

## Day 4: Supporting pastoral staff to consider some top tips for supporting refugee/asylum seeking CYP

### Principles of Early Intervention

Research indicates that pastoral staff or emotionally-available adults can provide the following to support positive outcomes for refugee children & young people:

A sense of safety - re-establish familiar routines

A sense of self and community efficacy - help children and young people regain some agency and control over events

Calming - give information about normal reactions, teach relaxation skills

Connectedness - enhance social support

Hope - encourage a focus on the future and positive goals

### Why is it important to support children to process and understand their experiences?







Processing traumatic memories is key for healing, however this may be accompanied by a great deal of fear, horror, helplessness or other psychological distress.

Bessel van der Kolk (2013) suggests a combination of:

↓ **Top-down approaches** (e.g., talking and connecting with others to understand and process the trauma, & psycho-education, like the Teaching Recovery Techniques (TRT) Manuel (Smith, Yule & Dyregrov, 2013).

↑ **Bottom-up approaches** (e.g., expressive activities like play therapy or art) & narrative work (e.g. expressive writing (Pennebaker, 2014), Talking Stones (Wearmouth, 2004), Life Story Work (Rose, 2012), Tree of life (Ncube-Mlilo, 2006), Drawing and talking (Beagley, 2004), or using stories to heal about loss, anxiety and changes to help children process trauma without overwhelming them. NOTE: some of this work may need to be appropriate to be completed by qualified professionals and therapists.

### Top tips for supporting refugee children, based on guidance by Dr Tina Rae (2024)

-  **Listen & Talk:** Gently encourage them to share their experiences if they choose to, as this helps them process.
-  **Reassure:** Remind them they are safe.
-  **Manage Anxiety:** Understand that discussing painful memories may disrupt sleep initially, but anxiety will reduce over time.
-  **Creative Expression:** Offer activities like drawing, journaling, or painting to help express emotions.
-  **Emotional Literacy:** Help children identify and express their feelings.
-  **Challenge Negative Thoughts:** Guide them to reframe their worries and fears.

### Supporting staff wellbeing

Staff providing emotional support, such as therapeutic or emotionally-available adult, must also prioritise their own wellbeing using strategies like those from the Healthy Mind Platter (Rock, Siegel, et al., 2012) to ensure they are able to care for students effectively.

**DOWN TIME:** Let your mind wander. Don't think about any particular goal.

**FOCUS TIME:** Closely focus on a task or goal. This challenge makes connections in the brain.

**PLAY TIME:** Sit back, relax, and be spontaneous! Being creative and allowing time to "just play," helps the brain make new connections.

**TIME IN:** Shhhhh. Quiet reflection helps to better integrate the brain. Focus on sensations, thoughts and feelings.

**CONNECTING TIME:** Connecting with others in person, not via a screen! As well as stopping to connect.

**PHYSICAL TIME:** Get up, get moving! It strengthens the body, including the brain.

**SLEEP TIME:** Get your Zzzzz's! While the brain snoozes, learning is consolidated. Sleep also allows the brain to recover from the day's experiences.