

Brain Building for Logan

*A brain building resource
developed by and for
Logan's people*



We pay respect to the Traditional Owners and custodians of the Land on which our community lives, works and plays, the Yuggera and Yugambeh language groups. We recognise our First Nations people as the original storytellers and knowledge holders and acknowledge their continued connection to the lands and waterways of this Country. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and seek their guidance and wisdom to ensure all children get the best start in life.

We extend our respect to all Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Logan and across Australia. As a collective, we are steadfast in our efforts to work together to improve the life outcomes of our jarjums and families by embedding First Nations First, putting children at the heart, and seeing community lead the way. We believe in First Nations First, which means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, families and jarjums feel like their Indigenous lives matter, respect is paramount, and they are heard.

Aunty Robyn Williams, Proud Traditional Owner, has provided her endorsement of the Acknowledgement of Country for the Brain Building Booklet.



Disclaimer: Indigenous ways of being doing and knowing are wholistic, relational culturally and spiritually connected understandings. Written descriptions do not encapsulate or convey our understandings. To truly understand our ways respectful interactions are needed to grow relationships so that place-based innovations can inform a productive knowing together.

We are all
brain builders



Logan Together thank the members of the Brain Building for Better Futures Co-Design team for the wisdom, time and energy they have shared in the development of the shared language and understanding for brain building in Logan.

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Brain Building for Logan

Our brains are incredible!

Pregnancy and childhood are critical stages for lifelong wellbeing. In the first few years of life, a child's brain builds over a million new connections every second. These connections help children grow healthy brains, strong bodies, and good relationships. But they can't do it alone — the people and experiences around them make a big difference.

We are all brain builders, from community members and parents and carers through to people that design and fund services and opportunities for others.

Every time we learn a little bit more about young brains, we become better equipped to support children and their families as well as the communities, workforces and systems around them. Doing this will give children and families in Logan the best chance to thrive and create a healthier community, as we continue to walk together for Logan's children.

We welcome you to be part of the Brain Building movement.

For more resources, check out:

logantogether.org.au/brainbuilding



Brain Building during pregnancy



What happens before birth shapes children's development in the early years and their health and wellbeing throughout life.

By supporting people during pregnancy, we do a lot to help our children have a healthy start to life.*

* L'Hôte, E., Hawkins, N., Kendall-Taylor, N. & Volmert, A., *Adding prenatal development to the core story of early development* (FrameWorks Institute, 2020).

Available via colab.thekids.org.au/SysSiteAssets/media-docs---colab/prenatal_corestory.pdf

Ideas for supporting: Brain Building during Pregnancy

Stay active, go for a walk or do other gentle exercise

Respond to your baby's kicks by gently touching your belly where they kick

Gently rub, touch or massage your/their belly

Talk and sing to your baby

Play calming music to your baby

Eat healthy foods

Talk to your partner, family member or friend if you are feeling stressed

Avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs

Seek support from a midwife, General Practitioner (GP), or Community Hub to help with the pregnancy journey

Try to limit stress

More information



Connecting2u: a free text messaging service for parents and carers during pregnancy

childrens.health.qld.gov.au/our-work/connecting2u



Panda

panda.org.au



Your healthy pregnancy

health.gov.au/your-healthy-pregnancy



SMS4dads and SMS4DeadlyDads

sms4dads.com.au

sms4dads.com.au/deadly-dads



Pregnancy and Mental Health

beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/parenting/pregnancy



Bonding with your baby during pregnancy

pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/bonding-with-your-baby-during-pregnancy



Check out more resources here

This is how we build brains in Logan

These key Brain Building messages were developed by weaving science with community wisdom:



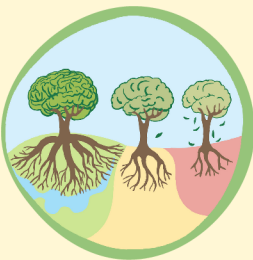
Strong and Safe Connections



Brain Foundations



Serve and Return



Harmful Stress



Traffic Control



Resilience Scale



**Read on to see how
you can help build
brains in Logan...**



Strong and Safe Connections

A child who feels safe and loved learns to trust and explore. They navigate their world with confidence, knowing they can return to their strong and safe connections.

