

Embrace: Exploring the cyclical links between poverty and mental health

PLATF **FORM**

For mental health and social change


**Achub y
Plant**
Save the Children


Bettws
early learning community

THE BEST START IN LIFE

OUR WORK IN THE
UK



**Save the
Children**



THE EARLY YEARS OF A CHILD'S LIFE IS WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

Up to **6 months** ahead in development



HIGH-INCOME

AGE:

5

7

16

26

AVERAGE

LOW-INCOME



One third of poor children **behind** in language and communication

Up to **17 months** behind children from higher income families

81% of high HLE index children **attain** 5 A*–C GCSEs⁵

5% do not attain any qualifications by age 26⁶

Employment rate with a degree: 84.2%⁸

THE GAP WIDENS WITH AGE

34% of low HLE index children **attain** 5 A*–C GCSEs.

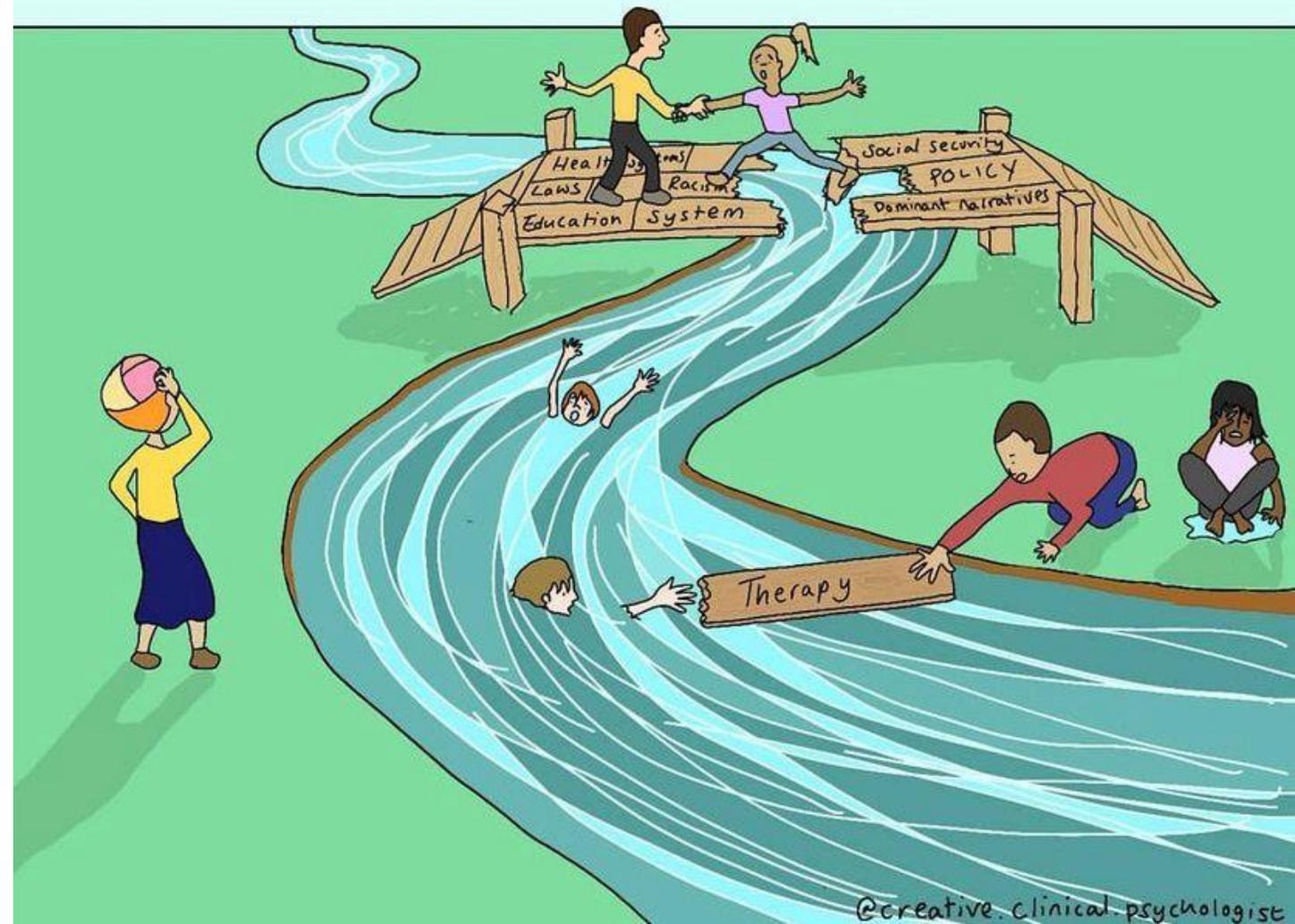
Average of **11 months** spent **NEET** between age 17 and 19

30% do not attain any qualifications by age 26

We need systemic change.

