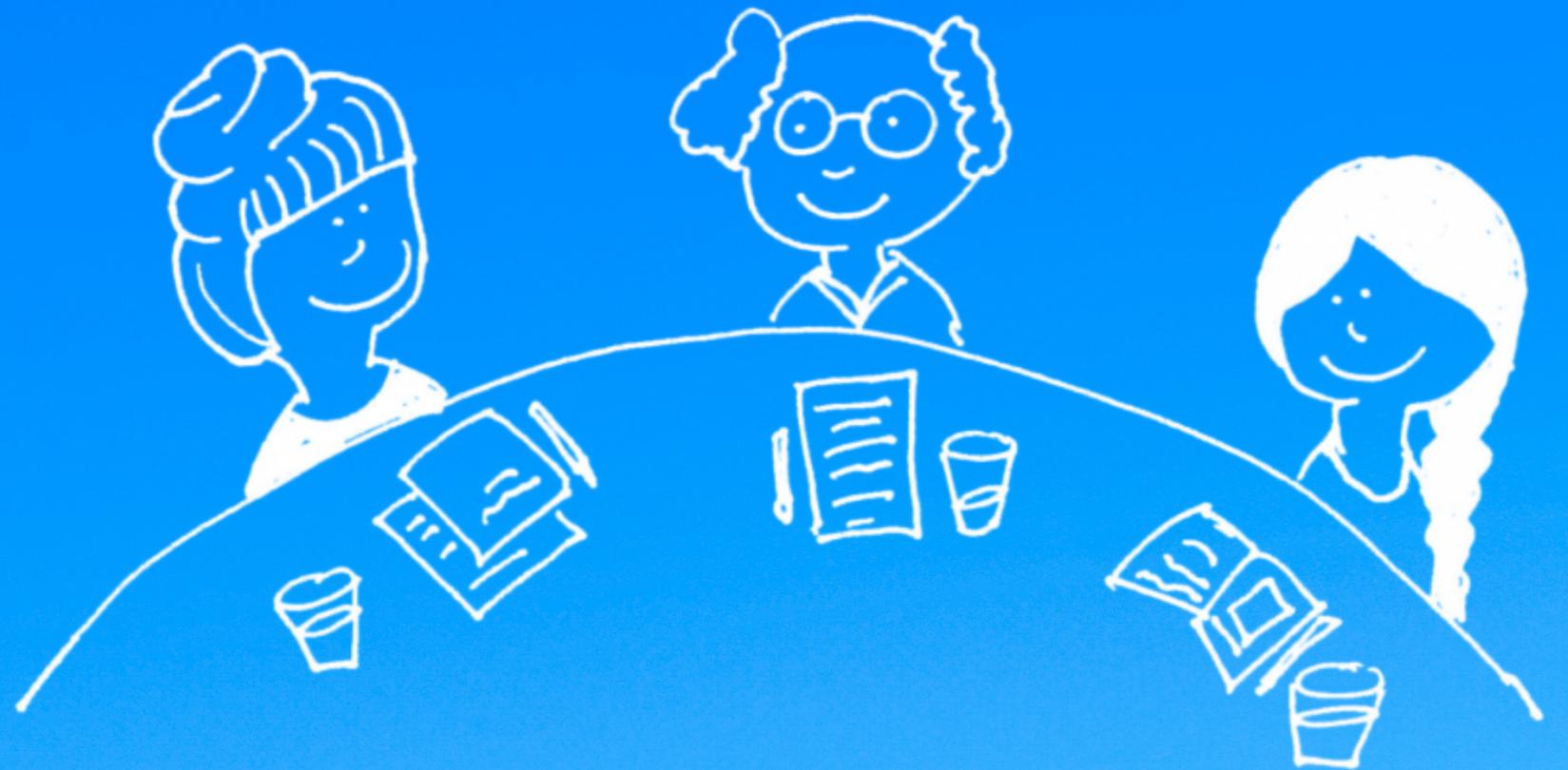
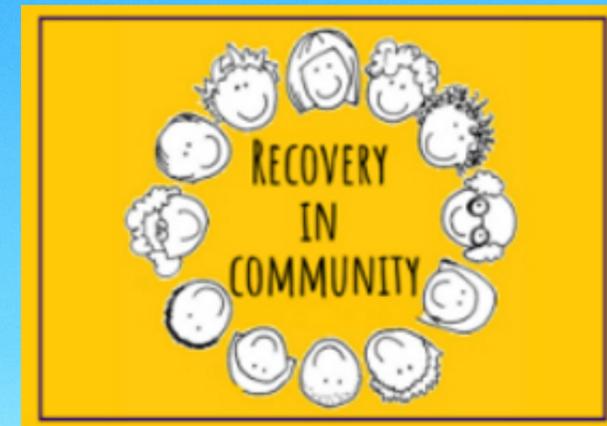
