

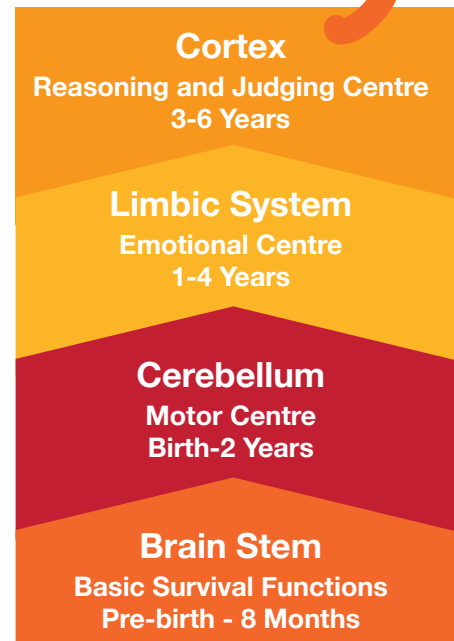


BRINGING UP GREAT KIDS

Parenting Program

HANDOUTS

Bottom-Up Brain Development



The brain is comprised of different structures that grow and develop at different rates and different times.

The **brain stem** area of the brain develops first and is responsible for basic functions that **keep us alive** such as heart rate, breathing and regulating our body temperature. The brain stem is fully developed at birth. It is the part of the brain that is 'hard wired' and least susceptible to change.

Connected to the brain stem is the **cerebellum** or motor centre of the brain. This area is responsible for **movement** and develops over the first few years of life. Development in this area is seen in babies gaining head control, sitting, crawling and walking. In the next few years, children will gain greater co-ordination, learn to skip, kick a ball, ride a bicycle, cut, draw and eat with cutlery.

The **limbic system** is the **emotional** centre of the brain and rules the lives of young children up to around four years. During the toddler years, the limbic system goes through a period of rapid development. This helps explain their bursts of irrational behaviour and tantrums. Toddlers need our help to manage their **strong** feelings. Young children **feel** then **act**, they **can't think** then **act**. This is due to the emotional centre of their brain developing before the cortex, or the thinking part of their brain. Young children basically view the world through an emotional lens.

The **cortex**, or thinking part of the brain, is the last part to develop. This is the part of the brain responsible for reasoning, planning and problem solving. This is the part of the brain that enables humans to **think** before they **act**. As children grow and develop, the cortex is gradually able to help us to pause when we are flooded by **strong** emotions, thus allowing us to **feel, think, then act**.

Unlike the brain stem, the limbic system and cortex are highly susceptible to change due to experience and the environment in which the child lives.



Stop...Pause...Play



When we can relate to our children with mindful awareness we activate a part of the brain (the medial pre-frontal cortex) which allows our defensive systems to switch off, putting us in a more relaxed state and allowing us to think and act more rationally and to step outside our own experience so that we can **BE MORE PRESENT TO OUR CHILDREN'S NEEDS**.

This is an exercise that we will practice every week or use any time you need to take time out to calm down before you respond to whatever is going on.



Stop

- Stop what you are doing.
- Make sure your feet are placed firmly on the ground.



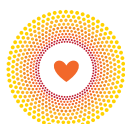
Pause

- Focus on your breath.
- Breathe in slowly, right down into your belly, then exhale completely.
- Take 5 more slow breaths, being aware of each breath in and each breath out.
- Smile and enjoy standing like this for a moment. Feel your body relax.
- Reflect. Ask yourself "What do I need?" and "What does my child need?"



Play

Respond to your child with new understanding.

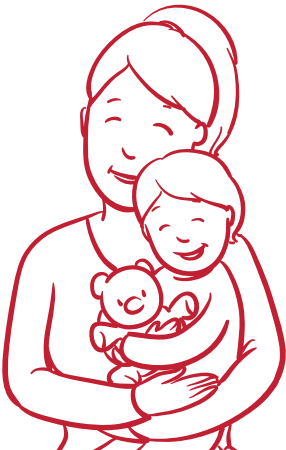


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Children's Behaviour



Situation	Behaviour	Understanding (emotion, reason, intention)
		
		
		



Anthill Scenarios

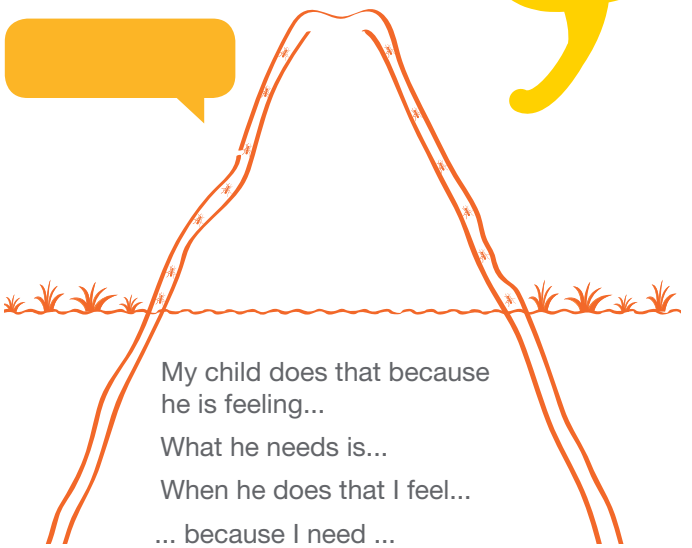


My child does that because
he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



