

**WELCOME TO**



**MATES**  
Brain Regulation Program

**DEEP DIVE**

5 simple, empowering skills for children and adults to:  
Self-resource, Self-regulate,  
increase affect tolerance and capacity

November 2020  
First DEEP DIVE ONLINE in English

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**MATES Brain Regulation Program Developers**



*Salene Souza*  
MA Brain & Mind Science  
BA (Hons) Psychology

*Dr. Roby Abeles*  
PsychD Clinical Psychology  
MA Counselling Psychology

**INSPIRED BY A BEAUTIFUL AND CHALLENGING REQUEST FROM NATALIE JANE, IN 2011**

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**MATES Brain Regulation Program (BRP)**

MATES is a psycho-educational program to facilitate understanding about brain function, trauma, and our survival defenses: Fight, Flight, Freeze, Faint, Fawn (Self-abandonment), as well as the practice of the Simple self-regulating skills that we call "MATES keys": Mind, Air, Tree, Express and Stretch.

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## Who is already part of the MATES Club

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# Who is already part of the MATES Club

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## WHY WAS THE MATES BRP DEVELOPED?

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## HOW DOES MATES BRP HELP?

As a result of parents using MATES BR Program information and keys, they began the process of being "a source of safety" for their children, by being more attuned to their child's emotional need – more present, grounded, confident, ad creative in their roles.

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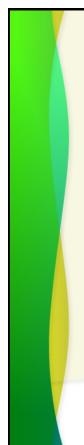
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## Lets reflect a bit...

- What problems are we facing today?
- What are the challenges?
- What type of issues are coming more often to your office, or where you work?
- Are the issues the same or different from your generation and the new generation?
- What are the most common symptoms people are experiencing today?



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**Observations...**

- More people are being diagnosed and medicated
- More people with complex and multiple difficulties
- Lack of trauma information
- Lack of trauma specialists
- Internet and technology exposure
- Lack of time, patience and connection between people... and so on



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**What is the solution to these problems?**

*"To best help finalise inappropriate fight / flight / freeze responses, you need to work with people's body responses.*

*You need to help your body feel that (the traumatic event) is over."*

**Bessel van der Kolk, MD**



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**What is the solution to these problems?**

A package we could give to everyone, independently of age or culture, with:

- ✓ An easy language to be shared that facilitates understanding about trauma and its effects without labeling and pathologizing people
- ✓ A simple set of self-regulation skills that help people to become more aware of themselves, feel more connected to themselves while facilitating connection with others
- ✓ Accessible materials to share and deliver information about how the brain works
- ✓ ALL IN ONE EASY PRPOGRAM ☺



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We believe we have found a very effective solution, and we are excited to hear your opinion after you learn about the MATES BRAIN REGULATION PROGRAM.



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### What is the MATES Brain Regulation Program?

- It is not a therapy, but it can be used before, during and between therapy sessions.
- It is a psycho-educational method using simple language and metaphors to explain complex information about:
  - Brain-body function, including the autonomic nervous system.
  - The survival response of fight-flight-freeze-fawn
  - The importance of dual attunement during activation



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### Why is the MATES Program effective?

- Because it promotes the development of awareness of the individual's emotional state and empowers them with skills to "turn off" the fight / flight / freeze / breakdown / self-abandonment survival mode which facilitates a return to adaptive self-regulation.
- Consequently, adaptive self-regulation allows for social engagement.
- And social engagement allows you to connect with yourself and others to find security and safety.



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**What is the difference between the MATES Program and other stress management programs?**

The MATES program takes into account

- People with complex needs
- People with multiple diagnoses
- People who do not believe that change is possible
- People with learning differences and challenges
- People with limited attention spans
- Offer skills that are easy and quick to learn for all ages, even those with different cultural backgrounds.

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The MATES Program considers that when people are in the survival mode, their brain can't remember what the skills are they have learned.

So, they need a simple way to remember new skills.

For this we have developed metaphors, illustrations and bracelets to help them remember what their new skills are.

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✓ How are you with yourself?

✓ How is your self-care routine going?

✓ Do you prioritise yourself?

✓ Are you aware of your strengths and vulnerabilities?



