



Integrating Mindfulness and Creative Play in Trauma and Therapy Work

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Sorry, you can't pet me.



What do we mean by trauma?

- It is different for everyone.
- It is about the individual's experience.
- Much of the trauma in one's life, people do not recognize or label as such.
 - Cumulative trauma
 - Community violence



Trauma

An event of intensity, brutality, or magnitude of horror that it would overwhelm any human being's ability to cope.

Post traumatic behaviors are often a normal response to an abnormal event



Trauma

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XasCFJEHoMA>



How trauma impacts people

- ❖ Hypervigilance
- ❖ Trouble with sleeping, eating, focusing
- ❖ Difficulty trusting & forming attachments
- ❖ Depression, anxiety
- ❖ Physical & behavioral responses



How trauma impacts kids

- concentration, attention & focus
 - unable to think clearly or make sense of what people are thinking.
 - unfinished projects, forgetfulness
 - memory blocks, dissociative symptoms
- attachment, loss of control & hypervigilance
 - Easily startled
 - Screaming
 - Fleeing, fighting, freezing
- regressive behaviors, overprotectiveness, avoidant
- depression and anxiety
- sleeping and eating disturbances
- recurring thoughts and or nightmares
- fearful, phobic, worried
- unexplainable crying, sad, withdrawn, detached
- anger & irritability



Trauma and our current culture

Everything is always on.

Political and divided

Triggers are everywhere

Trauma triggers: anything that sends a person back/ reignites that



**Examples of trauma
themes in our current
culture.**

Induces trauma
Connected to traumas

- #MeToo
- Immigration
- Black Lives Matter
- School shooting



Therapeutic Third

1. Neutral

2. Feel worse after

Try to take the grief away...

3. Feel better after

Allow darkness & moving backward first...



In work with traumatic losses, people want those grieving to move to a lighter place for their own comfort.

Darkness before light

Naturally though, in grief

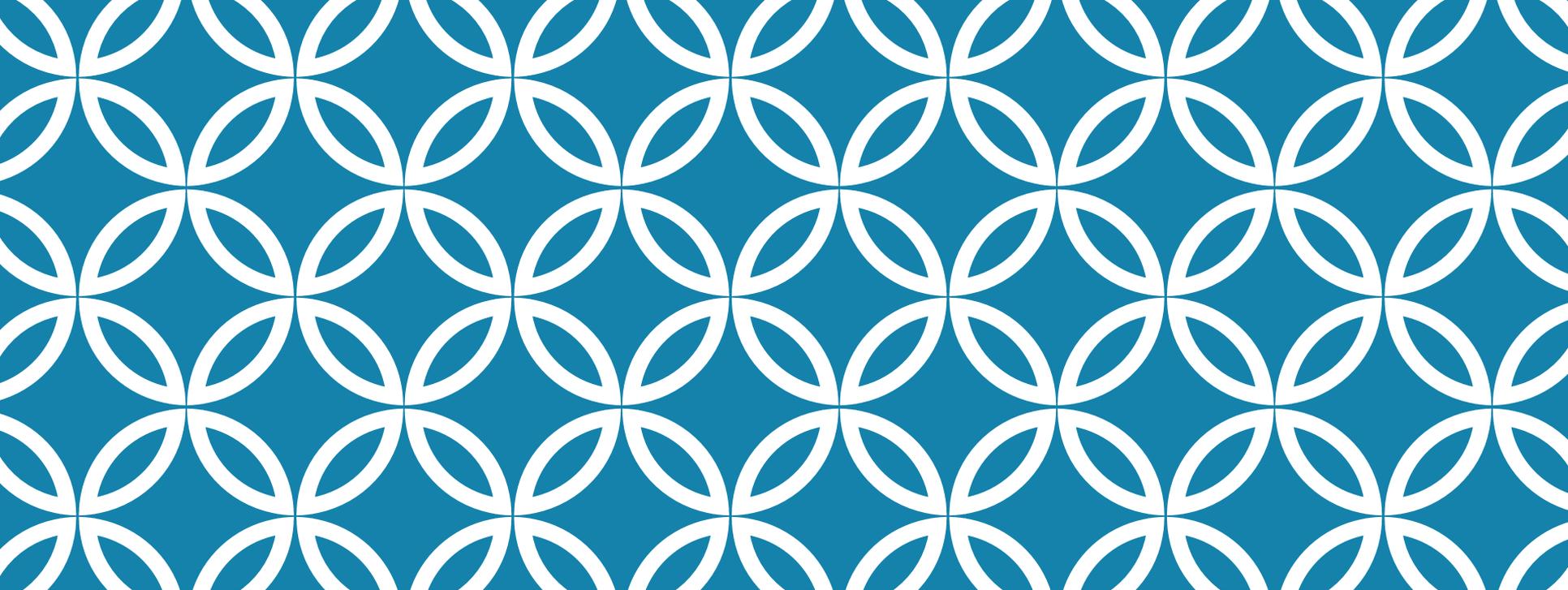
- darkness proceeds
light
- we have to say
goodbye before hello
- go backward before
forward