My child does that because
he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

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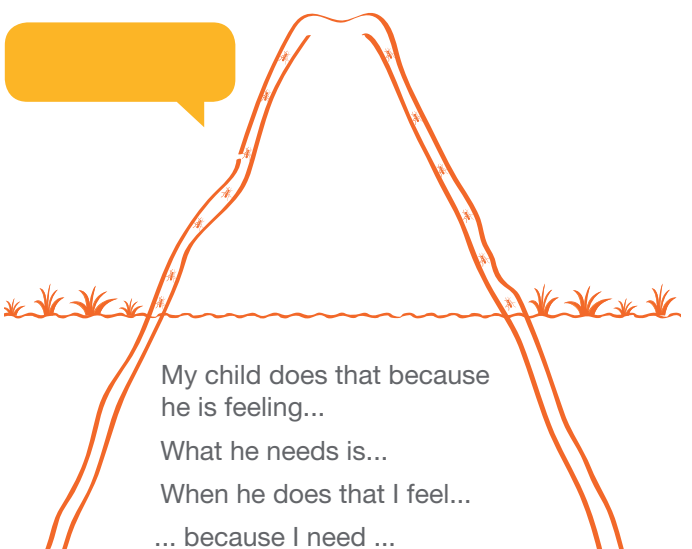


My child does that because
he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



My child does that because
he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



Iceberg Scenarios





My child does that because he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



My child does that because he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



My child does that because he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



My child does that because he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



My child does that because he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



My child does that because he is feeling...

What he needs is...

When he does that I feel...

... because I need ...



Family Case Scenario 2

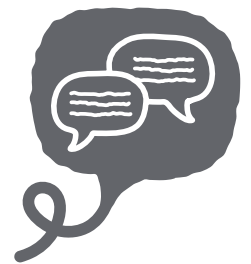
**James, a single dad, cares for his three children.**

Adam, aged 6 who demonstrates some challenging behaviours and has recently been diagnosed with ADHD. Sarah, aged 10, is a very nervous child who struggles to make friends. Sam, aged 3, is a very sociable and friendly child.

The only support James gets each week is from his mum who lives nearby and looks after the children two afternoons a week.

The house James has been renting for five years has been sold and will no longer be available for rent. There are no other houses in the nearby area within James's budget so he has no choice but to move to the other side of town to where he can afford to rent. The move will mean a change of schools and finding a new day care for Sam.

Group Discussion



Consider the children in the scenario and what the change of circumstances may mean for each one, take into account each child's;

- Stage of development
- Personality / Temperament
- Gender
- Position in the family

Consider possible impacts on the child's:

- Feelings
- Sense of security
- Friendships
- Behaviours



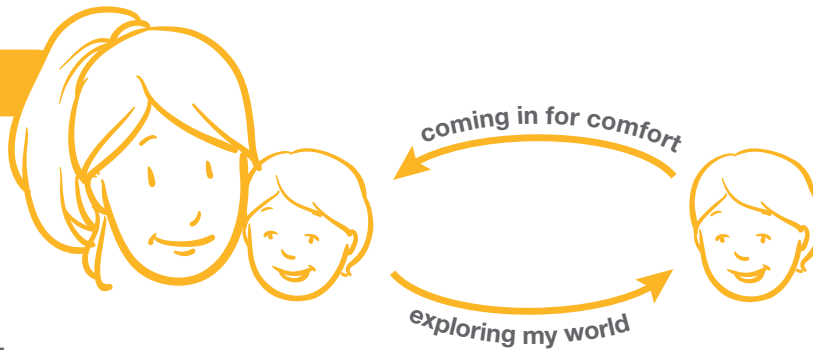
Being there for children



Page 1

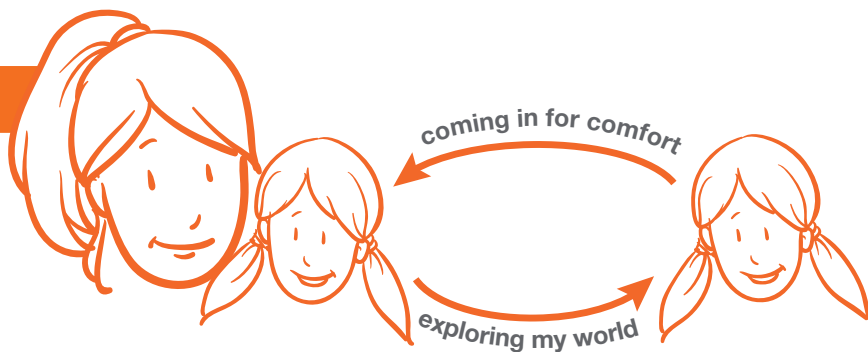
- A. What might **exploring my world**, and **coming in for comfort**, look like for a child of each of these ages?
- B. What does the child need from the parent in each case?

3 Years



I need you to...

6 Years



I need you to...

9 Years



I need you to...



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Being there for children



Page 2

- A. What might **exploring my world**, and **coming in for comfort**, look like for a child of each of these ages?
- B. What does the child need from the parent in each case?