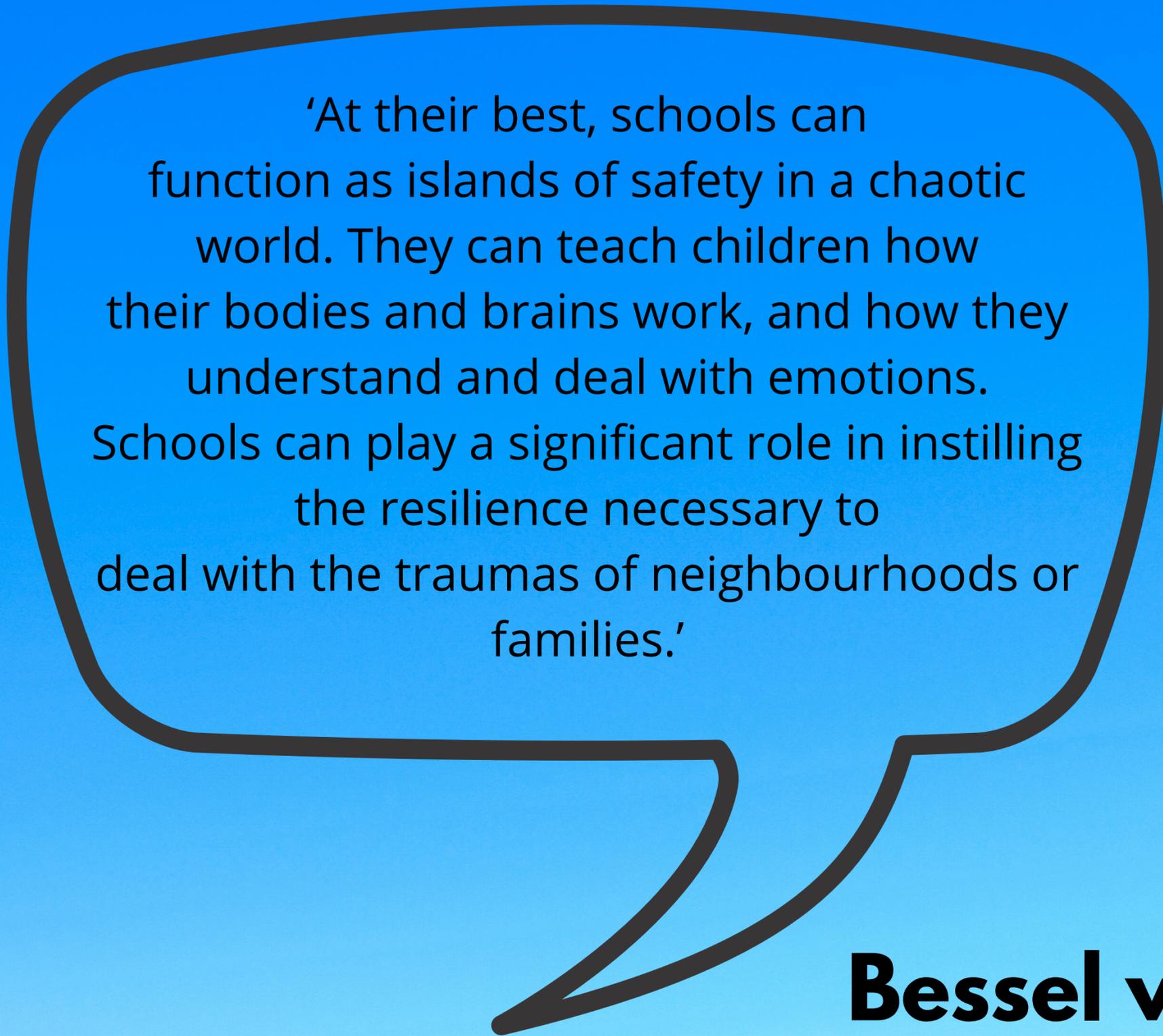