- Strong and safe connections contribute to happy, healthy children.
- Strong relationships grow strong roots to build strong brains. Talking, yarnning, singing, dancing and playing face-to-face with babies and children helps build the relationship and connection and deepen the roots of the brain foundations tree. Doing this in nature is beneficial for everyone.
- Sometimes strong and safe connections can be interrupted when adults are busy or overwhelmed. If this happens, it's ok. Spending time talking, yarnning and playing as soon as possible after this interruption will help repair the strong and safe connection.

Ideas for supporting: Strong and Safe Connections

**Embrace your
inner child**

Read stories or sing
with the child
at bedtime

**Respond right away –
show you’ve noticed or
heard the child**

Spend time
connecting in and
with nature

**Play a game together
with the child**

**Have a picnic in
the backyard**

More information



What is wellbeing? (ARACY)

aracy.org.au/what-is-child-wellbeing



Read and Talk to Learn (RATTL)

childrens.health.qld.gov.au/resources/health-services/speech-pathology/read-and-talk-to-learn-rattl



Introduction to the Circle of Security

circleofsecurityinternational.com/pages/what-is-the-circle-of-security



The whole Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child

emergingminds.com.au/resources/the-whole-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-child



Nature Play Queensland

natureplayqld.org.au



Check out more
resources here



Brain Foundations

Much like a strong and healthy tree grows over time, strong and healthy brains are built over time. They are built from the bottom up and just like a tree they require a sturdy foundation through strong roots to support all future development.

- Think of a child's brain like a tree. Every time you talk, read, sing, play and connect with children the roots of their foundation grow deeper.
- People who help connect children to culture, community, positive experiences and the environment also help build strong roots.
- For First Nations people these foundations are nurtured through kinship and story - connections guide children's growth for generations.
- For Logan's diverse families being connected to culture and language can also build strong roots.
- Brain foundations can also be known as *Brain Architecture*.

Ideas for supporting: Brain Foundations

Go to playgroup to meet others with young children and enjoy playing and connecting together

Read & explore books – talk about pictures, facial expressions, point to pictures

Play 'I spy' in the car or on the bus

Involve children in household tasks – they love to copy adults!

Play the way your child does!

Walk around the neighbourhood and name things that you see

Share stories about when you were younger – pass storylines down

More information



How Brains are built (Alberta Family Wellness)

youtube.com/watch?v=LmVWOe1ky8s



Sharing the Brain Story – Brain Architecture

vimeo.com/508953184



Words Grow Minds

wordsgrowminds.org.au



Check out more resources here



Serve and Return

Positive back and forth interactions between caregivers and children (e.g. smiling, cooing, hand movements, eye contact, and talking) strengthen brain connections.

- Starting early and often, two-way talking, yarning and interacting grows a happy, healthy brain. This can start from when a baby is growing inside the womb.
- Talking, singing, reading and playing with children at any age helps their brain grow. It's especially important in the first five years.
- Children and adults using screen devices can get in the way of serve-and-return interactions. Time each day for two-way talking, yarning and interaction without screens helps build strong and safe connections and deepen the roots of the brain foundations tree.
- For Logan's diverse families, serve and return interactions show children they are seen, valued and connected to family, culture, and community.

Ideas for supporting: Serve and Return

Join in with what the child likes or is curious about

Time in the pram is a great time to connect – have the baby face you and chat to them

Take turns drawing pictures in the dirt with a stick

Cook with children – tell them what you are doing and the foods you are using

Have conversations with children in your language

Start with what the caregiver is already doing – be curious, notice what's going well, and build on that

Play peek-a-boo

Roll a ball back and forth. Match the excitement of the child

Make funny faces and watch the child giggle! Do it again!

