

Supporting the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Students with Complex Needs

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Language

Team Teach acknowledges that the language we use is changing and varies across cultures, regions and industries. We aim to be respectful and responsive with the language we use and encourage the same from our participants.



Setting the Scene

If you work with students with complex needs...

ASD, ADHD, ID, Sensory Impairment, Physical Disability, Complex Communication Needs, etc...

And you are experiencing behaviours of concern...

Disengagement, Emotional Dysregulation, Aggression, etc...



Fight



Flight



Freeze



Giggle

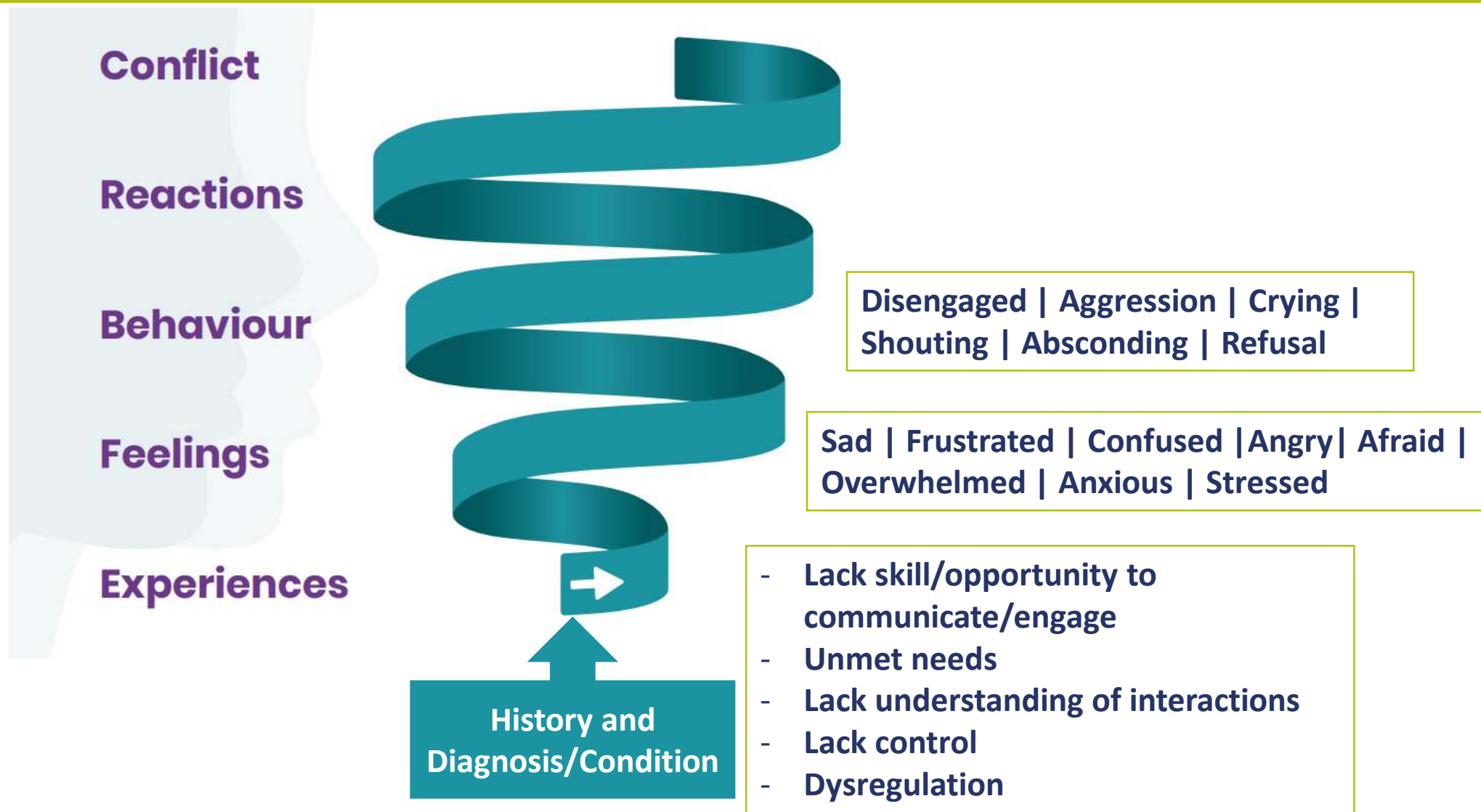


Flock

And want to see improvements.

