramid of Need to help us think about where we need to meet the child at.



Dr. Leanne Johnson has developed the 3 Cs Model of Trauma Informed Practice – **Connect, Co-Regulate and Co-Reflect**. It is a comprehensive approach based on the current evidence base, emphasising the importance of relationships that young people require in trauma recovery. The Trauma Informed Practice approach encourages colleagues to standardise their practice through the lens of **Connect, Co-Regulate and Co-Reflect**.



What are the 3 Cs?

Connect

Connect helps young people feel 'seen' and kept in mind

Finding ways to connect with young people and encouraging them to trust others intentions is a critical part of the approach. Connect supports colleagues to help young people feel 'seen' and kept in mind throughout their day. The approach refers to this as therapeutic anchor points and includes strategies such as 'Meet and Greet' and 'Random Acts of Kindness'. Connect also addresses the use of positive praise, which can be overwhelming for young people with such a negative self-concept. Using specific, subtle and unexpected praise can support this and reduce the likelihood of young people sabotaging success. An important part of connect is the use of PACE (playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) as a way of being, rather than a strategy to turn on and off! Connect emphasises the importance of adults approaching young people to repair relationships in a non-shaming way – to re-connect relationally as soon as is possible.

Co-regulate

Co-regulate develops and supports a sense of safety

Developing and supporting a sense of safety in the environment is the foundation of Co-regulate. The approach supports safety with creating consistency, repetition, predictability, structure and boundaries. Co-regulate assumes that young people have not learnt to recognise their thoughts and feelings and how to manage them; the approach helps give skills to support young people to develop skills in their emotions and behaviour through the support of others. Strategies include emotions coaching, teaching practical skills such as 5,4,3,2,1 Grounding Skills, Brain Stem Calming Approaches, as well as an awareness of curriculum areas to be sensitive of, e.g. Sex and Relationships. Co-regulate focuses on calming the fight flight freeze survival response that is very practiced and engrained in young people with lived experience of trauma.

Co-reflect

Co-reflect is to support with therapeutic boundaries which are integral to helping traumatised children learn safe and effective ways of living their lives

Co-Reflect is to support with therapeutic boundaries that are emotionally containing and integral to helping traumatised children learn safe and effective ways of living their lives. Co-Reflect recognises shame as being a barrier to support progression and learning as young people will shield their shame to protect them from a sense of 'badness' and fear of rejection when feeling a threat of feeling even slightly criticised. Co-Reflect supports with non-shaming and inclusive ways of providing boundaries, including the use of natural and logical consequences to help children learn linked and appropriate responses. Co-reflect is not about a lack of boundaries (or being fluffy!) or only responding with nurture. It is about supporting the young people in a relationally collaborative and empathic way, helping them to positively prepare for their future to be the best they can be.

"By working in this way together we can support the journey of young people through their recovery of trauma."

Dr. Leanne Johnson
Consultant Clinical Psychologist



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