

Trauma responses - what can I do?

FOR CARERS

Even when things are going well, something may trigger kids to start Heating Up or Boiling. Here are some tips on turning the heat down safely.

Be Aware

Pay attention to your kids' emotions, behaviours and awareness. At the first sign of Heating Up, support them to use their calming strategies.

Scaling Feelings

Talk to your kids about the intensity of their emotions. Use a simple scale of colours, numbers or temperatures to help them communicate.

Use your Tools

Use strategies from your kids' Managing Emotions Guide to help them settle back into the Chilled stage. If you're not sure what is triggering a trauma response, complete a Moment-by-Moment assessment.

It's not about you

Avoid rationalising, arguing and becoming defensive. Remember, don't take the behaviour personally. The best strategy is to remain calm and neutral. Using coregulation to help your kids settle back into the Chilled stage. Use your Centring Plan to stay calm when responding.

Calm the environment

Remove objects that may hurt your kids or others. Reduce stimulation in the environment by removing others from the space if necessary, but try not to move the Boiling child/teen. Turn off music and televisions, and dim the lights.

Keep it simple

Use clear, simple language – don't overload your kids with complex instructions or discussions about their behaviour. Remember, now is the time to calm, not teach.

Signals of safety

Remind your kids that you are there for them. Use reassuring but simple statements like 'you are safe' and 'we'll get through this'.



Time In

This means staying with your kids when they are overwhelmed or struggling to manage their emotions and behaviours. Time In helps kids learn to cope with big feelings, and shows that you will not punish or abandon them when things get tough.

During Time In:

- stay calm and take charge
- listen closely and respond with empathy
- stay close to your child/teen, offering the level of touch or closeness they are comfortable with
- use a soothing voice. Reassure them that this will pass, and they will soon feel calm again
- praise them for calming down, no matter how long it takes

Returning to Chilled

The Cooling stage is an important time, as it helps kids return fully to the Chilled stage. Focus on:

- reassuring them of your ongoing support
- helping them name their feelings
- helping them to determine what triggered their behaviour including the feelings associated with this.
- helping them to understand what has happened and talk about their behaviour - keep your language positive and simple
- problem-solving with them for next time
- helping them update their Managing Emotions Guide

If you're still trying to identify triggers for your kids' trauma responses, this is the time to complete a Moment-by-Moment assessment.