
Compassion Led Behaviour Support: Neuro Affirming, Trauma Informed, Child Led Approaches

Nerys Hughes



British Association
Of Occupational
Therapists



BAPT
British Association of
Play Therapists



ptuk
The Therapy United Kingdom



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Nerys Hughes



- Children's Occupational Therapist
- Clinical Director
- Social enterprise
- Interdisciplinary therapy centre
- Schools, families, charities

Learning Outcomes



- Using play as an assessment and engagement strategy
- What is connection, meaning and coregulation
- Role Modeling a behaviour tool for teaching staff

Underlying Causation of Behaviour

Difficulties in processing language- good expressive language, difficulty with processing verbal communication quickly.

Difficulties with social interaction- understand the 'unwritten rules' of social interaction or non-verbal communication including body language and tone of voice.

Confusion about emotions-feel overwhelmed by their own and others' emotions

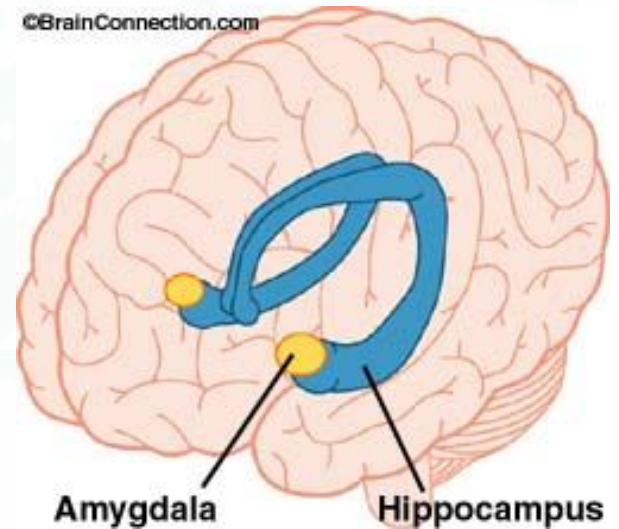
Intolerance of uncertainty – our children may struggle with all the 'what ifs' of life

Sensory Overload-contribute to anxiety, overload and avoidance

Amygdala

Part of the limbic system (the small brain):

- Processes emotion
- Scans the environment for cues of threat
- Assigns value to sensory stimuli:
 - positive or negative
- Consolidates Memories
- Ensures Survival



