

**FMC**  
Mediation and  
Counselling Victoria

# Maximising Parental Alliance

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# FMC Overview

FMC established in 1983

Receives majority of funding from Commonwealth Government

Provides services across 21 locations across Victoria

Over 7500 clients per annum

- Relationship Counselling
- Individual, Children and Young People's Counselling
- Family Dispute Resolution
- Legally assisted FDR
- Family Mental Health Support
- Parenting after Separation groups
- Bulk billed psychological services in schools and clinics
- Financial Counselling & Financial Capability development
- Respecting Elders service
- Training services

# Objectives of this workshop

1. The changing roles of the carer through the course of normal development
2. Deeper understanding of the impact of the fight of flight system on parenting and relationships
3. Parenting in the context of trauma
4. Communication styles when working with conflict
5. Provide practical advice working with carers when there is conflict to ensure better outcomes for the child

# What is parental alliance

The strength of the relationship between two or more carers of a child or children. Key factors include:

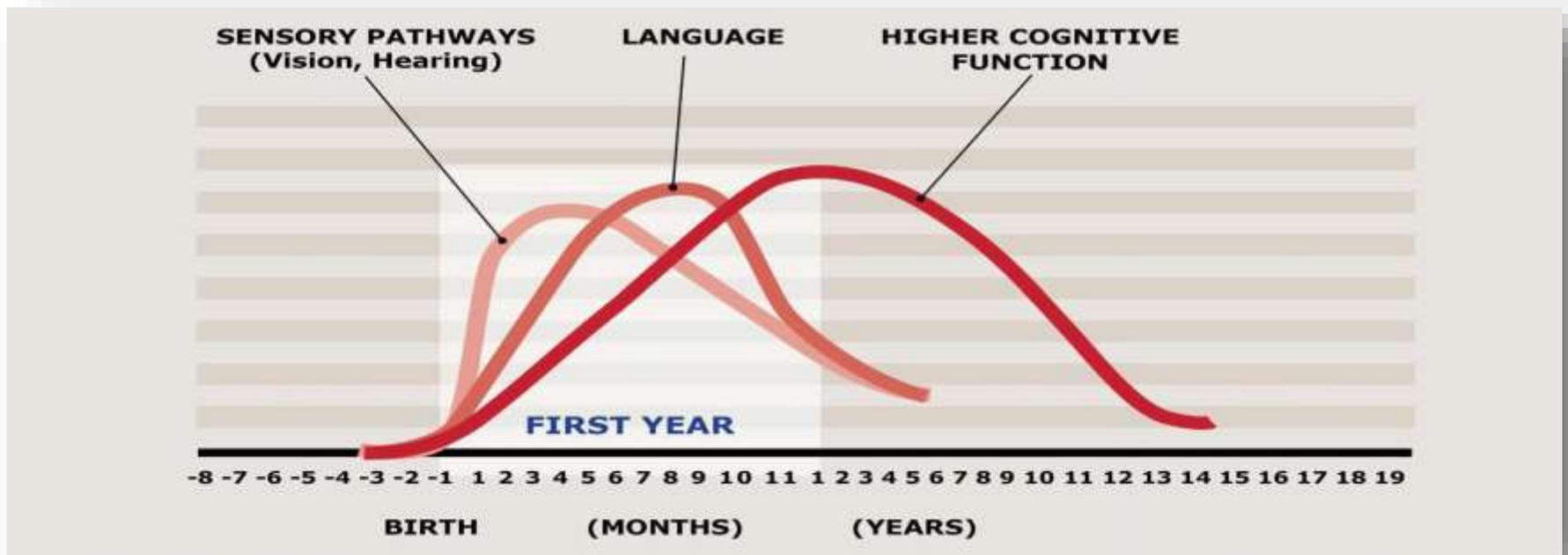
1. Cooperation regard care for children
2. Communication regarding care for children
3. Mutual respect regarding care for children

