

Understanding and responding to trauma expressions

Understanding trauma expressions



I feel connected
I am safe

- I can experience joy and spontaneity
- I am able to seek comfort and connection
- I am open to being taught and to learning
- I am able to negotiate with others
- I can demonstrate empathy
- I do not show obvious signs of stress

I feel a threat
I am becoming stressed

- I may feel fatigued
- I may have a headache
- I might be nauseous
- I may withdraw from activities that are usually a source of joy
- I may feel more afraid of being separated from safe adults
- I may show uncharacteristic emotion or behaviours
- I may lose my creativity
- I may seek more structure and clarity from others

I feel alarmed
I am distressed

- I may feel deep sadness
- I may be very frustrated
- I may have disrupted sleep
- I may have changes in diet and the need for food
- I may find it hard to trust people
- I become more attentive to time and routines and am unable wait
- I prefer more structure and clarity of information

I feel overwhelmed
I am going to explode

- I may display anger, rage, terror
- I may want to collapse
- I may experience a loss of empathy
- I may be reactive and take big risks
- I may hurt myself and others
- I may find it hard to use words
- I find it hard to control my body
- I enter **Fight, Flight, Freeze** or **Fawn** states

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How a safe relationship can support co-regulation

Fight

Activities to help make the body safe to inhabit

- Blow a feather across a table and see whose travels the furthest
- Make ribbon circles of different sizes, go quick and then go slow
- Wrap resistance bands around your own and your child's waist to see how close or far they can stretch
- Wrap resistance bands around your own and your child's feet and see how high or wide they can go
- Take turns falling into a bean bag and catch your child before they land
- Get into the garden and plant, dig, sow seeds, weed
- Be a lava lamp and sway or bob up and down
- Make shaving cream statues
- Wash or brush a pet

Activities to help ground in the present

- Place string on the ground and pretend to 'walk the tightrope'
- Sit opposite each other and twist to the right and left together
- Count steps as you walk backwards to an agreed spot
- Make a thick smoothie together and drink it through a straw
- Use a torch to spotlight objects in the dark
- Chew strong chewing gum or suck a strong mint
- Light candles and blow them out – try all at once, one at a time
- Wrap each other up in toilet paper like a mummy and then bust out!

Flight

Freeze

Activities to help move out of shut down

- Play pillow fights
- Make sandcastles
- Spin on an office chair
- Brush teeth with electric toothbrush
- Lay on lambswool and make snow angels
- Hold a heat/cool pack and talk about places and things that match the temperature
- Sway your child gently in a hammock or hold them on either side by their arms and legs
- Take a big breath in then let it out with a big roar
- Wrap child in a blanket and gently pull them around the floor

Activities to build confidence to reduce need to appease

- Look in a mirror at each other and make the same facial expressions
- Plan a menu together for the week
- Award a 'Medal of the Day' to each other and say what you noticed to warrant this
- Ask each other to choose a favourite from two similar things: apple/pear, painting/drawing, bath/shower, etc.
- Move into yoga warrior pose and keep body strong and still
- Why not come up with your own ideas? You could try karaoke, have a sing-along, do the Hokey Cokey, play dress-ups or do line-dancing!

Fawn