Fight or Flight

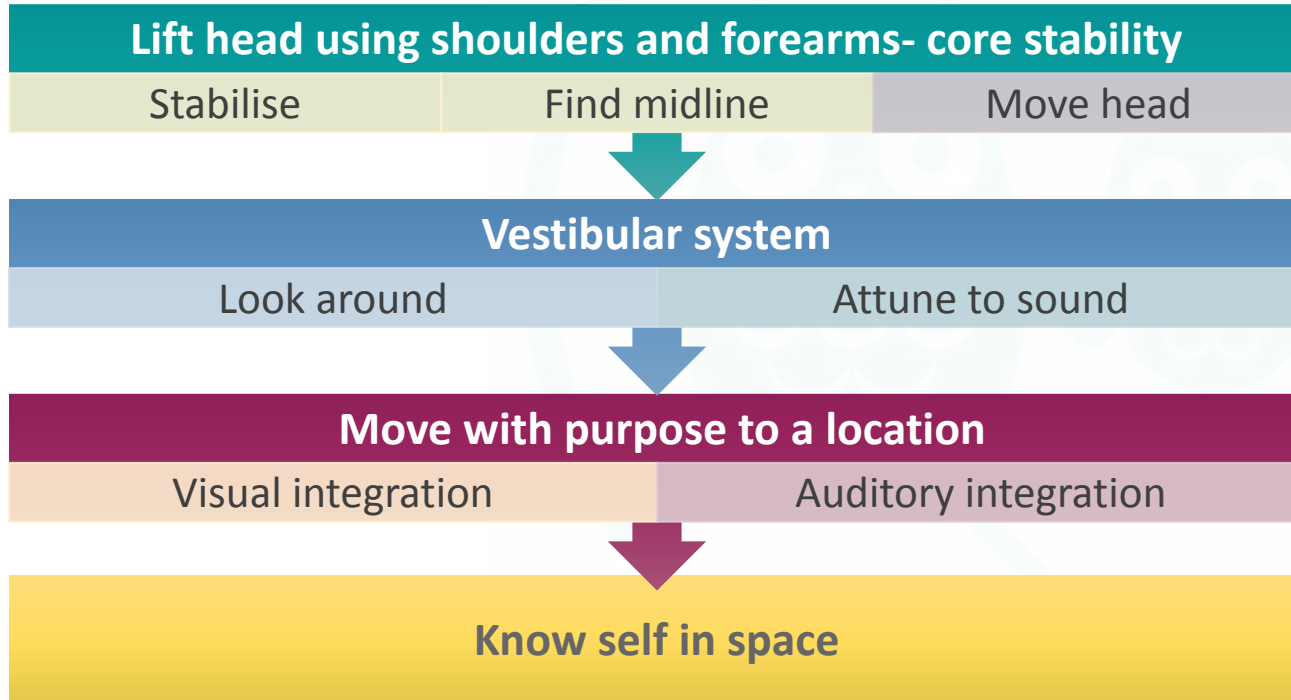


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdJpLvSTZMU&feature=emb_logo

Neurobiology

- Neurons start unspecialised, allowing flexibility of function
- In the first 3 years, the brain forms almost twice as many synapses as it will actually use
- Mirror Neurons - are contagious
- Adult Brain uses reasoning and experiences -hindsight
- Children seek exploration and novel activity to build the neurons into active highways

Developmental movement



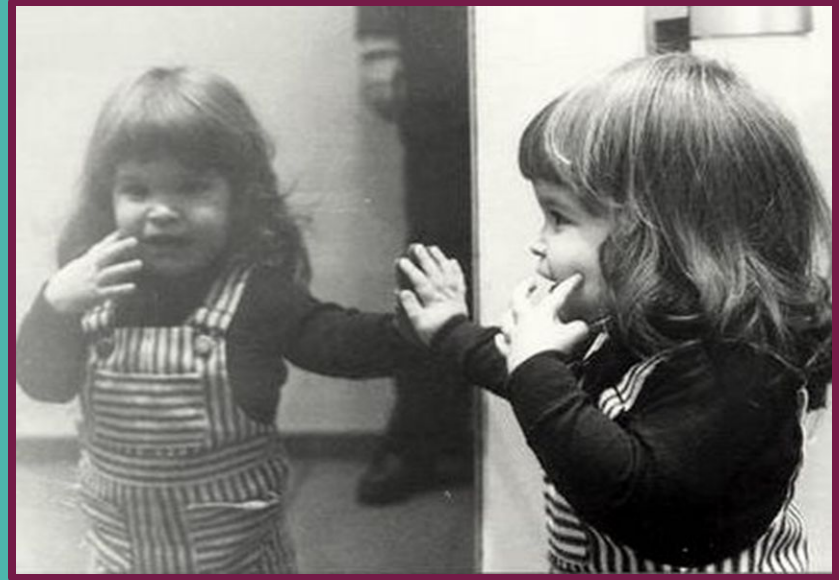
Developing a sense of centre

3-4 months



Developing a map

A sense of self in space





Trauma

- Distressing and disturbing emotional experience;
- It shatters one's sense of security, poses a threat to life;
- Leaves one feeling overwhelmed, isolated, helpless in a dangerous world.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IXbpgU9OWk>

