

# Building trust with kids who have experienced trauma

FOR CARERS



Building trust with kids who have experienced trauma takes time and commitment. Along the way you might feel frustrated, discouraged or rejected.

Remember that kids heal from complex trauma through loving, safe and supportive relationships. Creating stable environments for your kids will encourage these positive connections.

## **Predictability**

Kids who have experienced trauma have often witnessed or endured harm in unpredictable ways. Your kids need to know what to expect, from you and others, and when to expect it.

## **Consistency**

Rules, expectations and routines should stay the same as much as possible. Reliability is crucial for kids who have experienced trauma – they need to know they can count on everything you say and do.

## **Staying Neutral**

When kids are Heating Up, they need you to remain calm and in control. You can model neutral behaviour by calmly voicing your concern, using tranquil body language or tone, listening attentively and problem solving with them.

## **Psychological safety**

Talk to kids about what makes them feel emotionally safe, and how you can support them. Do try to implement their suggestions, but don't promise anything that you cannot deliver.

## **Pre-teaching**

Pre-teaching means describing to kids ahead of time what will happen and what you expect. Planning ahead for particular situations, with clear and positive expectations, can reduce anxiety.

## **Belonging**

To move beyond their past, your kids need to know 'who is here for me?' They should feel safe in their surroundings, and know that they belong in your world.

## **Signals of Safety**

Signals of safety are ways of communicating that convey warmth, concern, empathy and positive regard to kids. They can be provided verbally or through gestures such as smiles, pats on the back or high-fives. Signals of safety work best when provided multiple times throughout the day in short doses.

## **Cultural Connection**

For Aboriginal and CALD kids, meaningful links to culture are fundamental to healing. Effective coping mechanisms include connecting with culture, community and spiritual practices, and seeking support from elders or religious leaders. It's important work with kids' cultural communities to understand their specific needs, and how to best support healing.