

THURSDAY 26TH MARCH 2020 STAYING CONNECTED AND CURIOUS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

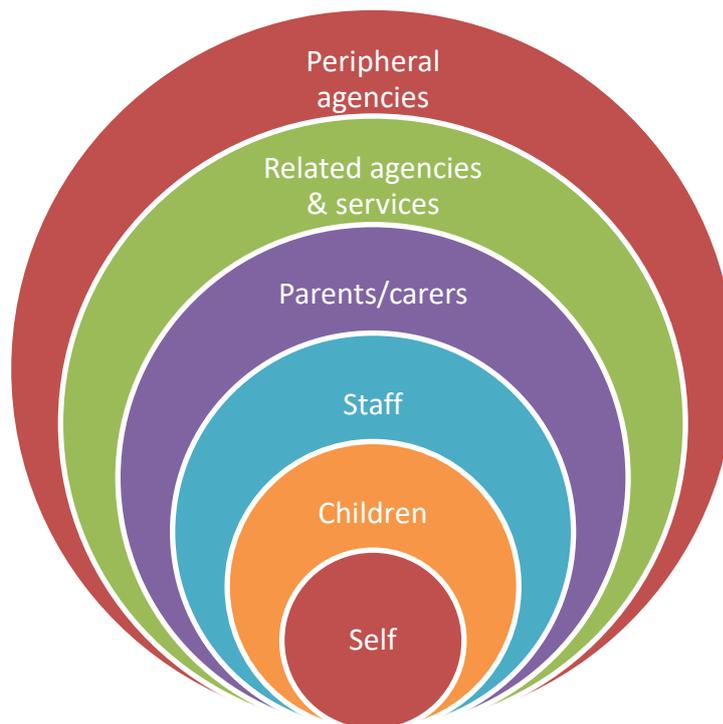
Knowledge and understanding of attachment and trauma

Falling down a memory timehole

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msNO7ZmLXns>

Dr Karen Treisman talks about 'Falling down a memory timehole', where past memories of being afraid and out of control, resurface and retrigger us, exacerbating our current feelings of fear and powerlessness.

The messages within this video will apply to our whole-school communities: self, children, colleagues, bosses, parents, governing bodies and all other stakeholders:



Overlapping and Impactful Interactors in Education

When we think of trauma-informed practice in schools, we often focus exclusively on the children. Thus, we fail to be truly trauma-informed because all of these other 'stakeholders' have a significant impact on experience, process and outcomes. If ever there was a time to be trauma-responsive, this is it! How do we ensure that we are trauma-responsive throughout the whole

system(s), when there are so many participants, often with different, or even competing priorities, agendas and narratives?

Some questions for reflection

Today, we have a three-part reflection: self, children, community.

Part 1: Self

1. Are the feelings you personally are experiencing new and unfamiliar, or are they reflecting past feelings of fear and powerlessness? On a personal note, my emotions and bodily sensations are very similar to when my parents were dying (eight years apart, but similar circumstances). This means that I am coping not only with my current fear of the pandemic, but also reliving again the loss of my parents and the grief, loneliness and fear that surrounded those days. What is it like for you? Are you connecting with the past as well as the present? Spend a little time looking at the What-Are-You-Feeling PDF from Beacon House. If it feels right and comfortable for you, use the body template to identify where you feel fear/worry/anxiety in your body. Use images, e.g. butterflies, pins, padlocks, handcuffs, icicles as well as words. This will help you name and maybe understand and respond positively to your feelings at this time.
2. What are your 'creative coping strategies' at this time: attack, withdrawal, disengage? To extend on what Karen said, some of us might be in 'friend' mode; I'm a 'pleaser', so being kind and friendly is my default mode when anxious, sometimes, at detriment to my wellbeing and authenticity. For some, aggression and 'fight' is their coping mechanism – better to attack than be attacked. For others 'grabbing' is their mode, so the panic buyer, who is afraid of not having enough. None of these is right or wrong, so please don't judge yourself. Again, simply try to understand yourself a little more. Is your go-to strategy working for you? Are you switching between modes? How can you ensure that your coping strategies are healthy for you and do not harm others?

Part 2: Children

1. Are the uncomfortable feelings the children who are in school today experiencing new and unfamiliar, or are they reflecting past feelings of fear and powerlessness? Children who have experienced any sort of uncertainty around safety in any of the situations on yesterday's list e.g. poverty, abuse, neglect, domestic violence, emotionally unavailable parents, are likely to be triggered by new experiences of old feelings. Can you name any children for whom this may be true? Could you usefully share the What-Are-You-Feeling PDF from Beacon House with the children who are in school, and use the body template to identify where they feel fear/worry/anxiety in their body? This is also a lovely activity using life-sized body outlines and collage materials.

2. Karen speaks about stress and anxiety contagion. Many children are currently experiencing this and being flooded by the thoughts and feelings of adults around them. This includes parents and other family members, educators and even news reports. How can you support the children by surrounding them with peaceful and pleasurable emotions while they are in school? This may serve as a buffer against less positive influences.

Part 3: School community

1. How are your colleagues, children's parents and carers and other stakeholders coping with their anxiety? Take some time to look at the 'Putting up Defences' document. This should be used positively and empathically. Does this help you to understand the responses in your own school community? Bearing in mind what Karen says about there being no one cookie-cutter approach, how can we best support one another in these challenging times?
2. **Covid-19 relevance:** I think it's all been Covid-19 relevant today, but particularly, how can you support those children and colleagues who are at home at this time, around the issues we are considering today?

This may be enough for you for today. If you want more, take some time to make and eat some Feelings Cookies! Don't forget your self-care today.

Have a good day, keep safe and healthy and ring or email me to chat if that would help. Jenny x

