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# GWELLA

‘Building relationships through a  
therapeutic approach’

# Objectives

- Using a trauma-informed approach to support children within care
- Practice lessons from the Gwella research project

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# The Building Blocks of Healthy Child Development

2 – 5 years	Safety & Boundaries	Trusting Relationships	Encouragement	Speech & Language	Positive Modelling
	Impulse Control	Play & Friends	Emotional Regulation	Positive Family Life	Positive Identity
6 months – 2 years	Speech & Language	Boundaries & Routines	Secure Attachment	Supervision	Encouragement
	Safety needs met	Food & Warmth	Positive Family Life	Stimulation	Gross Motor Skills
0 - 6 months	Eye contact	Secure Attachment	Attunement	Settled Environment	Stimulation
	Safe Base	Love & Cuddles	Positive Family Life	Co-regulated	Good nutrition

Adapted from Adoption UK, 'The Wall'

# Developmental Trauma

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# Developmental Trauma

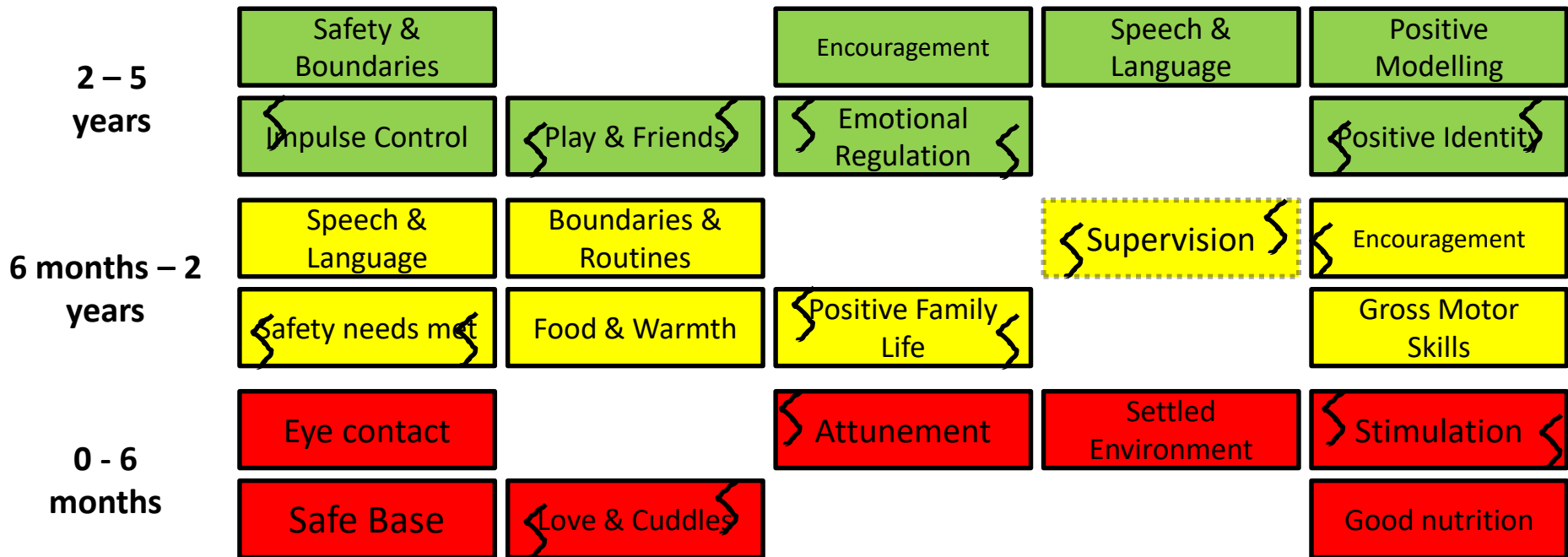
- Prolonged exposure to trauma
- Occurs in early childhood
- Impacts on development
- Relational: caused by attachment figures, whether through their own actions or through their failure to protect.