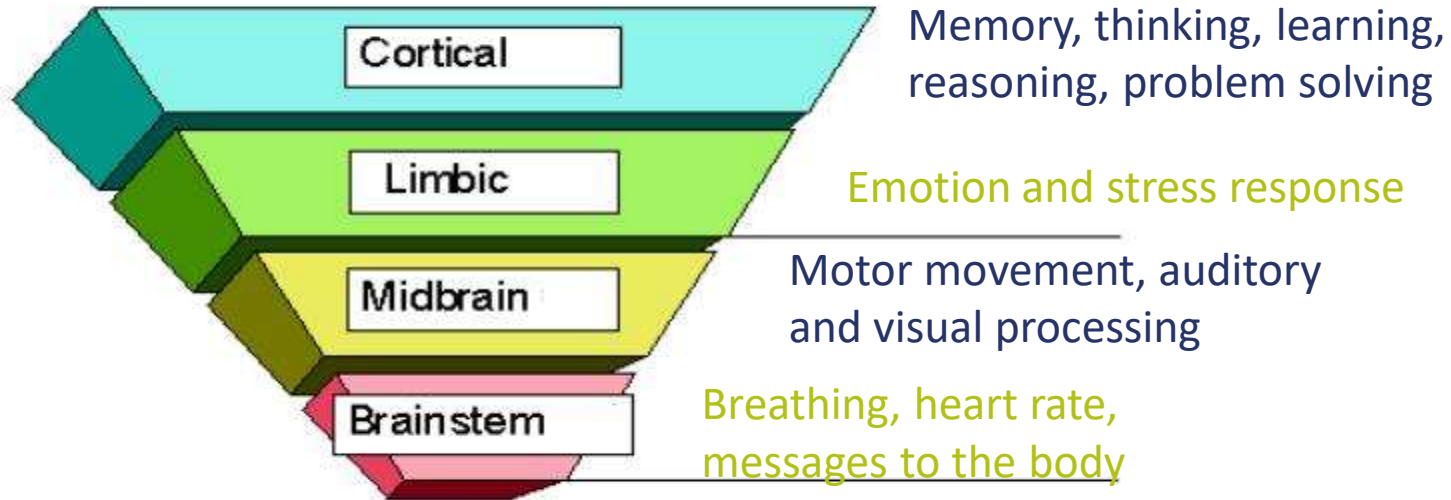
Wellbeing, Engagement, Relationships, Safety, Academic Outcomes

