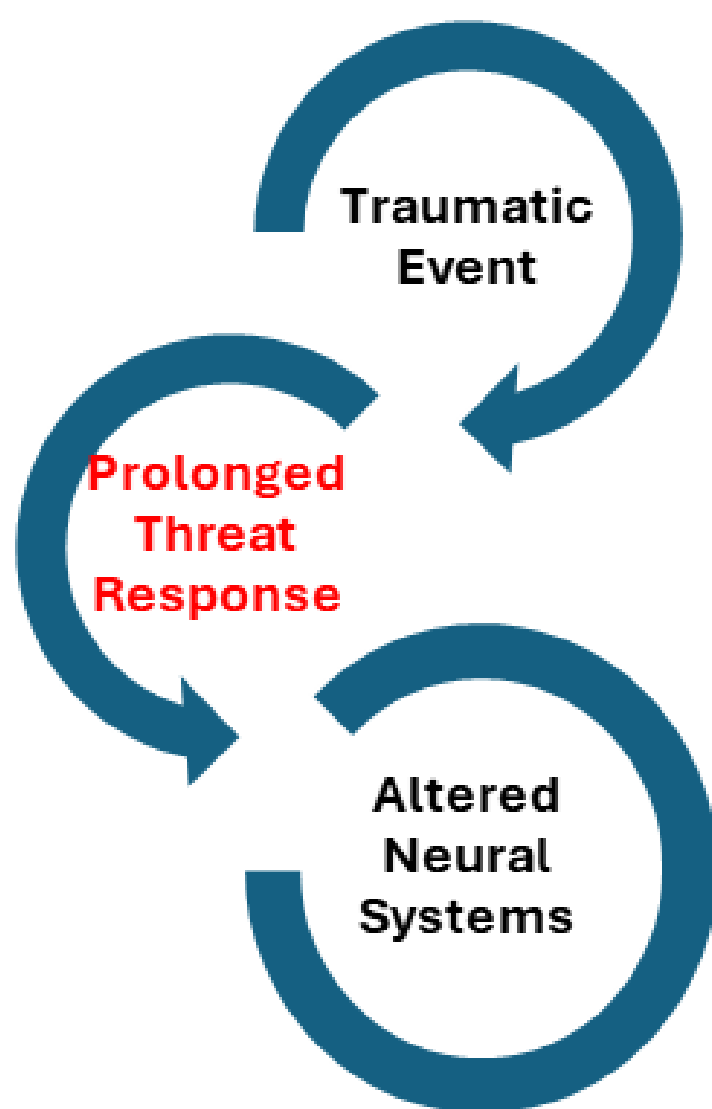


Refugee Week

Day 3: Ideas for supporting refugee children and young people to develop their own strategies for calming and managing emotions