Darkness before light

There are no rewards for speed.

We have to learn to be present in that darkness with them and create space for the dark places; to go backward, say hello and then goodbye.



Mindfulness |

WHEN I THINK OF MINDFULNESS...

- ✓Buddha
- ✓Yogis
- ✓Lotus position
- ✓Silence
- ✓Torture
- ✓Fad
- ✓Nice, but not for me
- ✓Impossible



MISNOMERS ABOUT MINDFULNESS

- Not thinking about anything
- A religious activity
- Requires at least 30 minutes day
- Has to be done in a special place
- Has to be taught by a guru

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?



Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from paying attention to what one is experiencing in the present moment in an open and accepting way (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

It all starts with a breath...



WHY I USE MINDFULNESS



No cost to clients (and minimal to counselors)

Not punitive

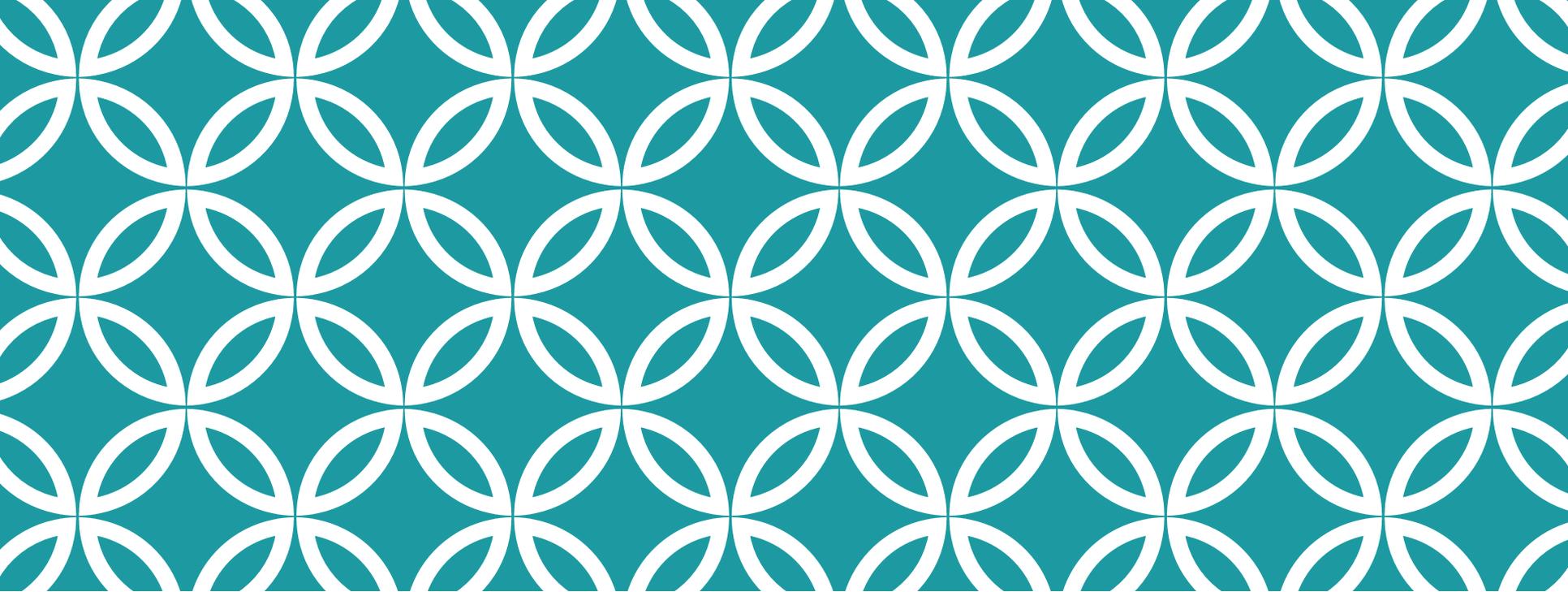
Can be done anywhere

Parental support not required (but always helpful)