“When children have been abused and neglected by their parents, they are very likely to manifest a range and severity of symptoms much greater than if they experienced a simple trauma that might have been caused by an accident, dog bite or surgery”

**Hughes, Attachment – Focused Family Therapy**



# The Building Blocks of a child who has experienced Developmental Trauma

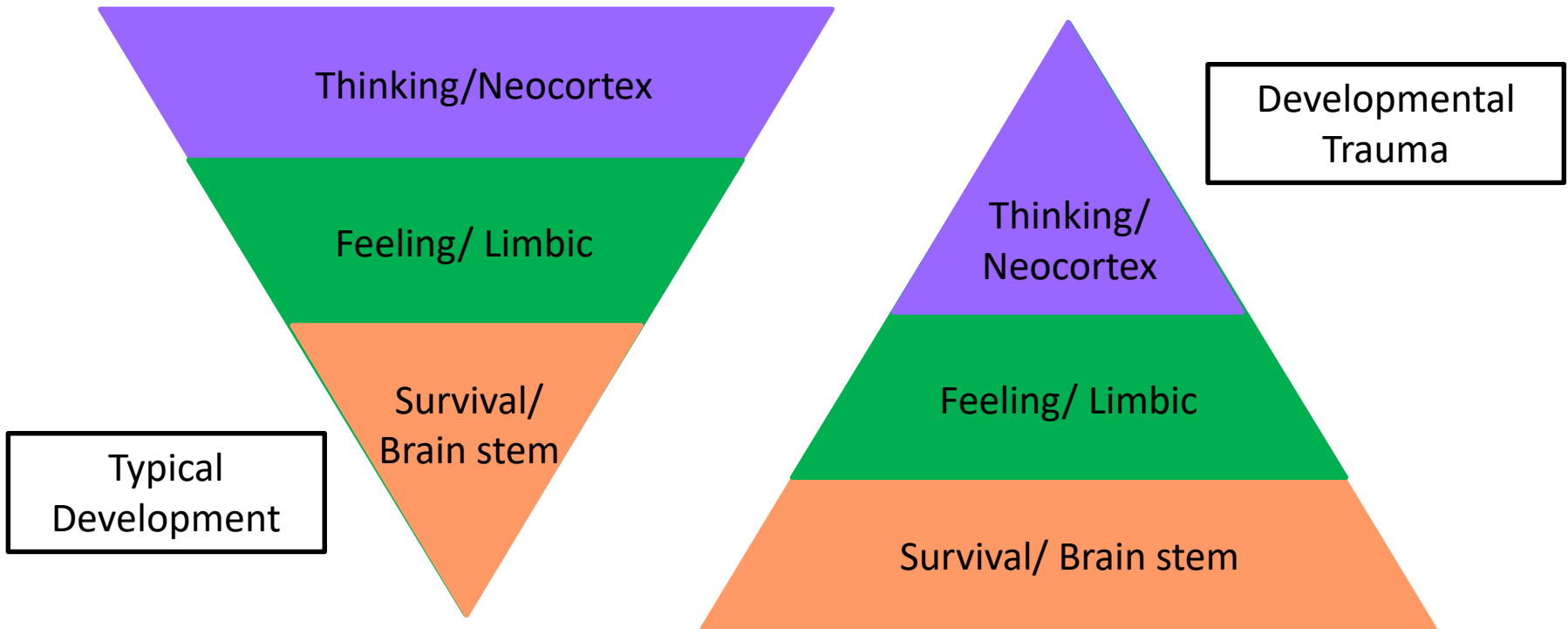


Adapted from Adoption UK, 'The Wall'

# Brain usage

Healthy development v  
Developmental Trauma

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# Living on the edge...