Talk or sing to baby when you change their nappy

Sing in the car or bus together

Talk to baby and wait for them to respond!
Do it again!

Ask questions about what the child is seeing

More information



How every child can thrive by five (Molly Wright)
ted.com/talks/molly_wright_how_every_child_can_thrive_by_five



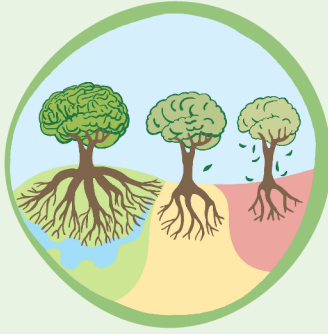
Child's Play (Alberta Family Wellness)
youtube.com/watch?v=MTeaLL5mg6M



5 Steps for Brain-Building Serve and Return (Harvard University)
youtube.com/watch?v=KNrnZag17Ek



Check out more resources here



Harmful Stress

How we experience stress is different for each of us. This is the same for children. Harmful stress happens when there is intense stress that lasts too long and there is a lack of strong and safe connection. It makes the roots of the tree less sturdy and stable, and can impact on how a child thinks, feels, and grows.

- There are three types of stress experienced by both children and adults:
 - **Healthy stress** can motivate us and help us to overcome everyday challenges, such as learning a new skill.
 - **Tolerable stress** is stress that we cannot avoid in our lives (such as death of a loved one or an accident). This stress is made tolerable by strong and safe connection with a trusted person. Without this connection the stress can become harmful over time.
 - **Harmful stress** (also known as toxic stress) happens when the stress response lasts too long without a strong and safe connection to support a child. It can come from things like abuse, racism, neglect, feeling disconnected from culture, or community violence.
- Harmful stress can be reduced when people have access to strong and safe connections, within their family, culture and community.
- Sometimes harmful stress is bigger than you and your family. Community services and organisations can help families during these times.

Ideas to help reduce: Harmful Stress

Use other words for stress such as tough time, tricky things, or challenges

When you feel stressed, you could try to attend a community hub or neighbourhood centre

We need to feel to heal, to talk about and label emotions, including the big ones

Ask “do you want me to listen or would you like me to help find solutions?”

Build your village around you to support you

Discuss stress alongside “what is working well right now?”

Talk about your feelings with people you feel safe and connected to

More information



What is Intergenerational Trauma? (Healing Foundation)

healingfoundation.org.au/intergenerational-trauma



Parent-child loop (Emerging Minds)

vimeo.com/518426046/2c38143db4



Blue Knot Foundation

blueknot.org.au



Check out more resources here



Traffic Control

Traffic control is how we manage our thoughts, actions and feelings. It includes planning, organising, paying attention, and prioritising tasks. These skills are called executive function. Self-regulation is our ability to manage our feelings.

- A child's ability to manage their emotions and the incoming mental traffic comes from a strong, healthy brain. This starts with strong and safe connections.
- Stress can impact these abilities, especially when harmful.
- Adults can help children's brains by responding using these steps:
 - **Regulate:** *Calm the stress response*
 - **Relate:** *Support the child to tell their story and name their feelings*
 - **Reason:** *Work together to solve the problem*
- Co-regulation happens when a caregiver with a strong and safe connection helps a child feel safe and calm. This support teaches the child to manage their emotions over time.
- Adults talking about their own feelings can help children learn to name and manage theirs.
- Rhythmic and repetitive movement can also help a child to self-regulate (e.g. clapping or drumming a rhythm).