Empirical support

Transferable throughout lifespan

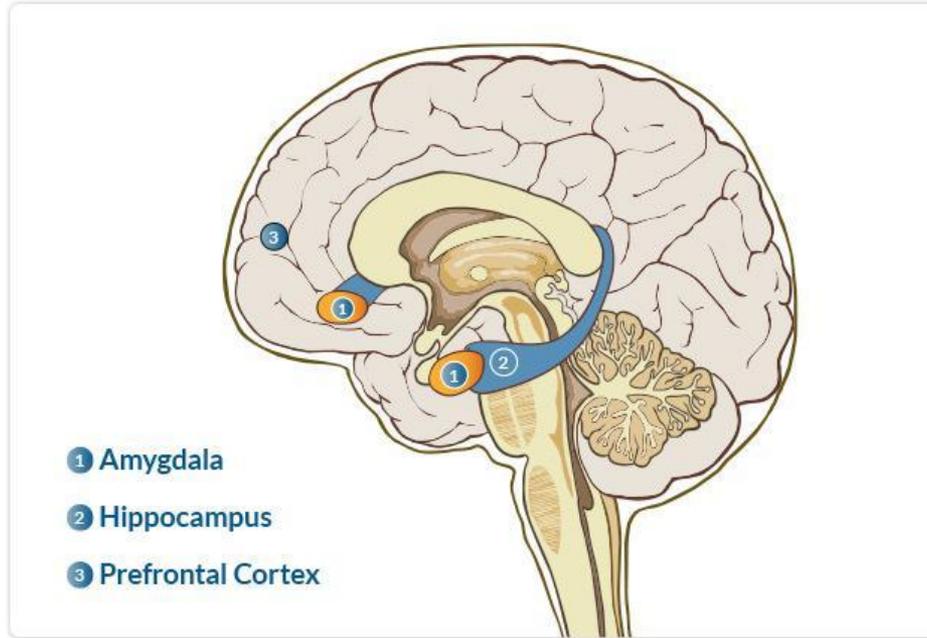
Not disorder specific



THE WHY AND HOW OF MINDFULNESS

Our brains love us and want
us to be better!

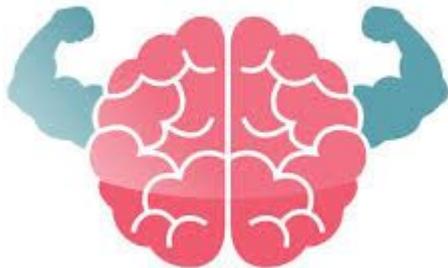
BRAINS



Why Teach Kids About Their Brains?



1. Kids love knowledge!
2. Gives children power by taking away the notion they can't control themselves.



The Brain Song

Sung to the tune of *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean*

My brain is so very important.

It helps me do most everything.

Located here in my head,

It's why I can think, choose, and sing.

My brain, my brain, it's so important to
me, to me.

My brain, my brain, it's so important to
me.

PARTS & PURPOSE

Amygdala – “Security Guard”

- Regulates our emotional state
- (Know any Amys who are emotional?)