Collective Trauma Recovery



Primary School Guide



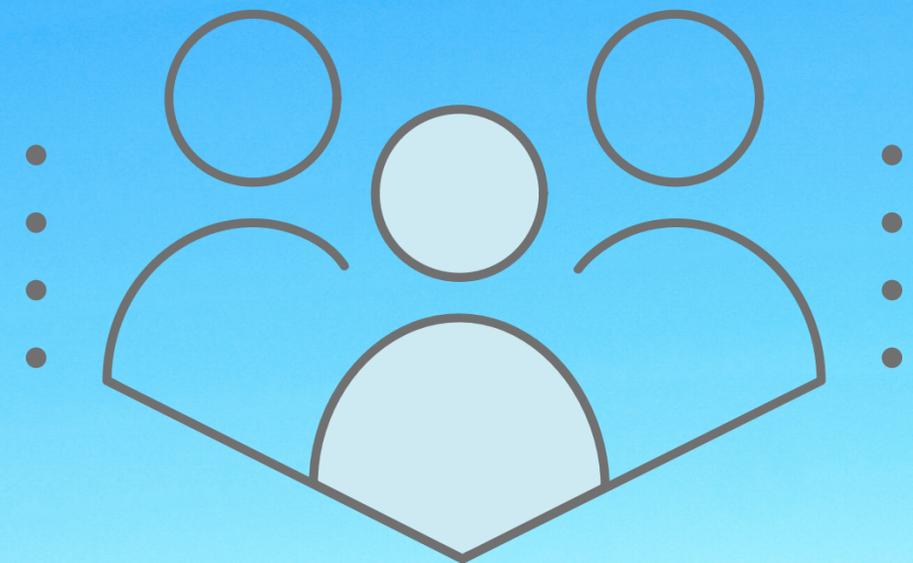


'At their best, schools can function as islands of safety in a chaotic world. They can teach children how their bodies and brains work, and how they understand and deal with emotions. Schools can play a significant role in instilling the resilience necessary to deal with the traumas of neighbourhoods or families.'

Bessel van der Kolk

A practical guide for staff, parents and pupils.

We all have a different experience of the pandemic we are living in. This guidance is for you to adapt and differentiate as appropriate. It accompanies the **Collective Trauma Recovery** webinars by Louise Michelle Bomber.



Thoughts about self-care...



**Put your own
oxygen mask on
first!**

The **polyvagal theory** (the work of Stephen Porges) tells us that we can send others into their alarm systems by ourselves being in our own alarm system. It is vital at this time of heightened stress that we as adults take care of ourselves in order to be the present, attuned and responsive grown-ups that children need us to be, and in order for us all to stay regulated.

Self-care strategies

Slow Down

As much as possible, slow down - give yourself time to adjust.

Increase Familiarity

Add in photos or pictures of people and places that make you smile to your pod.

Connect

Check-in with yourself - how are you feeling? Have 1:1 check-ins at work first, and then group check-ins with trusted colleagues. Encourage genuine connection.

Safe Space - for staff!

A protected space for staff to retreat to. Even if it is in the toilets - add a chair, hand-cream, plants etc.

Use PACE - Dan Hughes.

Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy. Smile. Use a warm, open body language with each other.

Teams

Create small staff teams - Determine who you can swap-in with prior to the children returning. Encourage time out for staff not the pupils. Swap-in to release each other.

Preparing for re-entry to school

Staff

- **Stagger and phase transitions.** Go slow. Help parents/carers to understand transition and what to expect in a clear and concise way.
- Consider the pupils as **new starters**, go back to basics.
- Be mindful that some children will be missing school and some will have been happier at home - there will be **mixed responses about the transition** back to school.
- **Check-in with the children** via letter, cards, voice messages. Encourage them to learn something new to bring to the class e.g. magic trick, joke, dance move etc.
- Film a **virtual tour of the school** for them - start with the outside in, do for both existing children, and later for those transitioning - do in bite size clips.
- Ensure **check-ins are sustained for those (staff and pupils) who are not yet returning** to school. Do a book or game swap each week to encourage children to make contact with school. Organise Zoom calls for staff on 1:1 basis or have team social calls.
- Every **transition activates the nervous system**. Overwhelm can quickly kick in. Keep this in mind and ensure you are **over-compensating safety, regulation and relationship** to calm the nervous system.