# Developmental Stages

Age	Characteristics	Signs of Distress	Suggestions
5-8 years	<p>Developing peer relationships</p> <p>Moral development progresses</p>	<p>Overt signs of grief eg. sadness, anger.</p> <p>Feelings of abandonment &amp; rejection.</p> <p>Changes in eating &amp; sleeping.</p> <p>Behavioural problems</p> <p>Loyalty conflicts</p> <p>May try to take on role of any departing carer.</p>	<p>Opportunities to express feelings, learn coping strategies</p> <p>Reassurance that they are not responsible for separation.</p> <p>Permission to love all carers.</p> <p>Participation in extracurricular activities to detach from parental problems.</p> <p>Benefit from spending as much time as possible with each carer.</p>
9-12 years	<p>Increased awareness of self</p> <p>Trying to fit in with peers</p>	<p>Intense anger</p> <p>Physical complaints</p> <p>Overactive to avoid thinking about issues.</p> <p>Feel different from other children.</p> <p>More likely to ally with a carer or be alienated.</p>	<p>Opportunities to express feelings</p> <p>Learn skills to cope</p> <p>Reassurance they are not responsible for parental alliance.</p> <p>Permission to love all carers.</p> <p>Participation in extracurricular activities to detach from parental problems.</p> <p>Benefit from spending as much time as possible with all carers.</p>
13-18 years	<p>Solidifying identity &amp; establishing self in relation to rules &amp; regulations of society.</p>	<p>Withdrawal from family</p> <p>Difficulty concentrating</p> <p>Engaging in high-risk behaviours (sexual promiscuity, drug &amp; alcohol use).</p> <p>Worry about own future relationships.</p>	<p>Consistent limits balanced with more freedom &amp; choices.</p> <p>Have input about carer contact but not burdened by having to decide custody &amp; access schedule.</p>

Adapted from Johnston & Roseby, 1997; Solomon, 2005

# Development



Take away:

Children are constantly changing the way in which they perceive the world, interpret it and express themselves.