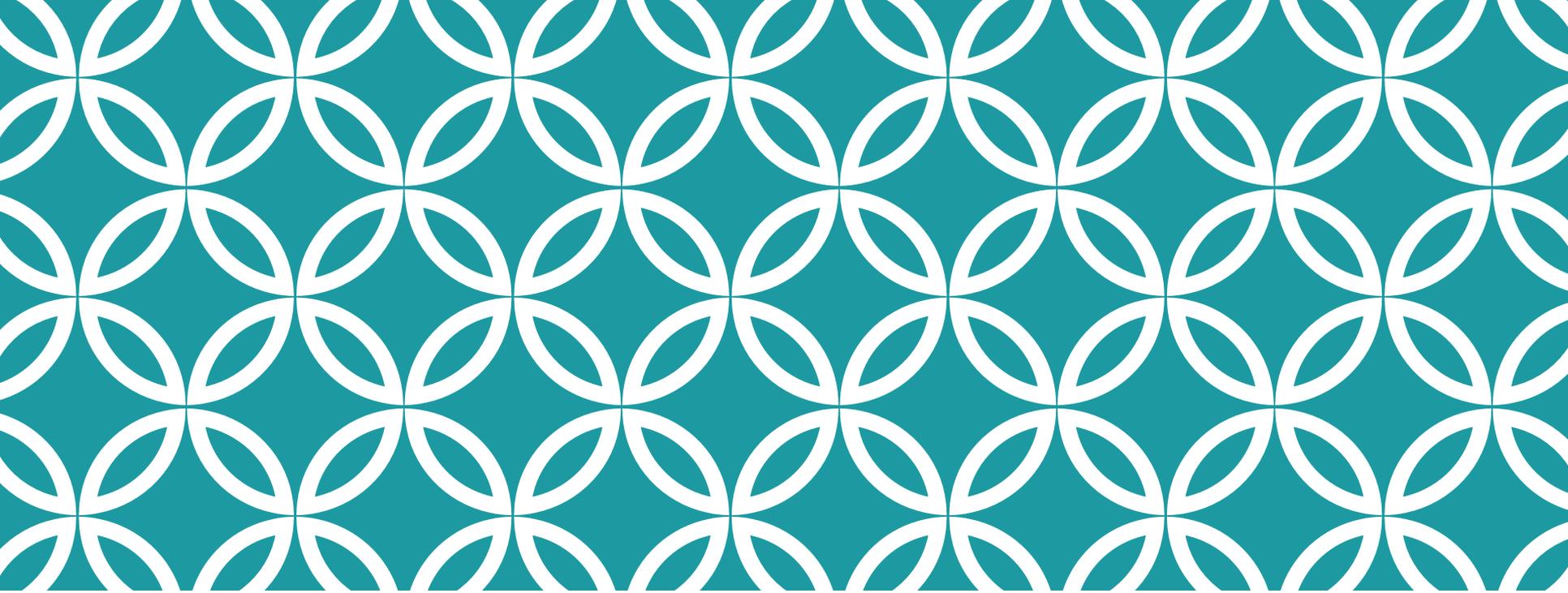
Hippocampus – “Saver of memories”

- Manages response to fear and threats, storage vault of memory and learning
- (You would remember if you saw a hippo on campus.)

Prefrontal cortex – “Wise Leader”

- Reasoning, learning and thinking center of brain
- (Core functions associated with brains.)





EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL BENEFITS





Increases

Meta cognition awareness

Positive affect

Working memory

Response flexibility

Information processing speed

Decreases

Rumination

Reactivity

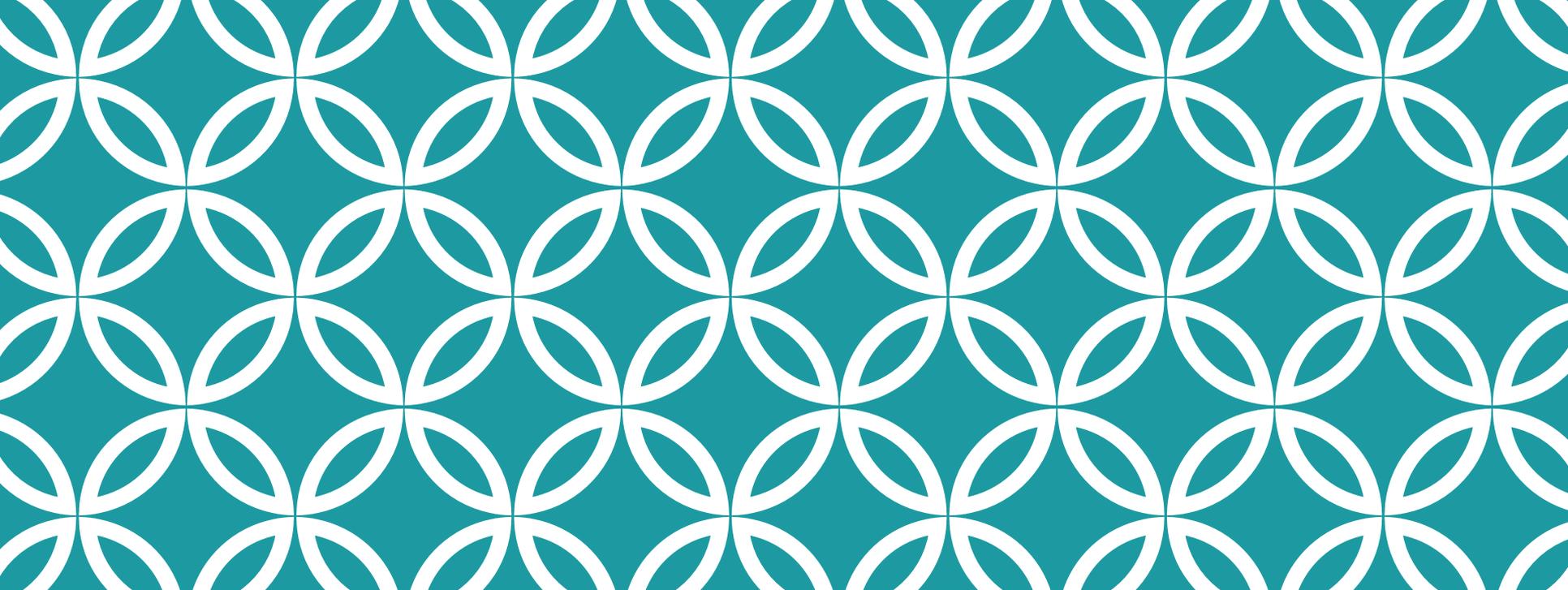
Depressed symptoms



RESEARCH SHOWS STATES
EXPERIENCED DURING
MINDFULNESS PRACTICE CAN
BECOME EFFORTLESS TRAITS
OVER TIME.