Cortisol is addictive

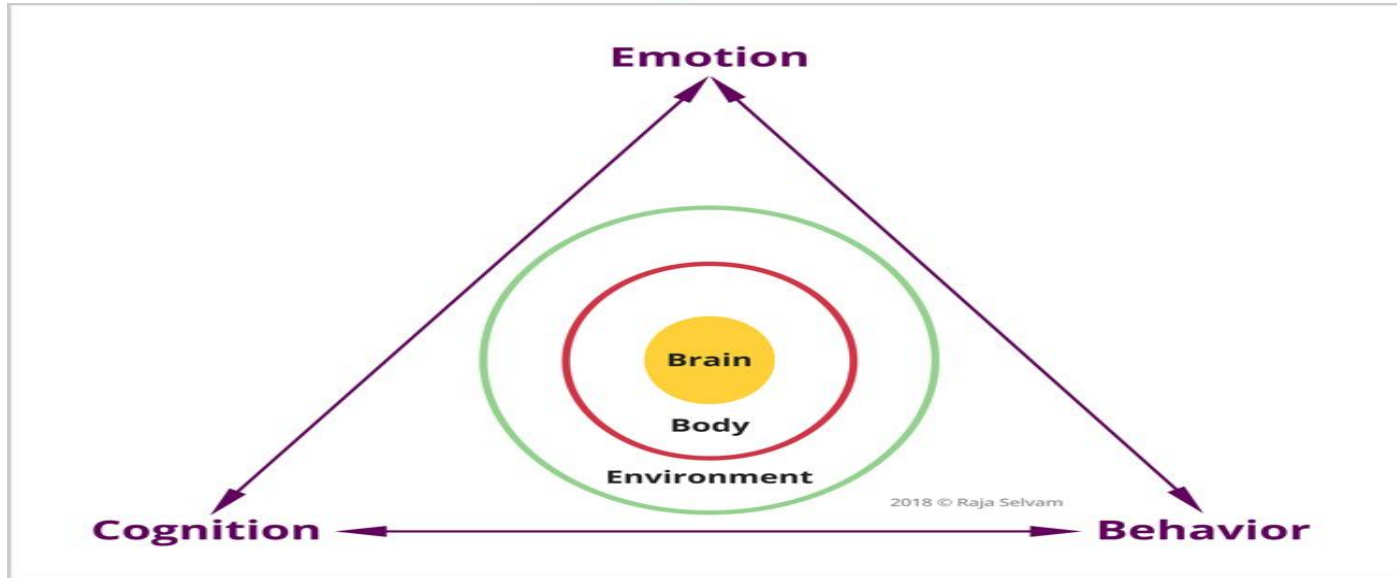
What is my known state
of arousal?

- Repeated experiences of heightened anxiety increase cortisol production
- Cortisol is produced when we are scared, when we laugh, when we experience something exciting, during sex
- Like any drug addiction the person believes their 'best state' is their most common state
- I work better under stress, I am good in a disordered environment
- Being scared is my normal

Exploration is key



Interaction creates the whole- embodied cognition



Embodied Cognition: Cognition, emotion and behavior are all embodied and embedded in the brain, body, as well as the environment. They affect each other but emotion is primary, as emotion is a stronger mediator of cognition and behavior.

Case Study - Harry

- Fixed in solitary play
- Stuck in trajectory and transporting
- He takes the wheels off every car
- Developmentally in the sensorimotor stage
- Poorly organised sensory responses
- Developmental play - motor and sensory, reflexes
- Enclosure, transporting, connection
- Solitary to cooperative



“2 rules- Stay safe, shoes off”

- Rewards create an additional demand on top of the demand itself
- Praise may be perceived as a demand
- Sanctions or consequences may feel unjust
- Setting up for success -over and over again
- Focusing on Harry's interests



Reducing the perception of demands



- **Phraseology and tone**

“The clothes are on the bed, I’m happy to help”- NOT you need to get dressed now.

Avoid trigger words- no, can’t, don’t.

- **Indirect communication**

Placing an object with no words, physical prompt

Collaboration for success



Making Rules together

We made a stay safe list

De-personalising

This room is available until 3pm

**Distracting/turning things into a
game**

Asking for help for me

Role modelling is Key



Role-Modelling with my story

I need the lights low my head hurts,
I am getting frustrated I need a
time out

Offering choices

Which game shall we play?

Meeting Sensory Needs- sensory about me



Working through my own sensory needs

Building a sensory schedule that was predictive and rewarding

Role Modelling of all adults our own needs

Making sensory choices

Labeling sensory experiences

AND... GROW UPWARDS!



NO more exclusions.

Participating in school, expressing wants and making choices, improved pencil grasp, reduced meltdowns, joined dance classes, had play dates, laughed with others, made a friend.

The aim is for a child to grow upwards but not for a child to be a grown up.... We get one year of being 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11...