# Developmental Hurdles

Managing Changing Relationships

Body Image

Navigating Friendships

Self Confidence

Basic Needs:  
trying to establish a sense of purpose

Self Esteem

Advocating For Oneself

Friends Providing Emotional Support

Personal Losses: Friendships

Communications Skills

Puberty

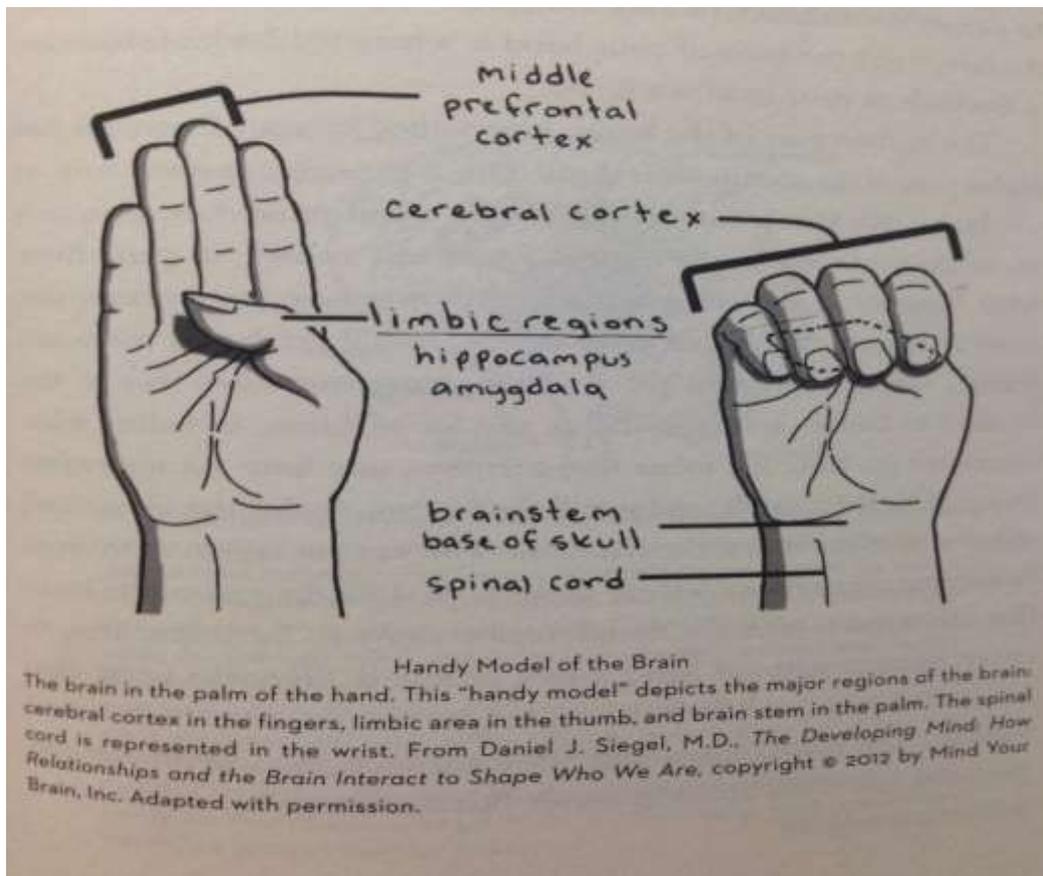
Dealing with Stress

Personal Identity

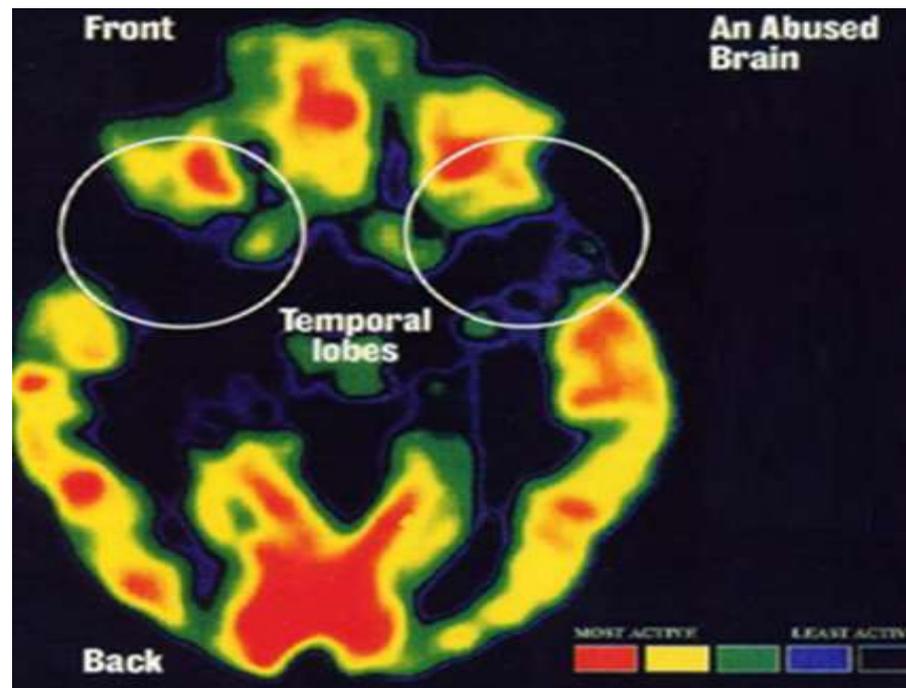
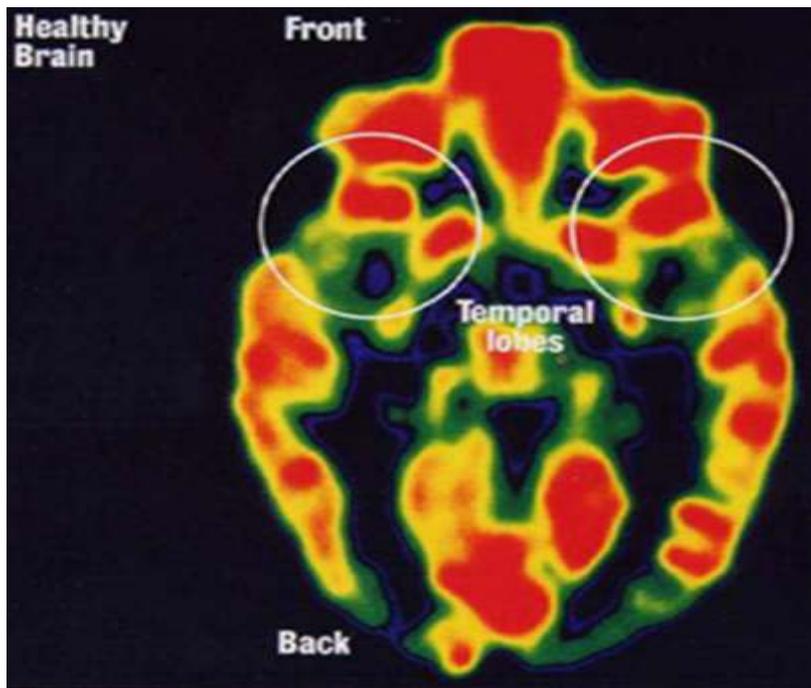
Problem Solving