To allow us to address the *root causes* of children's and their families adversity, trauma and distress.

There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. Some of us need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in. (Desmond Tutu)



BETTWS EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY: background

The Bettws Early Learning Community (BELC) aims to **improve early learning outcomes for children living in poverty**. We launched in September 2019. Since then, we have been working in partnership to improve the life chances of children by changing the Early Years system that supports them to develop and thrive.

Children in Bettws face significant inequality and disadvantage as a result of experiences faced before entering primary school. We know this negatively impacts on life chances and are committed to working together to create an environment where every young person has the **opportunity to thrive**.

We take a **'whole system' approach** to improving the early learning outcomes of children growing up in poverty. This means that we have a **shared strategy for change** and work across the Early Years system to **join up and strengthen services** that already exist. We identify families in need and deliver programmes to address the issues, testing new approaches and ways of working, and we share our learning as widely as we can to increase our impact beyond Bettws.



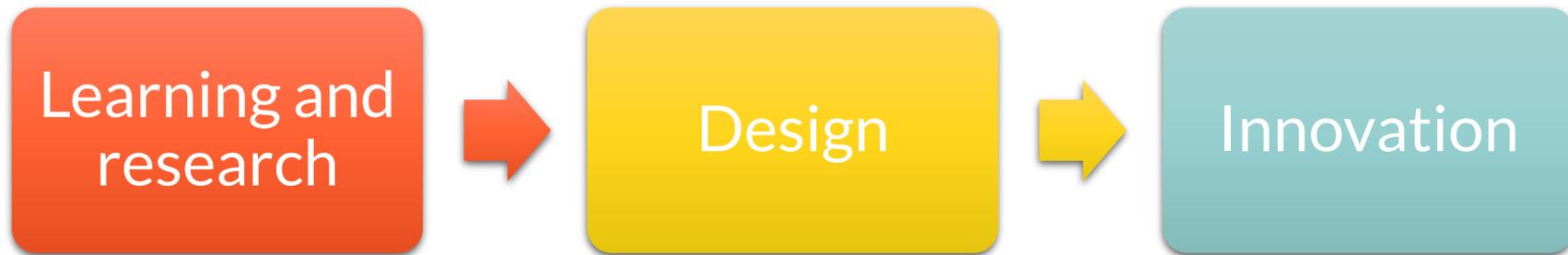
BETTWS EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY: our vision



To support **communication** and **language** development as well as the **social** and **emotional** development of children during their **first 1001** days and **crucial life transitions.**



BETTWS EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY: An example of what this looks like in our place

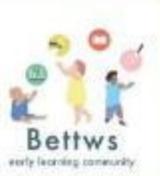


Resilience and Wellbeing

We believe that you cannot understand mental health without first considering somebody's circumstances, relationships and environments.

This is why our ELC is looking at mental health and wellbeing from a community perspective –to support our community to be psychosocially healthy.

Experiences accessing mental health support



PARENT STORIES PROJECT SUMMER 2021

4 interviews with parents living in Newport

Aims
To explore:

- Parents' mental health and wellbeing needs
- Barriers to mental health support

Recommendations for improving access to support

PARENTS EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

COVID has been tough for us all

We'd like to hear from you about your emotional health & wellbeing

Have you struggled getting help & support?