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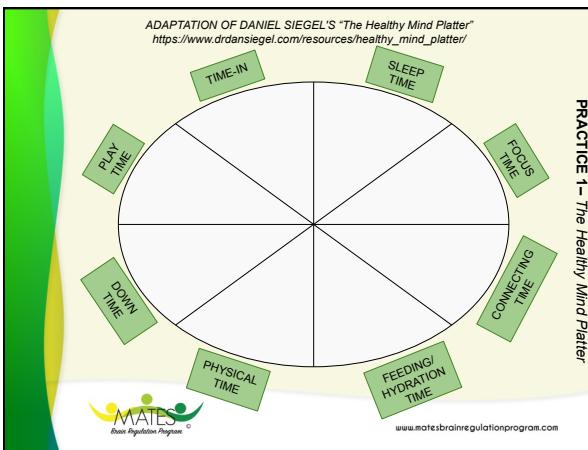
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PRACTICE 2 – Selene Window

WHAT I TALK/TEACH AND I DO	WHAT I TALK/TEACH AND I DON T DO
WHAT I DON T TALK/TEACH AND I DO	WHAT I DON T TALK/TEACH AND I DON T DO

Salene window – inspired by Johari window



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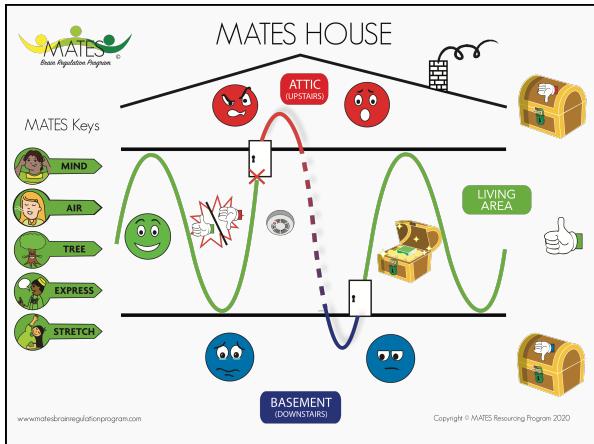
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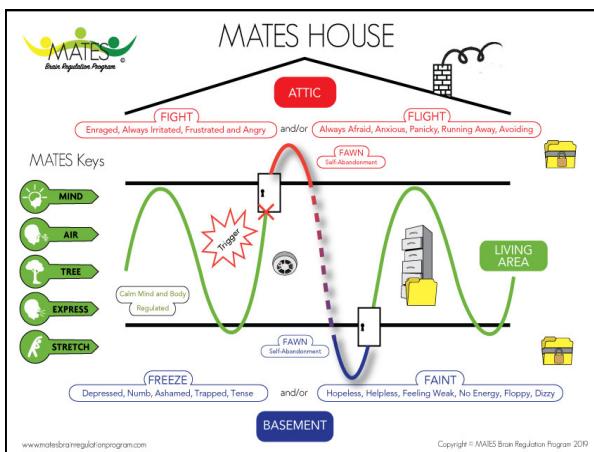
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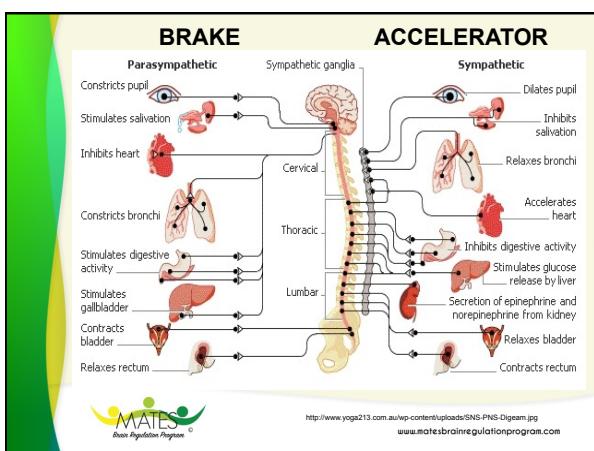
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## FAWN/APPEASE

A reaction when the nervous system “understands” that it can only feel safe when the other's nervous system is calm / regulated. It is triggered by an excessive fear of disapproval and / or an excessive desire for validation.

It is a way to minimize and guarantee love and attachment with the relevant people.