Sexual Relationships

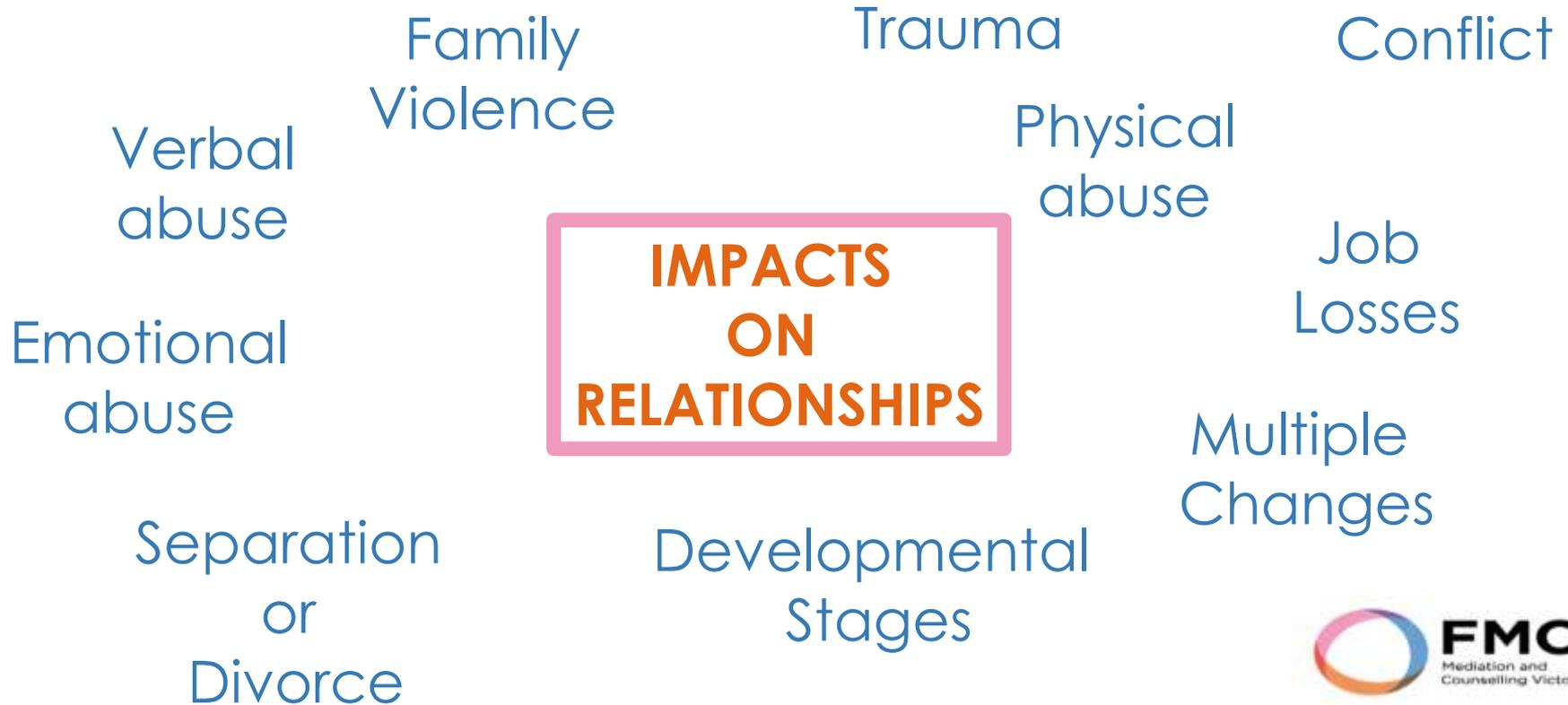
# Flipping your lid.