We'd like to know what you think would help

Ask your child's teacher to put you in touch with us

What it will involve
Meeting for 1-2 hours as a group to talk with Jen from the Bettws ELC project

Where
At your school on a Friday in either September or October after school, drop off in the morning

Bettws ELC is a public services & voluntary sector partnership project funded by Save the Children



Experiences accessing mental health support

¹³ BELC Parent Stories Project, 2021

“I didn’t know where to go. I didn’t know who to ring. I didn’t even know whether I could ring anybody”

*I don’t think they have time to have that kind of relationship with me”

“Not feeling comfortable enough with them so I can have a conversation with them and open up to them”

“A massive fear is that somebody is going to take your kids because they think you’re not coping”

Themes - Parents' needs

- 1 Need for empathy and compassion
 - 2 Need to look after my family
 - 3 Need for tailored mental health support
- 

“I was against it because I was always taught, you don't talk about your feelings, do not write your feelings down people can use them against you”

“The embarrassment of it as well because it’s still quite taboo, because a lot of people don’t quite understand fully”

Themes - Barriers

- 1 Support is not meeting my needs
 - 2 Setbacks in the system: accessing MH services
 - 3 Beliefs about accessing MH support
 - 4 COVID limitations
- 

“When COVID hit, they went online and I just did not get from it what I was getting from it in a group setting. So, I chose to not continue with it”

Experiences accessing mental health support

Recommendations for improving access to support



Increasing awareness of mental health options

Improving awareness of support and how to access it – having a hub in a local school was suggested to improve awareness and access.

“The best way is through the schools... Speaking to parents... activities with young people... That is the best way to get the message of what services are available on how they can be accessed.”

Increasing opportunities for peer mentoring

Peer mentoring is a great way to share experiences and make social connections and increase feelings of belonging

“You need to get the community’s trust – once you’ve got that you’ll find people start to dip their toes in the water”

Increasing sense of community

Increasing sense of connection with the MH Professional

More time to build trusting relationships with mental health professionals will make support more effective

“I’ve been open and honest with them and told them the complete truth that they felt like you know I can trust her because she’s trusted me with her stuff”