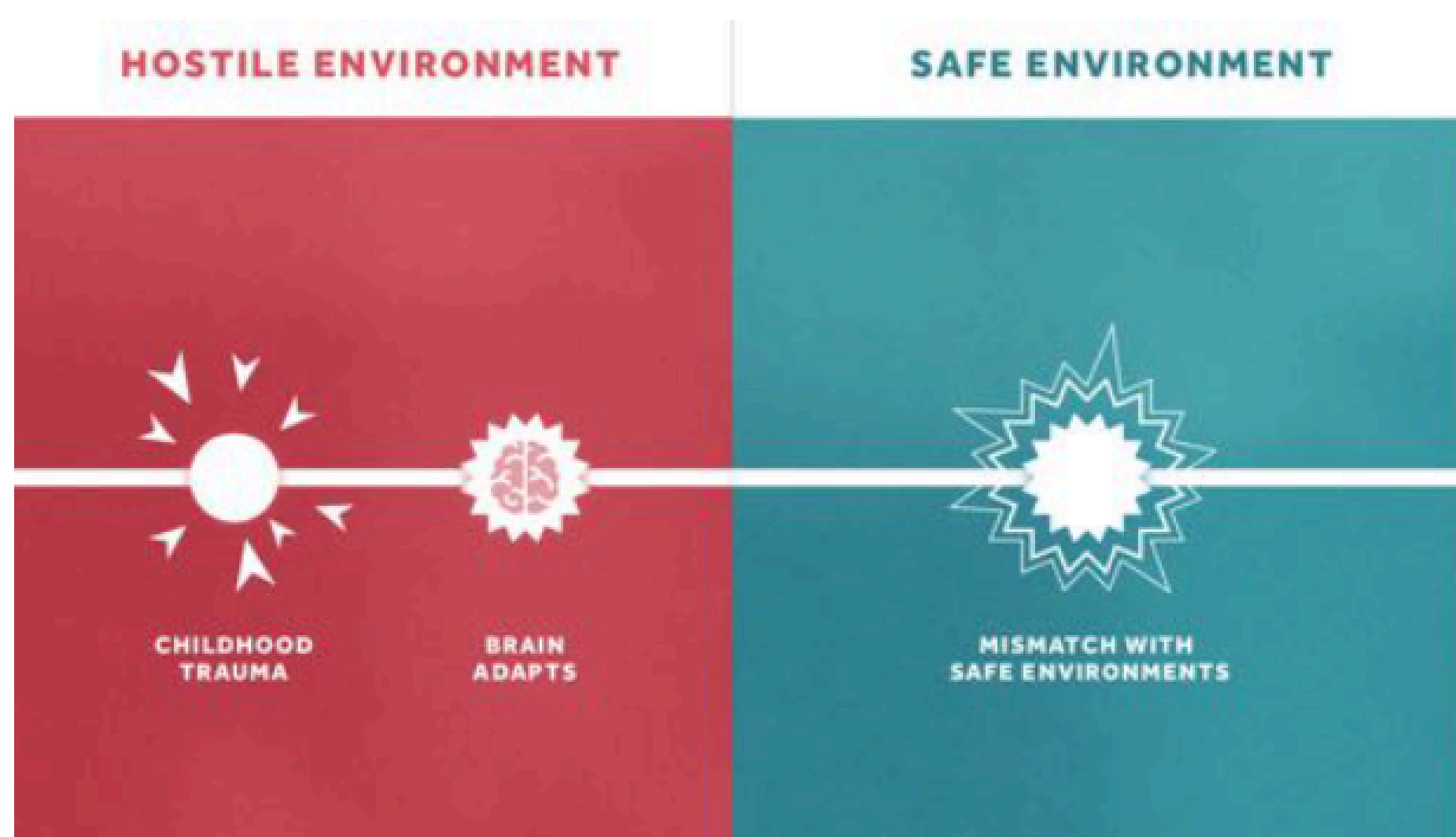
During war, children, like adults, may be repeatedly exposed to many different sorts of horrific, traumatic events. They may witness or experience significant events, including shelling and shooting, the destruction of their homes and villages, injured people or dead bodies, people being tortured or killed, bereavements, or, in some cases, been the victim of violence themselves. These experiences can lead to various sorts of psychological problems for children (Smith, Dyregroy and Yule, 2014). Betsy de Theirry explains the trauma continuum with many refugees experiencing Type 3 or 'multiple and pervasive traumas' related to their migration.



Professionals, such as Perry, have indicated that prolonged periods of stress can have a detrimental effect on a child's development.

Van der Kolk (2014) indicated that ongoing threat 'impacts on their ability to reason and think rationally which results in a fundamental reorganisation of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but our very own capacity to think.'

When living in a hostile environment an individual can be exposed to prolonged periods of threat. This can result in altered neural pathways whereby the brain adapts and to the stressors. This can result in hypervigilance and an individual demonstrating a fight, flight or freeze response to ensure their safety. When the individual is in a 'safe environment' the brain can continue to react as if it is in a hostile one, as represented in McCrory and Viding's (2015) Theory of Latent Vulnerability.