The Conflict Spiral



The Neuroscience

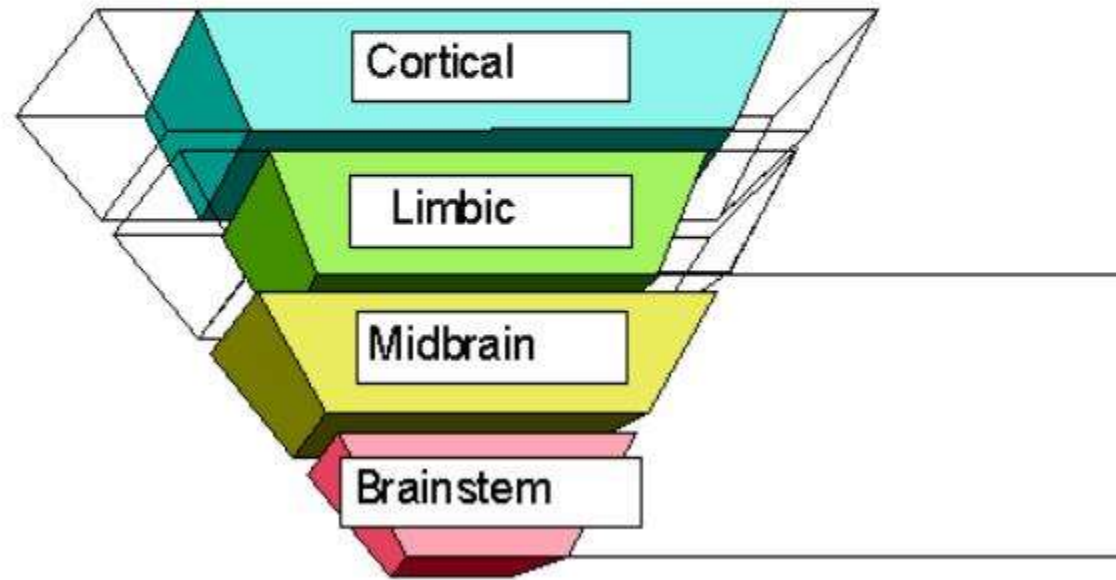
Optimal Developmental Experience



Bruce Perry M.D., Ph.D. 1997

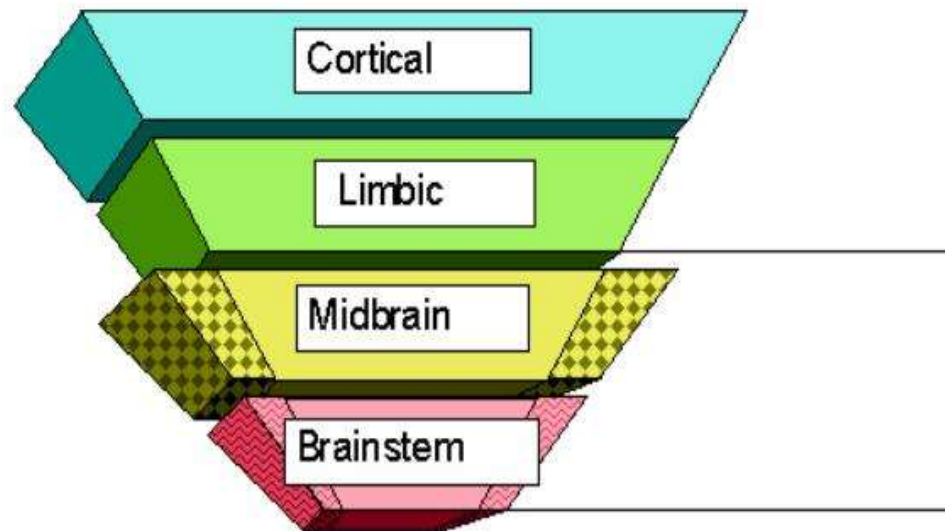
The Neuroscience

Developmental Neglect

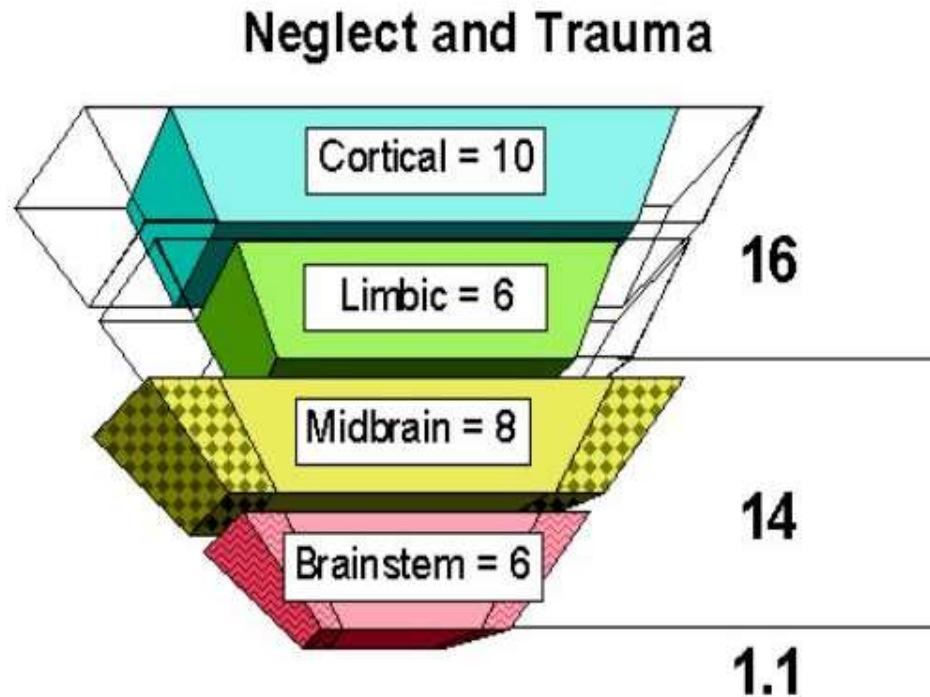


The Neuroscience

Developmental trauma



The Neuroscience



When the developing brain is both deprived of sensory stimuli *and* experiences traumatic stress, the brainstem/ midbrain to cortical/limbic ratio is profoundly altered.



Impact on Sensory Stimuli

- Receptive Language Deficit
- Sensory impairment
- Sensory aversion
- Restrictive repetitive behaviour
- Indirect interaction
- Physical disability