Internal and external motivating factors

A token

A reward

A threat

An expectation

A punishment

Makes me happy

Makes me laugh

Curiosity I want to try it and see
what it's like/does/feels like

I enjoy it

It makes me excited

You look at me/touch me/talk to
me/engage with me /you connect
to me

Play as a lens - play is the first place we should look

- Provides understanding of a child's development
- Provides insight into a child's story and narrative
- Provides reasoning to their behaviour
- Provides a tool for communication
- Provides space to co-regulate
- Enables a child to develop a sense of self
- Enables the child to develop bio-psycho-social comfort
- Enables belonging, hobbies, interest, community

Introducing Andrew

Let's think about
communication



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reJpo-GaopM&t=10s>

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria

Microaggressions cause
trauma

- Builds up over time
- Rejection does not have to be real only perceived
- Repeated failures
- Not belonging or fitting in
- Missing simple social cues
- Not being able to self regulate well

<https://neuroclastic.com/living-with-rejection-sensitive-dysphoria/>



Case Study - Sophie: Fawn

- Highly successful in Maths
- Perfectionist
- Nightmares, fear of dark,
- Separation anxiety
- Hard on herself

Very fearful of new things, resistant to unstructured and motor play, playing in groups.

Good girl, people pleaser, uses baby voice with parents and one teacher.



Finding meaning - Baby voice

- To signal she needs help
- To signal she is unsafe or wants protection
- To signal that she is taking on something scary
- To ask for nurture
- To indicate where she feels she is right now
- To signal you to play - imaginary and role play
- To show you she is letting you take lead
- Draw empathy towards her needs

How would you behave towards her baby voice?

Start where she is- listen to her play prompt



*Met the need, let her be babied.
Extend play with enclosure,*

Develop her role as carer in play

*Make safe-den building, knocking toys
down, transformative play/creative
play*

Finding our joy



Joy tracking

Connection building

Failing together-finding humour

Where the wild things roam: We're not scared!

*Frolicking, humour, unbounded,
true nature, free, fun, child led,
shared, enjoyed, repeated.*



Wellbeing

- **I am-** A sense of self, an innateness, uniqueness, this is me
- **I want-** To participate, belong, do, drive
- **Connection-** Belong, roles, identity, predict others, regulate with others



Wellbeing

- **Communication-** Engage, enjoy, participate, express, receive expression from others
- **To value-** How I value myself, how I am of value to others, self activity and be valued experience, explore productivity DOING
- **I find meaning-** Worth, validity, importance, value, engagement, enjoyment, drive



Us first, then them.....

- VOLITION: One's will
- Exploration: I like to explore new things by...
- Expression of Enjoyment: I will tell you I am having fun by...
- Showing Preference: Making choices, using core vocabulary- not please stop, go, more, NO!
- Participation: Joining in, copying, playing alongside, watching, trying, seeking connection, opening the communication circle



Productivity - solid, tangible, end product

- A product made or earned
- Measurable and observable
- Tangible
- Of use to others

e.g. making someone a cup of tea, giving someone a picture, making something, making a profit

Goal setting - belonging

Belonging and connection: how do I participate with the child?

- I am - how does the child **perceive** me?
- How do I **provide** a sense of self for the child?
- What is my own innateness and how am I **unique**?
- This is me - what is my **role** in the child's life?
- How do I promote **participation** for the child?
- How do I make the child feel that they **Belong**?
- **What do I do** for/with/on behalf of the child (what is my role)?
- How do I establish and support a child's **personal drive**?



Goal setting - Value and self worth

Value and self worth - how do I promote a child's value and self worth?

- How do I value myself - I am good at, I need help with?
- How am I of value to a child?
- How do I promote a child to - experience, explore, brave the DOING?



The reward is key:

- What do I find **meaningful in my relationship** with the child?
- How do I **value** the child's sense of worth?
- How do I **validate** the child?
- How do I let them know they are **important?**
- I **engage** with the child through...
- I demonstrate my **enjoyment** of the child by...
- I define our **roles** as...
- I let the child **predict** me and my values.
- My best **co-regulation** strategies are...



Self-Care Checklist

- **Physical:**
 - biological needs
 - time off
 - medical care
- **Psychological:**
 - Self-reflection
 - saying 'no'
 - inner experience
- **Emotional:**
 - tending to relationships
 - comfort activities
 - cry, laugh, play
- **Workplace:**
 - take lunch
 - find quiet time
 - exciting projects
- **Spiritual:**
 - time in nature
 - find inspiration (texts/talks/music)
 - contribute to important causes
 - pray, meditate
 - experience moments of awe



A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH

Nerys Hughes
nerys.hughes@wholechildtherapy.com

admin@wholechildtherapy.com
020 3441 6810

Speaking events and training
ellie@speakingofbooks.co.uk
www.speakingofbooks.co.uk