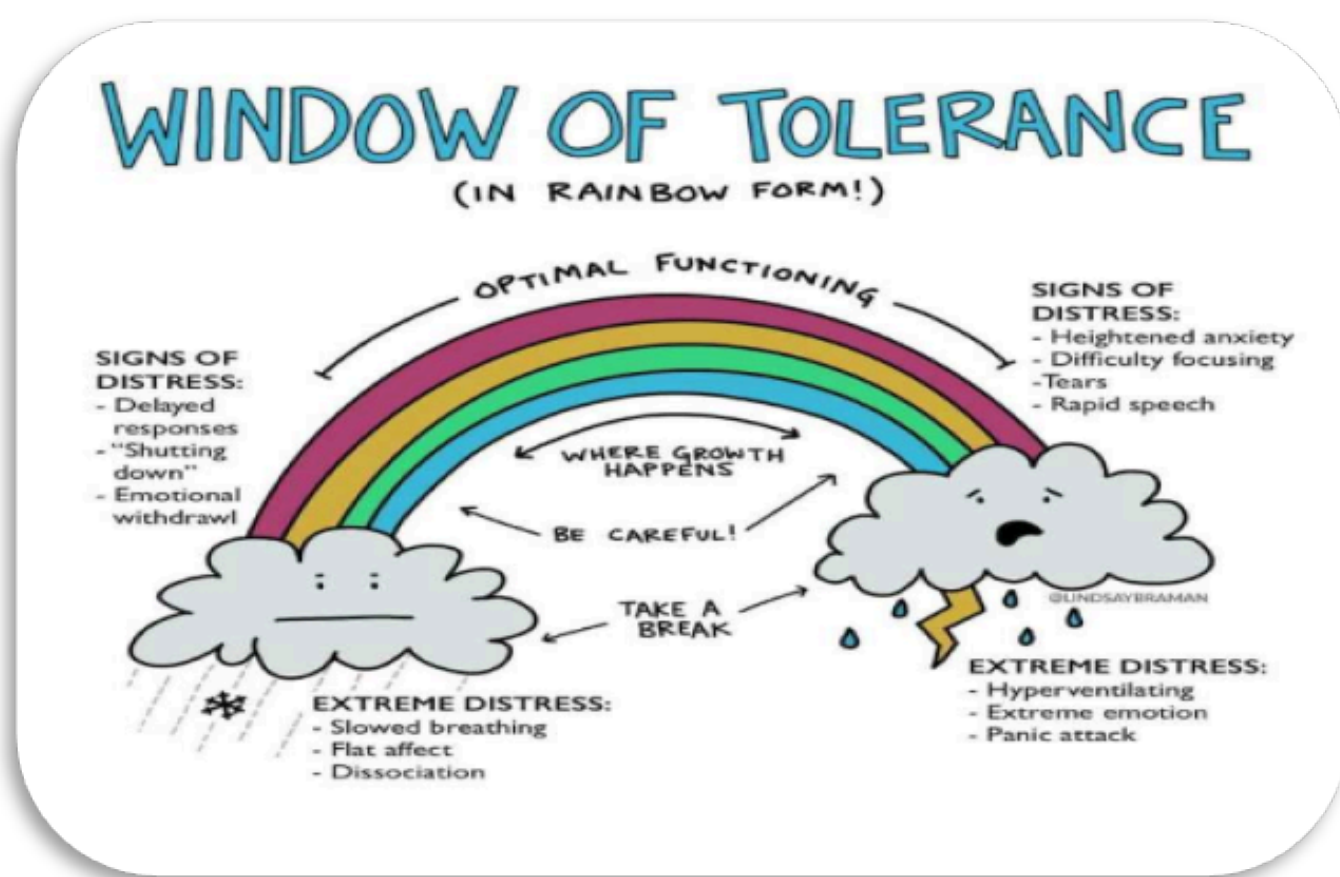


Based on image from UK Trauma Council, 2020)

Refugee Week

Day 3: Ideas for supporting refugee children and young people to develop their own strategies for calming and managing emotions

Models of psychology



Each mind matters, California (2020)

Children who perceive threat may respond with 'fight/flight' stress response, however for refugees they may be more responsive to stimuli than others, presenting with hypervigilance.

At times of anxiety, the individual may present with hyper-arousal (external behaviours) or hypo-arousal (internal 'shutting down', which may lead to avoidance).

For children to learn, they need to be within the 'optimal functioning' area, which can be maximised when individuals are able to calm.

(Bessel Van der Kolk, 2015; Mitchell, 2015)

Children initially develop regulation skills through having consistent, sensitive and nurturing relationships with adults who provided co-regulation. It is thought to aid connection between emotional limbic brain and cerebral cortex when provided often enough to support their ability to:

- rationalise
- reason
- empathise
- problem-solve

Over time, children and young people can be supported to develop their own strategies for managing emotions, however teaching calming techniques can enable the person to access the functions in the cerebral cortex to apply learned strategies.

Calming techniques which can be taught may include:

- Mindfulness & meditation: guidance on the Anna Freud website
- Visualisation & guided imagery through scripts
- Grounding: examples include 5-4-3-2-1
- Sensory activities
- Controlled breathing exercises or approaches: including squared breathing, finger breathing, and 7:11 breathing



Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, & rest for 4 seconds



Trace around fingers while breathe in in on the outside edge, and breathe out as you move down the other side of the finger or thumb

7:11

Breathe in for 7 seconds, exhale slowly for 11, & repeat for 2-3 minutes