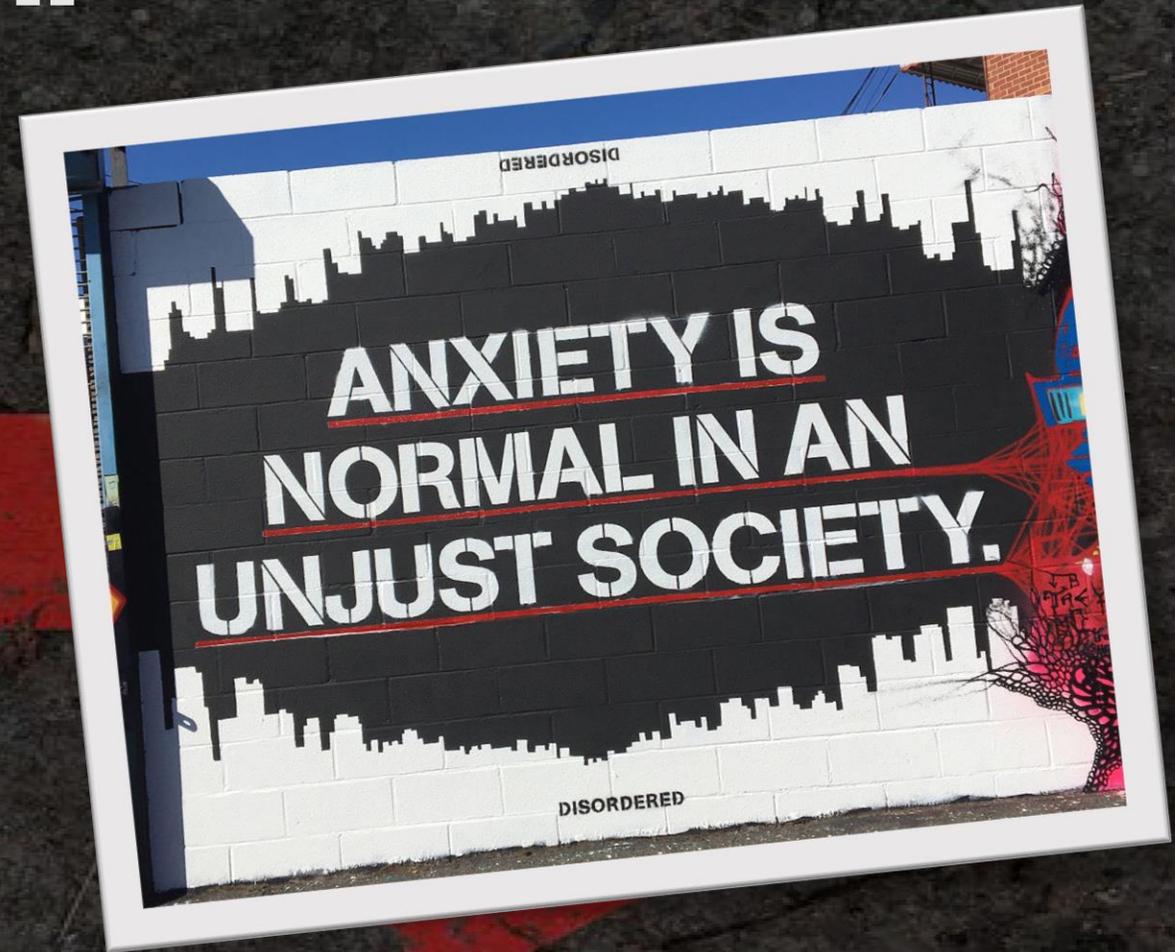
Platform's Mission

1. To challenge the dominant narrative around mental health

- By advocating for the role that trauma, life experiences and socio-economic circumstances have on our mental health + ability to heal.
- By making the evidence for this accessible to help shift public perceptions.

2. To make our 'helping systems' work better for people

- By changing how we provide services to people in distress.
- Focus first on the mental health, housing, homelessness, and young people's systems we interact with.



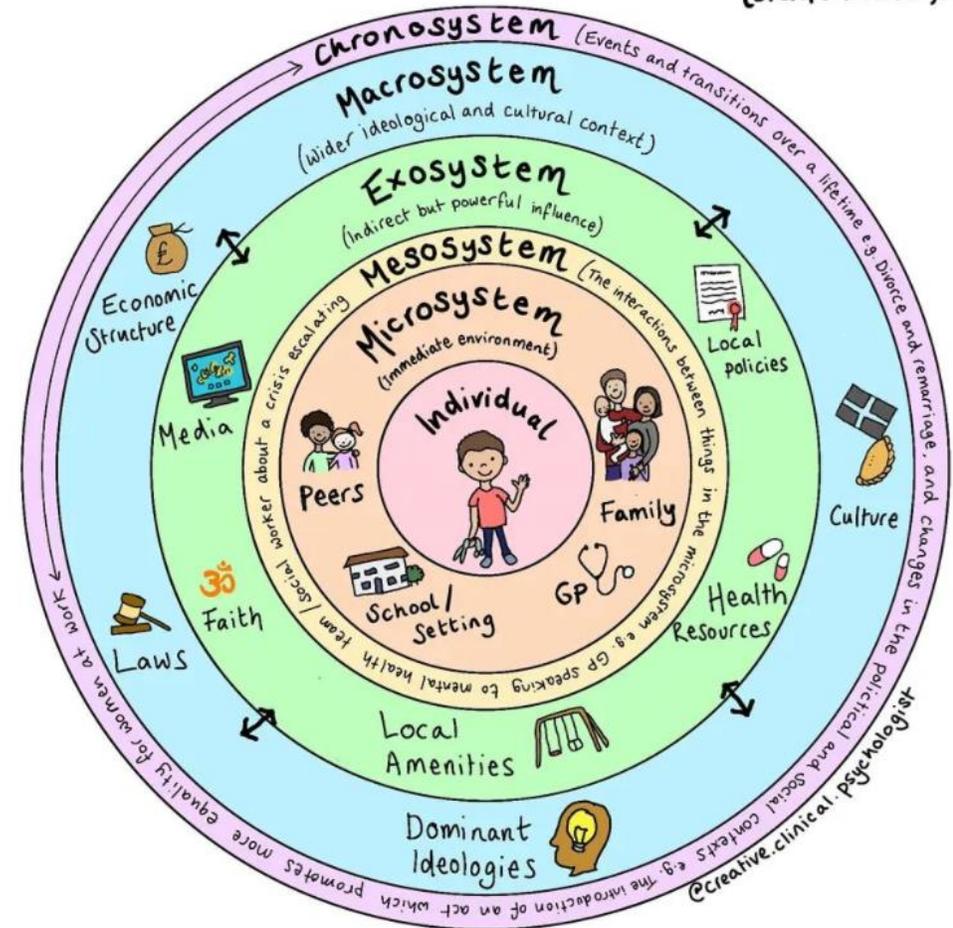


Who's problem is it?