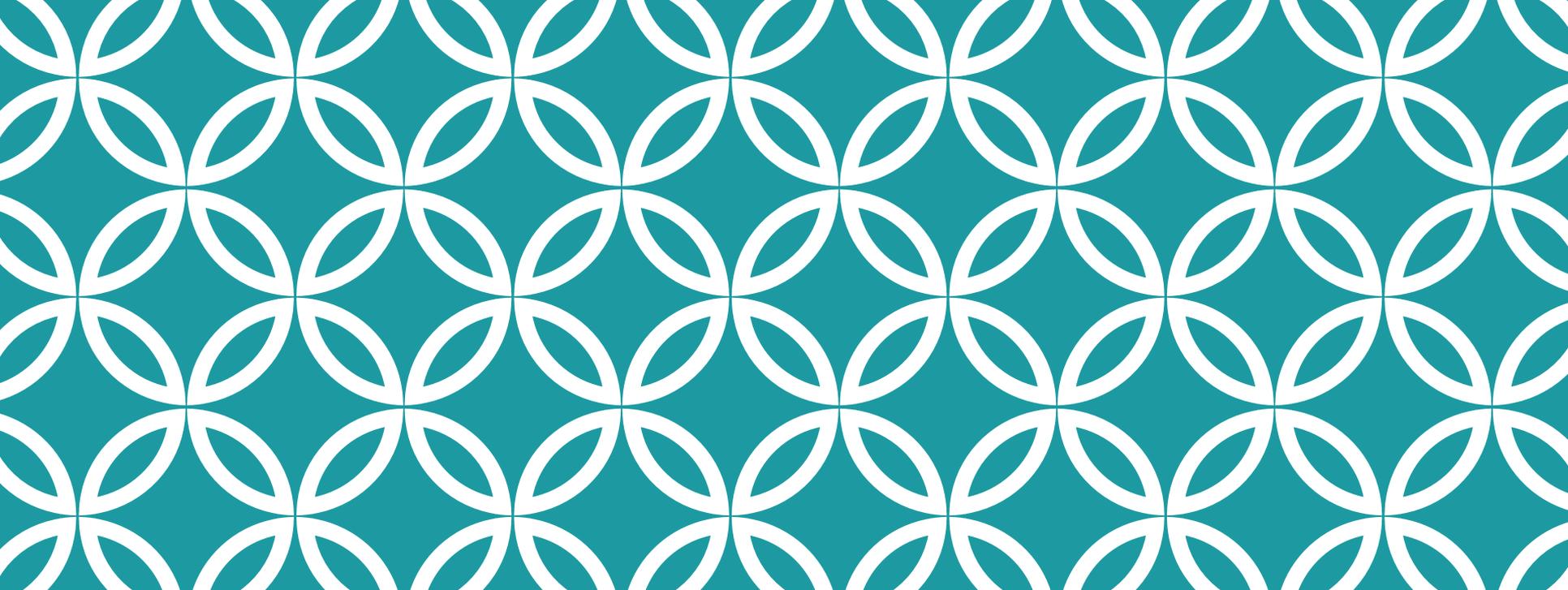
Some Important Notes

- **If you don't buy into mindfulness, don't use it.**
- **If you have a teacher who doesn't buy into it even after you have tried to teach them, don't have them do it.**
- **The best facilitators are the ones who practice mindfulness themselves.**



RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES





ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

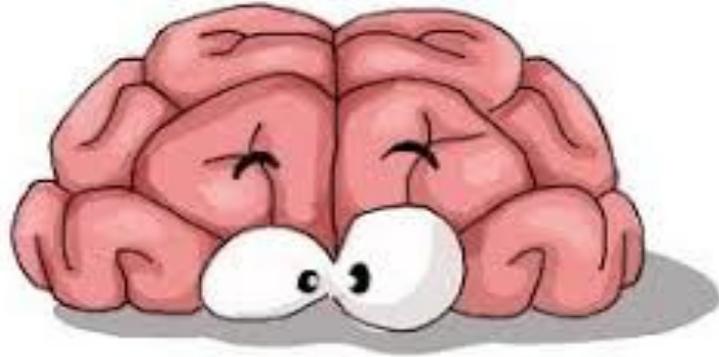
(ACT)

WHAT IS ACT?

ACT is a therapy approach that uses acceptance and mindfulness processes to produce greater psychological flexibility.

Psychological flexibility is the ability to be in the present moment with full awareness and openness to experience and to take action guided by values.