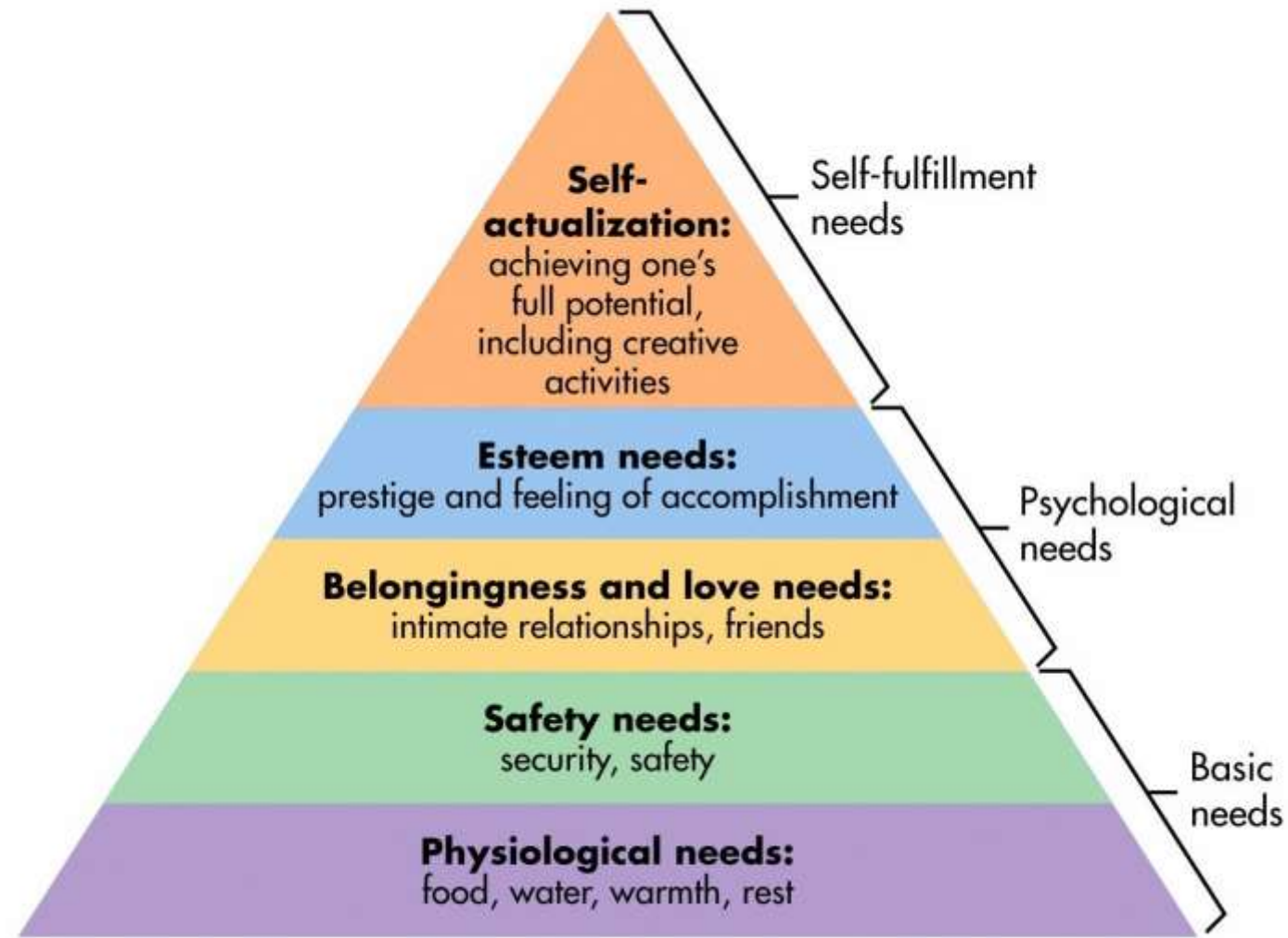
Traumatic Stress

- Lack of control
- Lack of information
- Lack of understanding/comprehension
- Responses to impulsive or dysregulated behaviour
- Invasive experiences
- Pain as part of a condition
- Inability to communicate pain/distress

Areas of Control

- **Experiences we create**
- **Responses to behaviour**
- **Recovery and Restoration after crisis**

Supporting Positive Experiences



Supporting Positive Experiences

- Consider sensory and biological needs
- Support feelings of safety
- Relationships first
- Appropriately support receptive and expressive communication
- Engage based on interests and abilities
- Validate and develop self-worth

Consider with Caution

- Prompt dependant programs and interventions
- School classroom expectations that prioritise preferred behaviour over engaged behaviour
- “but they have to...”
- Prioritising product over process

Tip

Conduct classroom observations to compare the ratio of positive to negative/corrective language used



Experiences that Trigger Behaviours of Concern

- What is the function of the behaviour? (don't guess)
- Can we change the experience/environment?
- Can we support positive engagement with the experience/environment?
- Do we need to avoid the experience/environment?
 - Is it necessary/functional?
 - Will it set up for success or failure?

Responding to Behaviours of Concern

Behaviours of concern often contribute to the escalation of others



This can lead to impulsive or escalated reactions



This can further escalate the individual leading to conflict and crisis



This can contribute to trauma and strengthening pathways to the midbrain

Responding to Behaviours of Concern

“But they have to learn”...

Learning happens when using the cortex. Forcing compliance during escalation is more likely to strengthen pathways to the midbrain.

“They need to do the activity”...

If they are escalated, any assessment would not be an accurate reflection of ability.

“You’re rewarding the behaviour”...

This is a consideration, but one that can be addressed through an FBA and planning. The immediate goal is de-escalation.

Individualising Recovery

- Time
- Space
- Sensory
- Rest
- Food/drink
- Activity
- Company
- Communication

WHAT DO
THEY NEED?