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A child who has experienced developmental trauma is:

- Constantly on edge
- Not knowing what is going to happen next
- Living in fear



# Emotional and Behavioural Regulation

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- Developmental trauma = stuck in the toddler phase of emotional and behavioural regulation.
  - A 6, 10 or 16 year old may still respond as a toddler does
  - Still requires an adult to co-regulate
  - Lacks language to explain feelings
- 'Attachment seeking', not 'attention seeking'



# What does Developmental Trauma mean for relationships?



# Internal Working Model

	Positive	Negative
<b>Self</b>	Lovable, Worthy, Effective, Competent	Unlovable, Worthless or Bad, Ineffective, Helpless
<b>Others</b>	Trustworthy, Dependable, Consistent, Caring, Responsive	Untrustworthy, Inconsistent, Undependable, Uncaring, Unavailable, Insensitive, Intrusive, Rejecting
<b>World</b>	Safe and exciting to explore	Unsafe and full of threat



**SAFETY  
IS  
JOB #1**

# C P R...

## CONSISTENCY

- “You deal with me the same way each time”

## PREDICTABILITY

- “I can anticipate you – you’re trustworthy”

## RELIABILITY

- “I can lean on you – you don’t give up!”



Dr. Tricia Skuse

*JonnyMatthew.com*  
Promoting recovery for troubled young people...



# Differences in Attachment and Behaviourist Perspectives (Dan Hughes)

<b>Attachment</b>	<b>Behaviourist</b>
Main focus is connection rather than correction	Main focus is specific reinforcement contingencies
Learning through relationship - relating for mutual enjoyment and learning from each other	Adult teaches child (top down approach)
Child's inner life of thoughts and feelings are accepted	Behaviour rather than feelings explored

# PACE

- ***Playful*** - the tone remains light and playful throughout
- ***Accepting*** the child unconditionally as their true self
- ***Curiosity*** is shown for the child's internal experience. Non-judgemental.
- ***Empathy*** builds feelings of connectedness and attunement

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# *PACE* Activity

# Theraplay

- Developed for 'difficult to reach' children
- Targeted at emotional age of child
- Overarching aim - to strengthen the relationship between main attachment figure and child
- Encourages parents to attune to child's emotional state and manage dysregulation



## Four Dimensions

- **Structure** – Safety, organisation and regulation
- **Engagement** – Connection, Attunement and Acceptance
- **Nurture** – Regulation, Secure Base and Worthiness
- **Challenge** – Confidence, competence and exploration

**Emphasis is on having fun together!**



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**Regulate and connect before attempting to complete “work” or have a difficult conversation**

**Art, music and other creative activities are right hemisphere activities which is where trauma is stored.**

**Helpful  
Tips**

**Take advantage of opportunities to increase intersubjectivity e.g. shared attention, 1:1 time**

**Non-verbal approaches: e.g. drawing, using play figures, transitional objects, theraplay etc.**

**Use PACE  
(Playfulness,  
Acceptance,  
Curiosity and  
Empathy)**

**Be Consistent,  
Reliable and  
Predictable (CPR)**

*Helpful  
Tips*

**The child needs to  
feel SAFE with you  
before anything  
else is going to be  
achieved**

**Remember the  
importance of  
Repair**



“It’s the relationship that heals, it’s the relationship that heals, it’s the relationship that heals”.

(Irvin Yalom, American Psychiatrist)



# Further Reading

- The Body Keeps The Score: Bessel Van Der Kolk
- The Boy who was Raised as a dog: Bruce Perry
- Working with Relational and Developmental Trauma in Children and Adolescents: Karen Treisman
- Attachment-Focused Family Therapy Workbook: Daniel A. Hughes
- Parenting with Theraplay: Vivien Norris and Helen Rodwell
- The Simple Guide to Child Trauma: Betsy de Thierry
- Being a Brain-Wise Therapist: Bonnie Badenoch
- [www.beaconhouse.org.uk](http://www.beaconhouse.org.uk)
- [www.traumarecoverymodel.com](http://www.traumarecoverymodel.com)