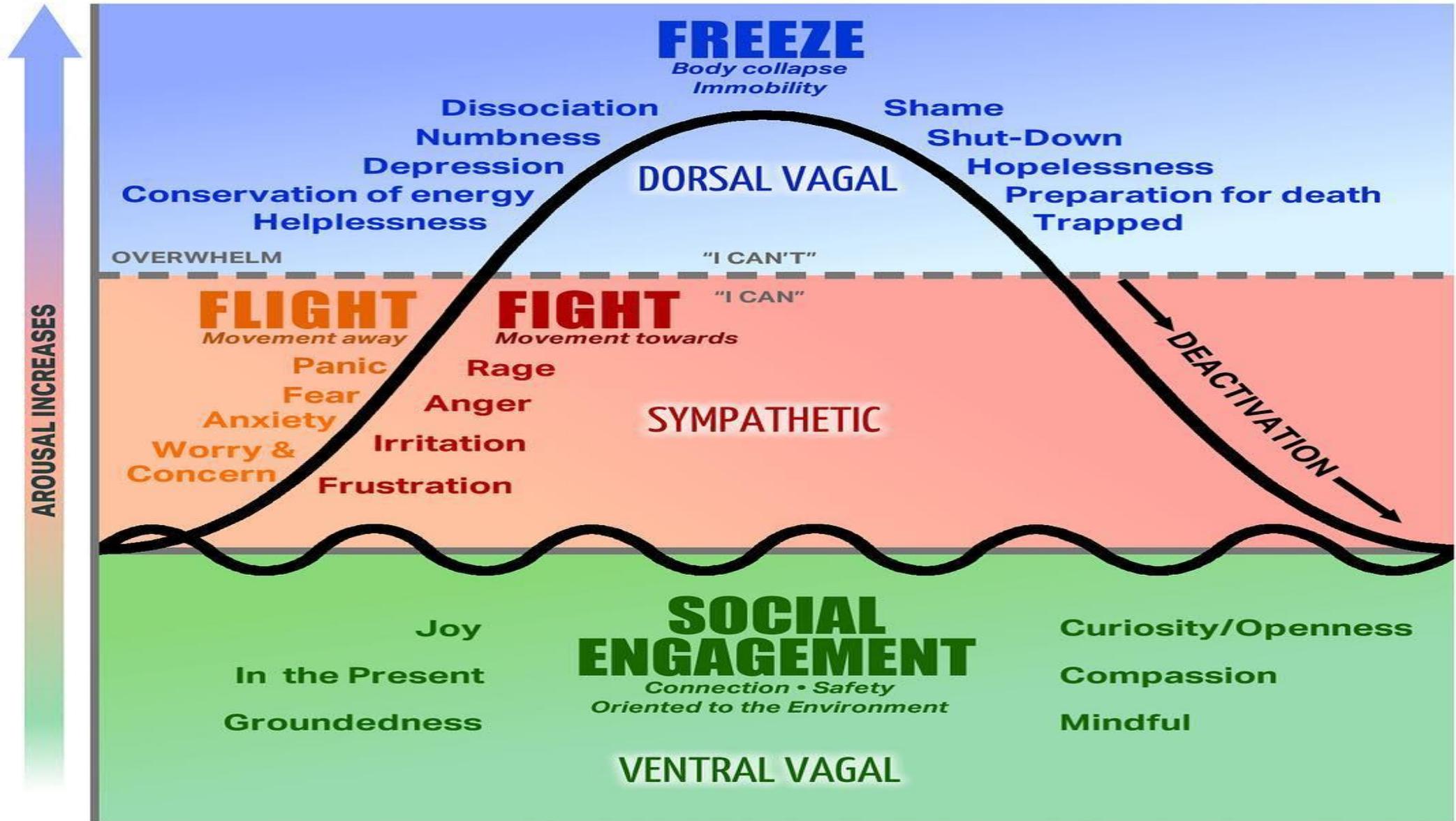
- We often put the problem on the child
- Refer the child to be fixed
- Ask 'what's wrong with this child?'
- 'Why are they behaving so badly?'
- 'Do they have a mental health disorder?'
- 'They're just being naughty'

But these are understandable reactions to adverse circumstances

Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)



Children living in the poorest households are 4 x more likely to develop nervous system regulation + social connection difficulties.