WHAT
ABOUT
STAFF AND
PEERS

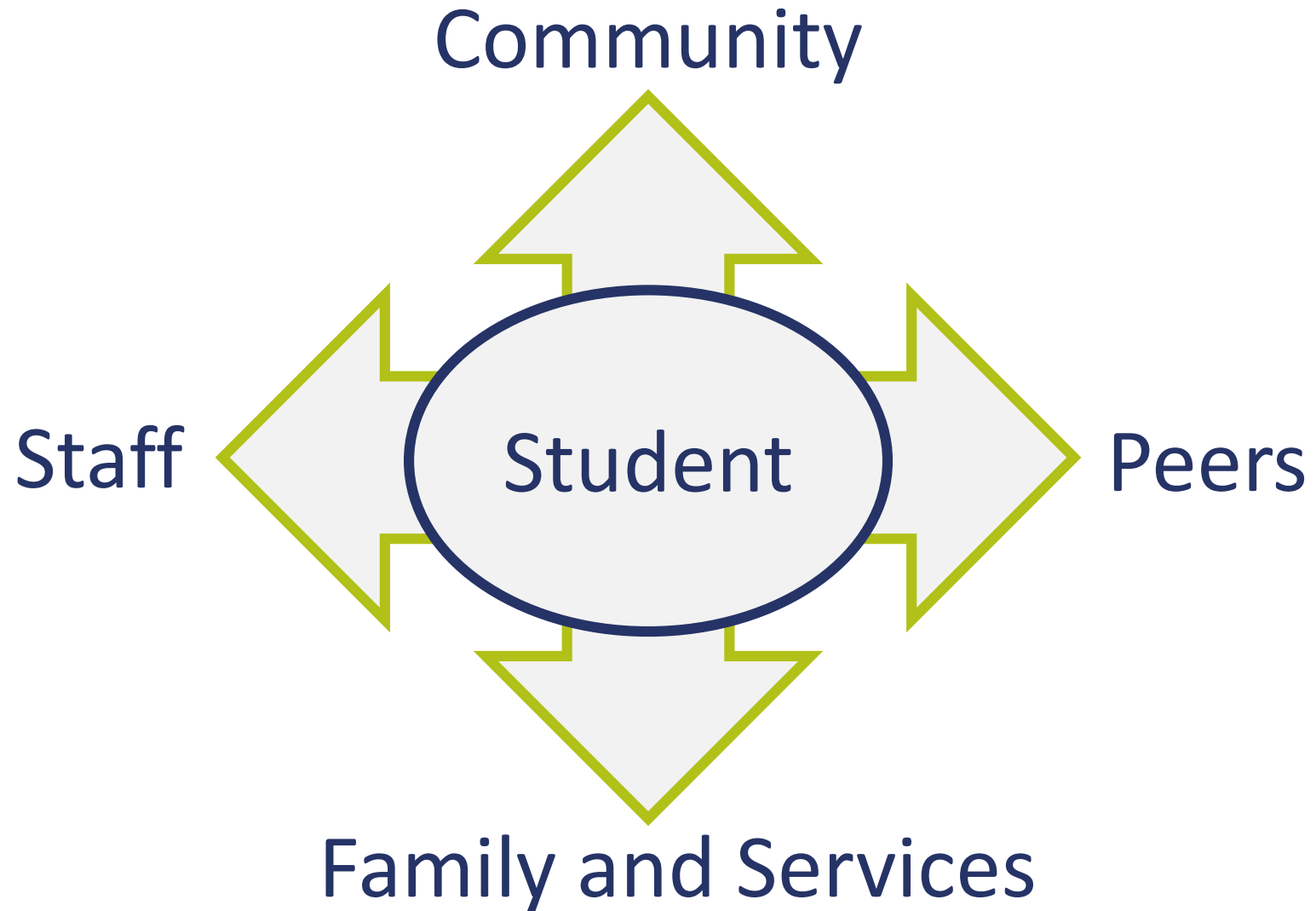
Complex Communication Needs Alternative

- “I can see something has happened ...”
- “Let me hold that for you”
- “When you’re ready...”
- “Maybe you’re...” ... pause
- “Maybe you’d like...” ... pause

Consider use of ALD



Restoration-Relational Re-engagement



Restoration-Relational Re-engagement

What are the barriers?

- Fear/trauma
 - Of student/staff
 - Of impact
- Anger/frustration
 - At student
 - At situation
 - At admin
 - At family and/or support services
- Hopelessness
 - Over cyclic circumstance
 - Over lack of outcomes

Restoration-What?

- What is the best agreed outcome?
- What do we need to happen to achieve this?
- What can we change?/What do we need to accept?
- What do we need to talk about? What don't we need to talk about?
- What interaction will best support restoration?

Restoration-When?

- Is everyone ready?
- What interim measures/supports are in place?
- Which happens first, re-engagement or restoration?
- What is happening before and after restoration?

Restoration-Where?

- What is the association with the space?
- Does it support regulation?
- Does it support safety in case of escalation?

Restoration- Who?

- Who has been affected?
- Are they ready to reengage?
- Will their presence help or hinder?
- Is it too many people?
- Do we need separate opportunities for restoration with different affected parties?



Additional Considerations

- Legal Framework
- Department and school guidance
- Effective Documented Plans and Reports that reflect de-escalation strategies
- Staff support mechanisms
- Team approach

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