



**NATP**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF THERAPEUTIC PARENTS



*Centre of Excellence in*  
**CHILD TRAUMA**

# CPR

## HELPING REBUILD BRAINS

We have all heard of CPR, right? Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation – it's a life saver. Well, now I want to talk about a different sort of CPR that can help to rewire, reactivate and build brains!

### CONSISTENCY PREDICTABILITY RELIABILITY

Wait, what? No, it can't be that simple, surely?

OK. First of all, it **IS** simple. But amazingly complex. Here's why:

We know now that our experiences build our ideas and our Internal Working Model (way of understanding the ourselves, others and the world). Our earliest experiences received through our senses activate pathways in our brain and give us survival information. For children that have suffered abuse and trauma, this can lead to a brain wired to survive. Thus:



- **I am** – bad, worthless, unlovable, stupid, rubbish, lonely, scared, invisible. My life is in danger.
- **Others (adults) are** – scary, dangerous, cause me pain, untrustworthy, unreliable, unpredictable.
- **The world is** – dangerous, hostile, unwelcoming, scary. I have to remain alert all the time to stay alive.

When we introduce Consistency, Predictability and Reliability into our routines and responses and approach our children in a caring, empathic and therapeutic manner this activates different pathways. They are not as strong as the old ideas, but gradually they take hold. At first this feels very hard for our children, and it's hard for us too, because it feels like we are banging our head against a brick wall. Actually, our feelings start to mirror each other's...



- **I am** - confused. This doesn't fit. I feel wobbly and out of control. **I have to take charge.**
- **Others (adults) are** – confusing. They seem to care. That can't be right, it's probably a trick. It will all change. I must keep my guard up
- **The world is** – not how it used to be. I don't understand. I think my head will explode while I try to make sense of it.
- **Parents find they have much the same feelings.** Try not to worry, it's a sign of connection to your child

Over time, as we keep to our routines, our boundaries, and provide a nurturing therapeutic environment the new pathways become stronger, more resilient. The old pathways remain, but they are activated less frequently and usually under extreme stress or as a result of an early memory/feeling triggering a response. It is hard, but children can resolve their conflicts with support, and this will enable them to have a different kind of life and relationships to the one they were stuck in, through no fault of their own. Then:



- **I am** – OK. Pretty good actually. I am learning that I am loveable, I have skills, I am caring. Sometimes I still feel bad.
- **Adults are** – Usually loving and helpful, especially my parents. Its ok be careful with strangers. My parents can help me sort things out.
- **The world is** – not so scary. I know I can have help to work things out. Parts of it are even quite fun!
- **Parents feel much the same, but as parents and child/ren continue the process they can find joy in each other.**

As Dan Seigel says, Neurones that fire together, wire together. Don't forget –



**CPR**

**Makes a healthy brain and a happy  
heart**