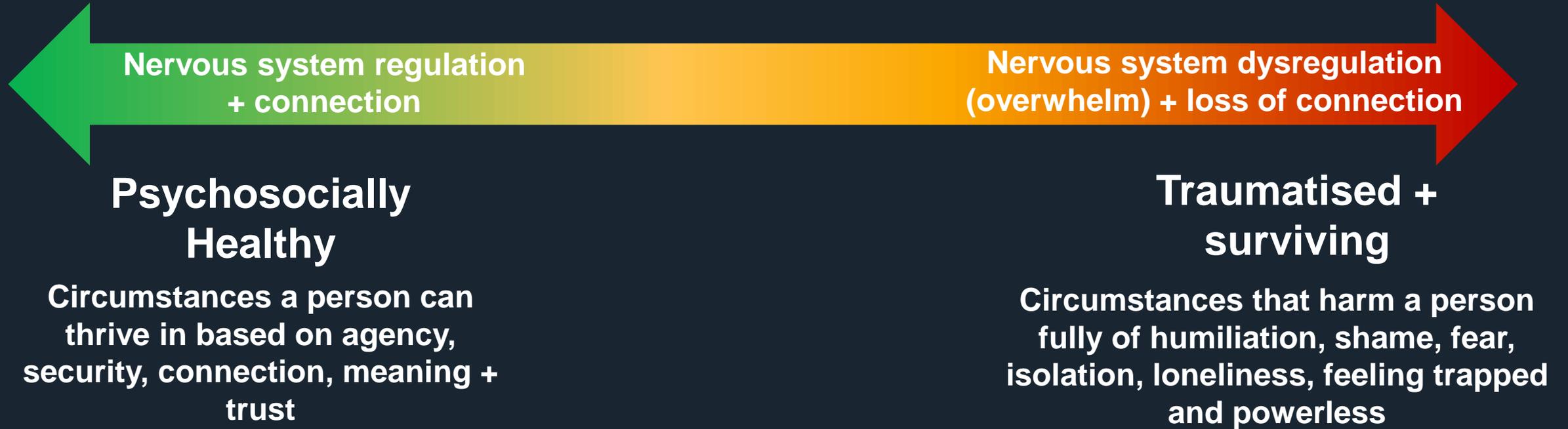


Adapted by Ruby Jo Walker from: Cheryl Sanders, Steve Hoskinson, Steven Porges and Peter Levine

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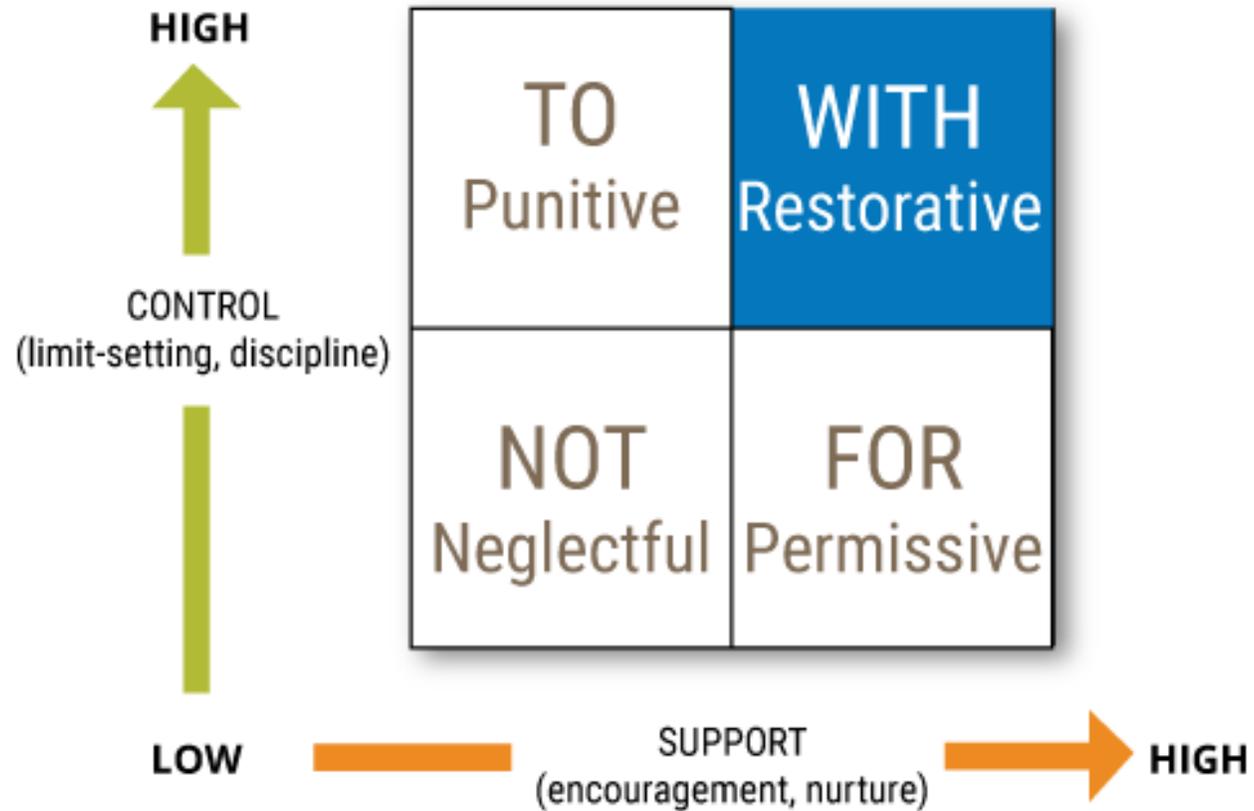
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Continuum of Relational Health