Preparing for re-entry to school

Parents/Carers and Pupils

- Encourage parents/carers to **walk by the school** before the children start. Chat about what they like best, “What’s your favourite space? Who’s your favourite teacher? Where do you normally play? Tell me about it.” Reminisce.
- Talk to them about returning to school. Keep it light, and chat about what it might be like, **what will be the same and what will be different?**
- Encourage **parents/carers to check-in with staff**, when they feel comfortable to, if there is anything they would like to share regarding their time during lockdown. The better the relationship with the parents/carers the quicker we can help the children settle.
- Where appropriate, families to have time to **work with grief and sadness at home**, privately, before any work is done in school.

Facilitating Felt Safety

Felt safety according to Dr Stephen Porges, has more to do with **meaningful, genuine and familiar connection**, than to do with the absence of threat.

Structure

Use a **visual countdown**, mark time off, stick to the timetable to increase predictability.

Words such as "**first...next...**" or "When... then..." Can be helpful.

Mark **hellos and goodbyes** with rituals e.g. special handshakes but mirror the movements rather than touch hands. A special signal.

Use **Social Stories** to communicate expectations.

Make **routines explicit**. revise old routines and teach new routines. Remember the children will need repetition.

Felt Safety Cues

Be really **demonstrative in your interactions**. This increases safety cues (soft and warm eyes, smiles, vocal prosody).

Try to keep everything as small as possible, e.g. spaces, group sizes, chunk the curriculum. Minimise transitions.

Support the children to **create safe spaces/dens**. Think about how accessible they are, allow to personalise where possible.

Reassure parents/carers you are prioritising safety and relationships right now. Be confident, clear and empathic in your communication to reduce parental anxiety.

Connection - building relationships

- Play collaborative games together - some suggestions on the following page that use the principles of Theraplay.[®]
- Encourage meaningful home-school communication.
- Keep PACE in mind for all - staff, parents/carers and children.
- Check-in on a daily basis - show your interest in them.

Games for connection

CREATE A SPECIAL HANDSHAKE

Make up a special handshake together (mirror actions rather than touching hands), take turns to add new gestures. This can be cumulative over several sessions and can be your beginning or ending ritual.

LAND, SEA & AIR

Determine which part of the floor is 'land' and which is 'sea'. If you're using tape, put down a long piece to mark it off. The area in front of the tape is 'sea' and the area behind it is 'land'. You call out one of three directions: Land, Sea or Air. When you say "Land!" the child jumps into the land area. When you say "Sea!" the child jumps into the sea. When you say "Air!" the child jumps as high into the air as he can. Surprise the players with random commands like "Tornado!" and "Earthquake!" where everyone invents their own movements.

MR BUBBLE WRITING

Squirt foamy soap e.g. Mr Bubble on a smooth surface like a window or a mirror. Standing apart, draw something one part at a time and then ask the child to copy it. When done smear the soap back again and switch the leader, having the child lead if appropriate.

CLAPPING PATTERNS

Leader claps pattern on knees and hands. Group imitates clapping pattern. Start with a simple pattern and become more complicated as the group allows.

Regulation

Set up **grounding rituals** with your class. Do a body scan followed by noticing 1 thing they can see, hear, feel and smell.

Think about putting in regular **regulation breaks**.

Small doses of 15 minutes, at least 4 times a day.

Support pupils to create **calm boxes**, calms purses, SOS bags. e.g. treasure box, octopus of options, cool down ice box, calm down superhero, protective palm, tree of tools. **Karen Treisman – Cleo the Crocodile – 2019.**

Be **playful**, use humour – watch funny clips.

Regulation

Use **music**! Sing!
Drum, clap, tap or
hum.

Think about using
sensory snacks. Snacks
that are crunchy or
chewy,
water bottles that can be
sucked on will all help
regulate and calm.