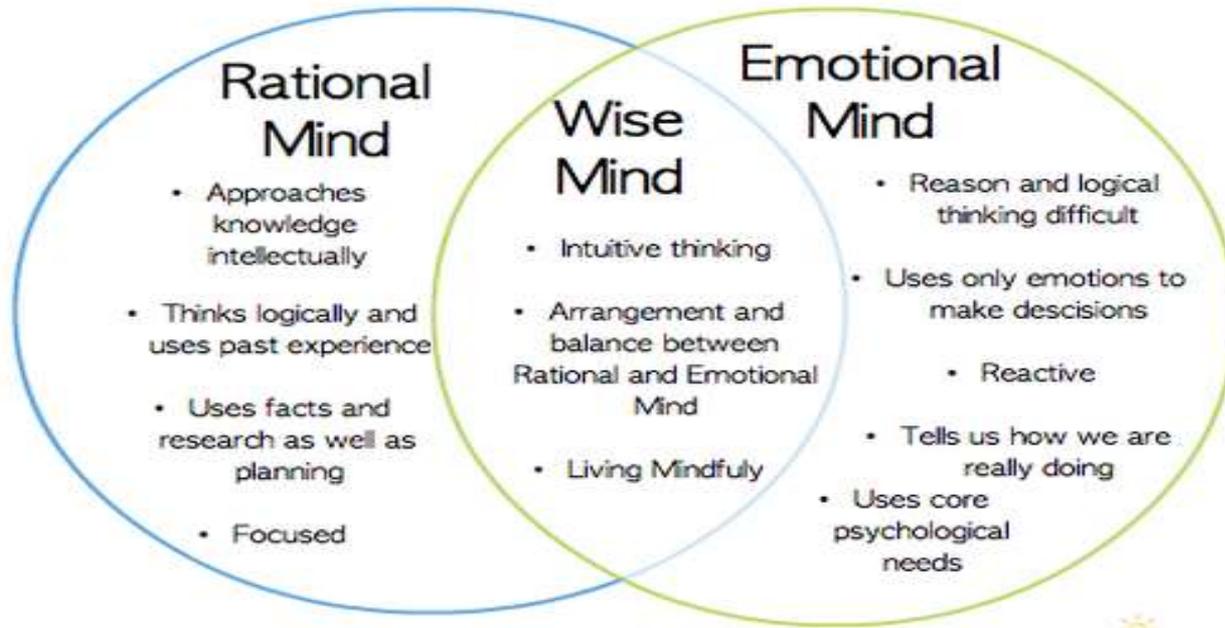
# Healthy Brain vs Unhealthy Brain



# Relationships Hurdles



# For Carers – Engaging both sides of the brain.



Take away:

If there are emotions blocking rational thought, start with the emotions. Only come to the rational when calm enough

# Relationships

Awareness of Self  
and  
the impact we have  
on others

Reflective  
Behaviour

Noticing

Time:  
Deliberately  
making  
time for one  
another

**HOW TO HELP IMPROVE  
RELATIONSHIPS**

Positive  
Reinforcement

Parenting  
Programs

Counselling

Modelling  
Behaviours

Respectful  
Communication

# Styles of Communication

## Passive Communication

Passive communicators have trouble expressing their needs and their feelings. They may not react to upsetting situations. This can cause them to feel threatened, unfairly treated and taken advantage of. Passive individuals often have poor eye contact, may be softly spoken and may not be able to get their own views or point across.

## Aggressive Communication

Aggressive communicators can be verbally abusive, using criticism and domination. Infringe on the other persons personal space, continuously interrupting others. They can encroach upon others rights. They may speak in a loudly, be easily annoyed and frustrated.

## Assertive Communication

Assertive communicators value and allow the opinions of others without letting it encroach on their values and beliefs. They display respect for others. Often listen without interruption, clearly stating their needs. Engages in the conversation with respect, however stands up for personal beliefs and rights.

# Communication Skills

## How to Manage Strong Emotions

Bring the young persons awareness to their feelings.

That must be frustrating for you, would you like to talk to me about it?

Share with the young person what you might do in this situation.

Sometimes when I feel frustrated I will.....

Using 'I' statements to describe how you're feeling.

'I feel frustrated when I ask you to clean your room and 20 minutes later it still isn't done'

# Communication Skills

## Be mindful of how you are communicating

Our behaviours are reflective of the way the young person behaves.

If we yell, inevitably they will yell.

Modelling the behaviours we would like to see in the young person.

Be aware of your body language when communicating

## Utilise opportunities to talk to the young person when there is not strong emotions

Such as; talking to them on the way to sporting events

Build on this as much as you can so that it creates a foundation of communication when things are going well.

# Communication Tips

Always include positive statements as you welcome the emerging adult:

“I like the way you handled that, I can see how much you have helped here”

“I can see by your behaviour that you have really thought about this issue and I think it’s great how you can change things that might not be working for you”

“Wow, I like that way you just said that. I didn’t realise how adult you are becoming”

Allow the young person to take charge of their contribution to the home:

“So what jobs would you like to do around here and how should we handle things if you don’t do what you have agreed to do?”

Always encourage the young person to problem solve as it defines a relationship where they have a say and some control:

“That sounds like a tricky situation, have you thought of how you might like to manage things?”

“Friendships can be tricky at the best of times, what do you think needs to happen here to make things ok for you?”

# ACTIVITY – Role Play

## Scenario:

A child kicks a hole in their bedroom wall after returning from school. Both carers are aware that the child has been in conflict with their only friend.

# Reflections for Parents

What are the **strengths** I give to my family?

A **challenge** I have as a parent?

A positive **change** I can make as a parent?

# Summary

Children are constantly changing the way in which they perceive the world, interpret it and express themselves.

If there are emotions blocking rational thought, start with the emotions. Only come to the rational when everyone is calm enough

The impacts of trauma are profound and there is cause for optimism

Effective communication is hard. If it were easy everyone would do it

# QUESTIONS



# Further Questions

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