

# BRAINSTEM CALMERS

THE 'NEUROSEQUENTIAL MODEL OF THERAPEUTICS', DEVELOPED BY DR BRUCE PERRY, IS A FRAMEWORK THAT HELPS US TO KNOW HOW TO HELP CHILDREN WHO HAVE SUFFERED EARLY TRAUMA AND LOSS.

Children's brains organize from bottom to top, with the lower parts of the brain (brainstem aka "survival brain") developing earliest, and the cortical areas (thinking brain) much later. A traumatized child's brain may become stuck in the brainstem, and therefore swing between their survival modes of fight/flight/freeze/collapse. One of the most helpful ways to move children from these super-high anxiety states, to their calmer 'thinking brain', is patterned, repetitive rhythmic activity. Creating a therapeutic web of relationships around the child together with regular brainstem calming activities can, over time, help a child's brain and body to learn that they are safe.

## BRAINSTEM CALMING ACTIVITIES NEED TO BE:

- Relational (offered by a safe adult)
- Relevant (developmentally-matched to the child rather than matched to their actual age)
- Repetitive (patterned)
- Rewarding (pleasurable)
- Rhythmic (resonant with neural patterns)
- Respectful (of the child and family)

Examples of brainstem calming activities include: walking, dancing, running, skipping, jumping, drumming, tapping, singing, drawing, breathing, and listening to music.

The best way to use these activities is to weave them into the child's daily routine so that they have them little and often, every day. Many of them can also be offered as part of a group activity.



INFORMATION COURTESY OF  
BEACON HOUSE THERAPEUTIC SERVICES  
& TRAUMA TEAM | 2022  
WWW.BEACONHOUSE.ORG.UK