Release tension – rip
paper, wring a wet towel
out,
squeeze some
dough/putty/climbing
grip strengtheners.

Get them to
journal. What
works to soothe
and quieten their
nervous
systems? Draw,
collage, paint,
dance.

Experiment with
mindfulness
(do-bemindful.com)



Regulation

Movement will help use up some of the energy activated by the nervous system for mobilisation against threat.

Think about heavy work type movement. Gardening is great for this. Get out in nature or the school field, notice all the things you can see, smell, hear, and feel. There are lots more ideas on **gonoodle.com**. Walking, stretching, yoga, baking, personal fitness routines, personal bests, stress ball, cycling, rocking.

Managing Separation

Think about a transitional object. This is something you can swap between you to form a relational bridge.

Parents/carers email photos to school

Decorate each other's water

Parents/carers spray bottles

perfume/aftershave on uniform

Sew tags/buttons into uniform

Managing Separation

Read "The Invisible String" in class to all the children. Help them understand that they stay connected even when they are apart.

If a child is really struggling, instigate a predictable time when they can contact home with a short phone call.

Remember to phase transitions when necessary.

Being open with feelings

Adults

Keep in mind exploring sadness and loss. We need to be ready to acknowledge and process what we have collectively been through. We need to support each other to articulate the losses, big and small, that we have all felt at this time.

- Provide supervision for staff, do through 'staff support teams' or maybe through educational psychology service..
- Provide a confidential space for staff - through a school counsellor where possible.

Being open with feelings

Pupils

Create a **sadness tree and an appreciation wall**. A collective art project where the children can add what they have felt sad or glad about during lockdown and the return to school.

Give each child a feelings book that they keep in their drawer and can draw or write in. Introduce this all together. Let them know this is a way of letting you know how they are doing, and if there is anything they want to talk about. Check in with their books at the end of each day. If something comes up that it might help to talk to the children about, respect the shared space of the book by keeping it anonymous.

Use **worry boxes**, diaries, post boxes, and friends. Decorate a shoe box and choose a name for it. Draw, write, sculpt worries to be placed in the box. Worries can also be represented by butterflies, worms, warriors, weights or stones.

Use **happy boxes**, record and celebrate their happy, special and positive memories, events and dreams.

What's tricky? What are they enjoying? **Look at *being* not just saying**. Let's listen with all our sense to what their behaviours are telling us – the body doesn't lie. Keep in mind that there may be miscuing, we need to look beyond what is on the surface.

Sit with what they communicate, **stay with the uncomfortable** for longer than feels comfortable.

Commentate! Describe what is happening and how they might be feeling. **Notice out loud what we see in the children:** "I can see/hear that you're feeling..."

Guess tentatively what might be going on using "I'm wondering..." and "Help me to understand what's happening right now..." **Curiosity leads to self-awareness**, and self-awareness leads to self-control.

Guess tentatively what might be going on using...

"I'm wondering..."

"Help me to understand what's happening right now..."

"I wonder if..."

"If I were in that situation, I might feel..."

"Tell me if I got it wrong, but it sounds as if you feel...because..."

"I'm not surprised that you are feeling ... when..."

"I am not sure but..."

"I wonder if your body could talk, what would it say..."

Recommended Reading:

Bloom, S.L & Farragher. B (2013) Restoring Sanctuary. A new Operating System for Trauma Informed Systems. OUP: USA.

Bombèr, L.M (2011) What About Me? Inclusive Strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties through the school day. Worth Publishing: London

Bombèr, L.M (2020) Know Me to Teach Me. Worth Publishing: London

Golding K.S; Phillips S; Bombèr L.M. (To be published autumn 2020) Working with Relational Trauma in Education: A Practical Guide to Using Dyadic Developmental Practice with Educators, Children and Families. Jessica Kingsley: London

Maté, G. (2019) When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress Vermillion: USA

Porges, S & Dana. D (2018) Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory. W.W. Norton: USA

Siegel D. & Byrson T. (2020) The Power of Showing Up: Scribe: UK

Taransaud D. (2011) You Think I'm Evil. Worth Publishing: London

Van Der Kolk, B (2015) The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma. Penguin Books: Great Britain



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