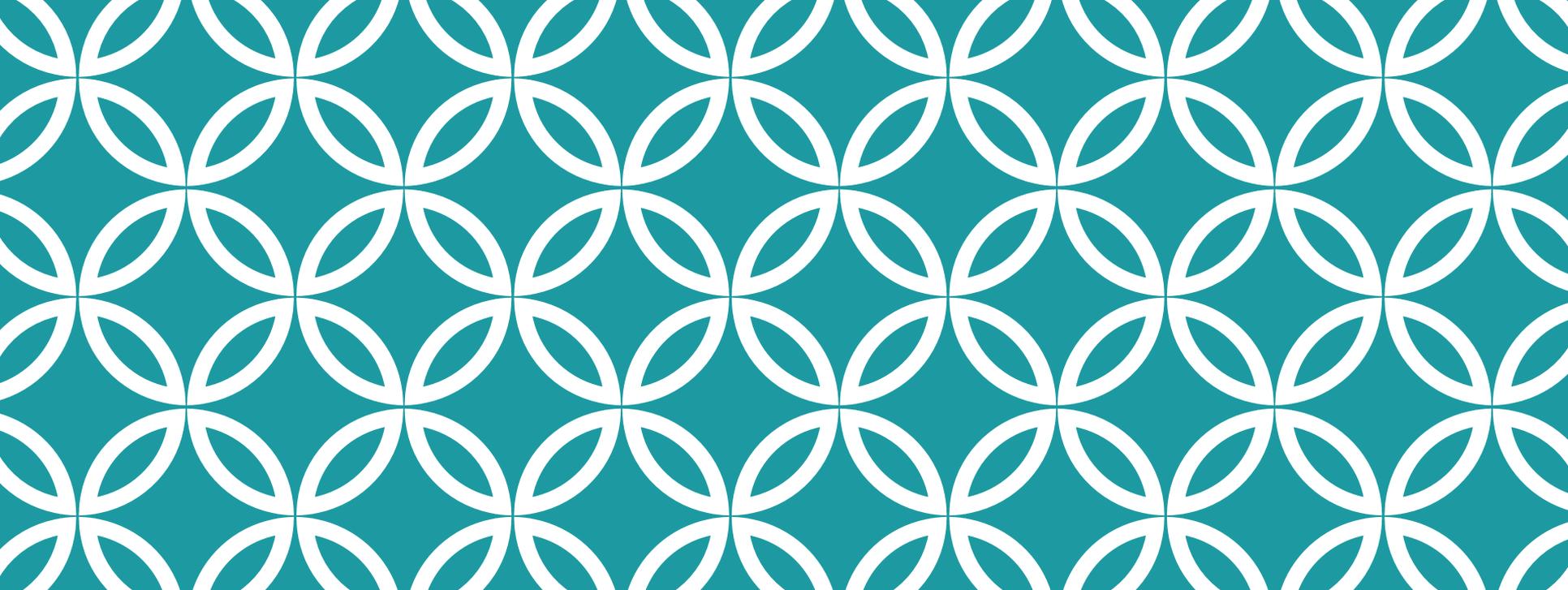
OBSERVING SELF



Adapted from Somaplay

DEFUSION TECHNIQUES

- Having the thought
- Singing
- Watching on TV



A Narrative Approach

A conversation with our pain

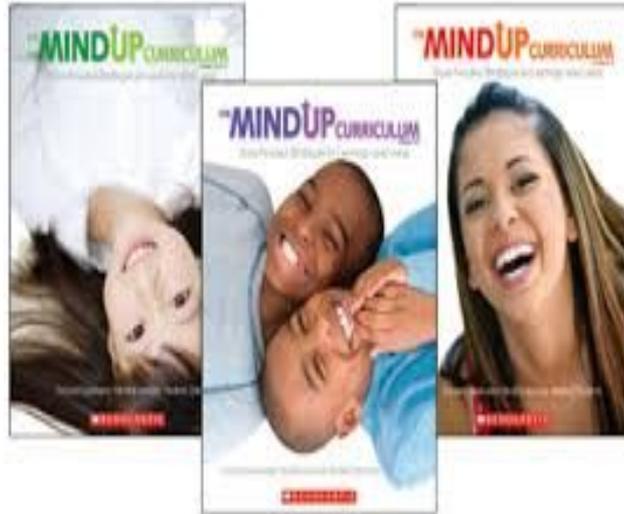


WORRY MONSTER

Questions to Ask

- How do you feel today?
- What do you need today?
- What causes sadness for you?
- What creates embarrassment or guilt for you?
- When do you feel scared?
- What do you need from me?
- How can I help you feel better?
- How can we work together?

MIND UP



BASICS OF MINDUP



The MindUP Program



YOGA





YOGA BOOKS

- *Baby's Big World Yoga* by Jenny Burrill
- *Yoga for You* by Rebecca Rissman
- *Yoga Bunny* by Brian Russo
- *Good Morning Yoga* by Mariam Gates