Ideas for supporting: Traffic Control

Practice five finger-breathing together

Get grounded and connect to the earth. Think about what you can hear, see, touch, smell and taste



Play memory, strategy, or organisation games

Use emojis for children to identify how they are feeling – display them on a wall



Discuss your own feelings to help the child learn how to identify and understand their own feelings

Activities like weaving or knitting help to calm the brain

More information



Raising Children Network

raisingchildren.net.au



Regulate. Relate, Reason (Dr. Bruce Perry)

youtube.com/watch?v=TpsK_fY2BpQ



5,4,3,2,1 Grounded Mindfulness Technique (Kazzum Arts)

youtube.com/watch?v=pY0Ldqwmz_Q



Check out more resources here



Resilience Scale

Resilience is our ability to adapt and remain healthy when we face challenges. It can get stronger or weaker over time based on our skills, experiences and/or our environments.

- The resilience scale can look like a see saw:



Positive factors (green blocks) include strong and safe connections to family, culture and community.



Negative experiences (red blocks) include harmful stresses such as abuse, neglect and mental illness. There are people around us who can provide support for negative experiences and they can add more positive factors.



The base of the seesaw (triangle) moves left or right based on our skills and abilities. This changes how the seesaw moves with the weight of the blocks.

- People decide their own green and red blocks. Blocks can feel bigger or smaller for different people.
- Building up positive supports like strong and safe connections, reducing negative experiences and developing skills and abilities can help build resilience for children, families, and communities.

Ideas for supporting: Resilience

Build the resilience scale with any toys or resources you have in your space

Talk to someone when you don't feel well who can help you find supports



Being connected to culture, language or church helps some people build resilience



Ask questions to help people identify their green and red boxes

Safe spaces (community hubs, neighbourhood centres) help people to build resilience with support



Create safe opportunities to have honest talks with your team or community to support and stay connected

Identify the little things that are green boxes for people

More information



"What surrounds us shapes us": A framework for building children's resilience to thrive in life (Queensland Kids Partnership)

youtube.com/watch?v=0Xodw-CDwul



Brains Journey to Resilience (Alberta Family Wellness)

albertafamilywellness.org/resources/watch/brains-journey-to-resilience



Resilience (Nathan Wallis)

cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0270/5958/5121/files/Resources_Resilience.mp4?v=1583553298



Check out more resources here

Notes

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*a space for all your brain
building thoughts...*



A series of 20 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Notes

[illegible]

*a space for all your brain
building thoughts...*



A series of 20 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Support Services

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

Lifeline : 13 11 14 (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Headspace: headspace.org.au

Blueknot: 1300 657 380, blueknot.org.au

Search for support services at askizzy.org.au

SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Parentline: 1300 30 1300, parentline.com.au

Kid's Helpline: (<25 years old), 1800 55 1800, kidshelpline.com.au

Raising Children: raisingchildren.net.au

Emerging Minds: emergingminds.com.au

Reach Out: au.reachout.com

SUPPORTS FOR LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE

QLife: 1800 184 527, qlife.org.au

Queensland Council for LGBTIQ+ Health: qc.org.au

Open Doors Youth Service Logan: opendoors.net.au

SUPPORTS FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PEOPLE

Multicultural Connect Line: 1300 079 020, worldwellnessgroup.org.au

Queensland Program of Assistance for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma: qpastt.org.au

Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre:
qld.gov.au/health/services/specialists/queensland-transcultural-mental-health-centre

SUPPORTS FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

13 YARN: 13YARN or 13 92 76, 13yarn.org.au

WellMob: wellmob.org.au

Thirrili: 1800 805 801, thirrili.com.au

SUPPORTS FOR WOMEN

Women's Wellbeing Line: 1800 496 636, wheq.org.au

The Centre for Women & Co: (07) 3050 3060, centreforwomen.org.au

DV Connect Womensline: 1800 811 811, dvconnect.org/womensline

SUPPORTS FOR MEN

Mensline Australia: 1300 78 99 78, mensline.org.au

DV Connect Mensline: 1800 600 636, dvconnect.org/mensline

Join the brain building movement in Logan.

*Check out our brain building
resources and information at:
logantogether.org.au/brainbuilding*