“Clinic based interventions that draw on NICE Guidelines are simply not going to work when poverty, adversity, neglect, abuse and ongoing exposure to toxic stress lie at the root of the distress families are experiencing.”

Dr Liz Gregory
Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Joint Head of Child & Family Psychology,
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Wales



Adapted by Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel



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Enhancing
community mental
health understanding



Developing meaning
making, storytelling
and collective action
skills



Reflecting, learning,
taking action and
sustaining change

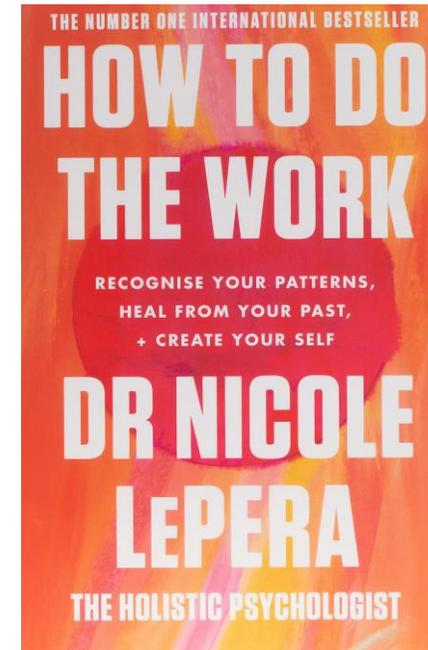




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Monnow Primary

Learning Plan

- S1 - Introductions
- S2 – Getting to know / Trust building / Ground rules/ Expectations/ Starter Kit
- S3 –Adverse Childhood Experiences
- S4 – Limitations of current approach
- S5 – Trauma + Relationships
- S6 – Trauma + Relationships -
- S7 – Trauma + Relationships – Making sense of it / Narrative
- S8 – Sense making
- S9 - Sense making / Action / Self healers network
- S10 - Sense making / Action / Sustainability
- S11 - Sharing Learning
- S12 - Endings



**What are we
learning so far?**

Evaluation

WHAT'S BEEN TOUGH?	WHAT'S BEEN GOOD?
Keeping up with my bills. Keeping up with making phone calls to sort things out. Keeping up with my son (financially) whether it's constantly washing his clothes (because of the fuel hike) or having to buy new clothes because of his clumsiness. My son's change from child to teenager	My son just came back from a 3 day school trip and he really enjoyed it.

before coming in today I felt...	what I'm looking forward to in the future
Stressed over over some drama but otherwise I'm ok today	taking the kids to pepper pig warts Christmas - I have the family at mine this year finally getting my tribble tattoo

What's been tough?	What's been good?
Paying bills. Getting stuff for my son. Day to day can vary with what's I have to deal with or not.	Getting my son back in school. Seeing how happy he is (at the moment) with school (apart from homework). Getting the support with school and school helping him adjust.

How did you feel before coming to session?	looking forward to something in the future.
I actually felt good about coming to coffee morning and catching up with some of the mums that I no longer see since my son started high school in September.	My son being a happy, confident young man. He said that he wants to go to college and university and it would be amazing if he follow his dreams.

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”

“Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings”

Nelson Mandela

Opportunity for Q & A and Reflections

In the context of your own work...

what has been good?

What has been tough?

What are you looking forward to in the future?

Get in touch

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