YOGA CALM





MISCELLANEOUS EXERCISES

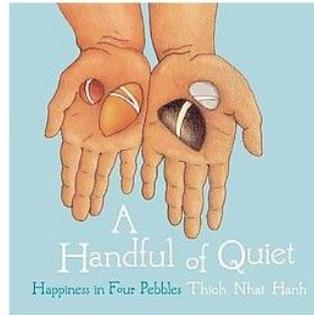
Belly breathing

Leaves on a stream

Body maps



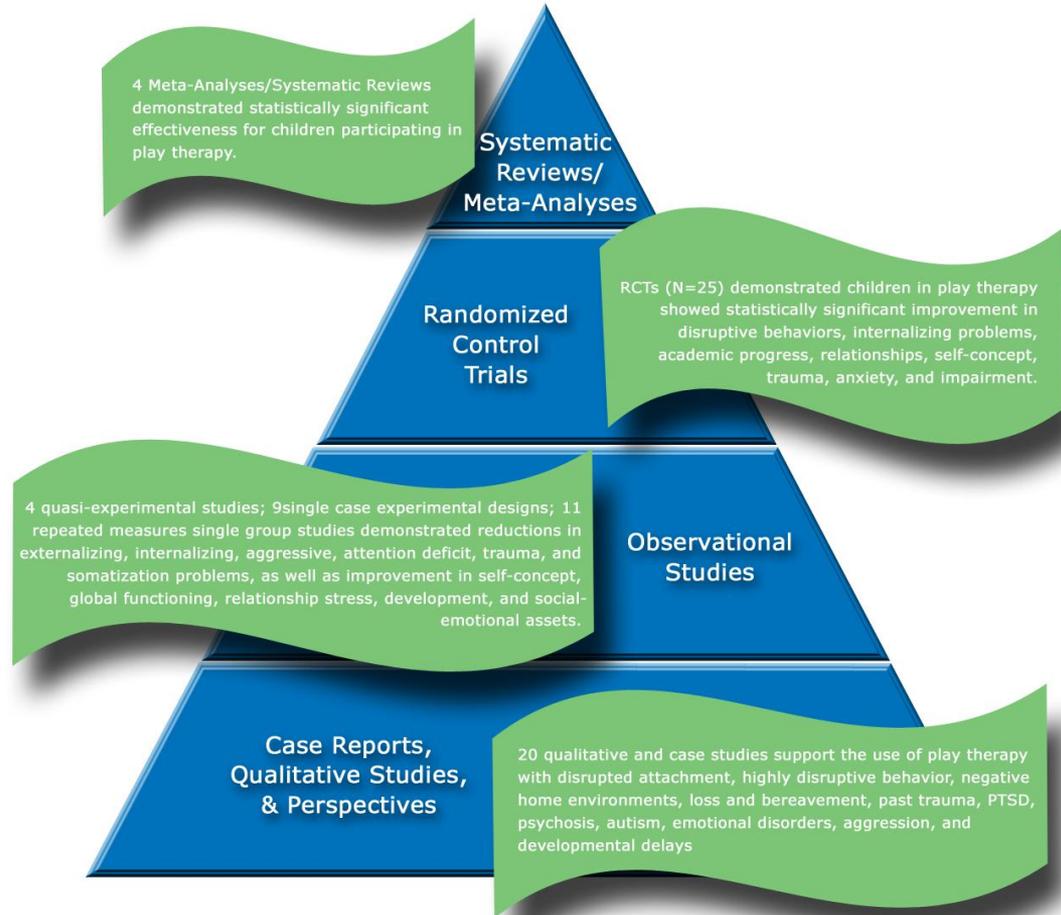
A HANDFUL OF QUIET
BY
THICH NHAT HANH



Play therapy is the systematic use of a theoretical model to establish an interpersonal process wherein trained play therapists use the therapeutic powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development (APT, 2015).

Evidence based info

Ray, D. C, & McCullough, R. (2015; revised 2016). *Evidence-based practice statement: Play therapy* (Research report). Retrieved from Association for Play Therapy website:
<http://www.a4pt.org/?page=EvidenceBased>



A view on Play Therapy



Using what works for you and for them...

I like reading, writing, art....
Hopefully I find one they like. If they like music or sports, then I learn from them.

Follow the child and provide structure.

Set goals and know how your interventions connect to the goals, but do not hammer the connection into them,

**Play therapy is all about the
metaphor.**





metphors



Trauma and play

- Some things are too tough for words.
 - 9-11 example
 - PTSD- hyperalertness, loss of short term memory
 - survival instincts and survivor guilt
- Words are not the primary source of communication for kids.
- not enough to just deal with words
- or words and emotions....
 - safety and comfort matter and must come first



Start in a place and come back to that place

what makes you at peace

what happened

who you remember from that and how you

remember them then

what you want for them ...

come back to your peacefulness



Processing questions

- What are you most worried about now?
- What was the worst part then?
- What is the worst part now?

A couple more things to remember with play therapy

Boundaries

Limits

Structure



Duck activity.



Building a safe place for your duck....

Our job is to create a safe place for mourning where its ok to be in the darkness

judgement- free

shame- free



Giving credit where credit is due

Alan Woelfeldt - Center for Loss and Life Transition

<https://www.centerforloss.com/>

Terry Kottman - The Encouragement Zone

<http://www.encouragementzone.com/>

National Center for Trauma and Loss in Children

<https://www.starr.org/training/tlc>

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
(TF-CBT)

<https://tfcbt.org/>