They are people who tend :

- to overwhelm themselves by saying "yes" to everything and everyone;
- to abandon their personal power (ignore limits, intuition and their own needs);
- to be overly concerned with pleasing others;
- to have difficulty saying "no";
- to cancel themselves out to prioritize other people's need;
- to focus on helping and solving other people's problems;
- to fear losing something or someone, being exposed or rejected;
- to merge with other people trying to avoid being rejected, hurt, or killed;

It is not a conscious attempt for manipulation. It is an attempt for survival.

They tend to develop co-dependent relationships.



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## FAWN/APPEASE

In Fawning you can go through cycles between the "Attic" and the "Basement". It is an ongoing internal battle between "I am too much" and "I am not good enough".

In the face of someone else's demand, you don't allow yourself to say NO, because your nervous system (sub-cortically) “interprets” the possibility of other people's dissatisfaction as a danger and / or threat to life.

Fawning in the "Attic" is experienced as over thinking, over doing to make sure everything is ok for everyone, ignoring their limits and needs for the other. Also it is experienced as an emotional purge - discharging emotions in a person of trust and feel bad, guilty about it afterwards.

Fawning in the "Basement" is experienced as procrastination for personal needs, severe perfectionism for personal projects. Also, it is experienced as an emotional restriction / cancellation, fear of being "too much" or "not good enough" for the other.



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## FAWN/APPEASE

“Self-regulation depends on having a friendly relationship with your body. Without it you have to rely on external regulation—from medication, drugs like alcohol, constant reassurance, or compulsive compliance with the wishes of others.”

Bessel A. van der Kolk,  
The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma



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### Brene Brown's 10 Guideposts to Wholehearted Living

#### Cultivating      Letting Go of

Authenticity	1	1	What People Think
Self-Compassion	2	2	Perfectionism
A Resilient Spirit	3	3	Numbing and Powerlessness
Gratitude and Joy	4	4	Scarcity and Fear of the Dark
Intuition and Trusting Faith	5	5	The Need for Certainty
Creativity	6	6	Comparison
Play and Rest	7	7	Exhaustion as a Status Symbol and Productivity as Self-Worth
Calm and Stillness	8	8	Anxiety as a Lifestyle
Meaningful Work	9	9	Self-Doubt and “Supposed To”
Laughter, Song and Dance	10	10	Being Cool and “Always in Control”



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## Types of triggers

External      Internal      External and internal together

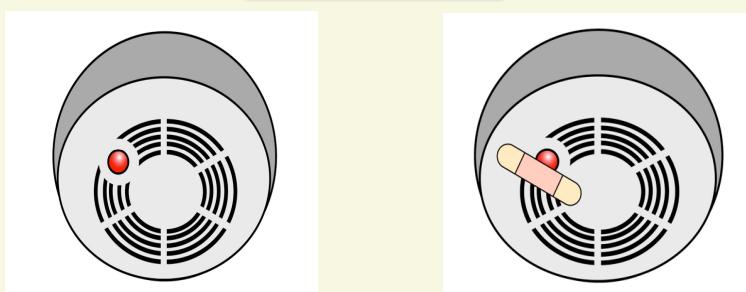


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## HOW IS YOUR SMOKE / ALARM DETECTOR?

CHECK YOUR SMOKE  
DETECTOR DAILY



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## SMOKE / ALARM DETECTOR

The illustration features two panels. The left panel shows a woman with a shocked expression, her hands near her mouth, looking at a white toaster with two burnt toast slices popping out. A plume of red smoke is rising from the toaster. The right panel shows a stylized house on fire, with orange flames engulfing the roof and windows. The background is pink in the left panel and red in the right panel.

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## What is TRAUMA?

*“Trauma is perhaps the most avoided, ignored, slighted, denied and untreated cause of human suffering.”*

Peter Levine,  
creator of Somatic Experiencing

The quote is displayed in a green serif font. Below it, the name Peter Levine is followed by the text "creator of Somatic Experiencing" in a smaller green sans-serif font.

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## What is TRAUMA?

**"TRAUMA = CHRONIC DISRUPTION OF CONNECTEDNESS."**

Stephen Porges  
**The Polyvagal Theory**

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## What is TRAUMA?

*"Any negative life event occurring in a state of helplessness (a car accident, the sudden death of a loved one, a frightening medical procedure, a significant experience of rejection) can produce the same neurophysiological changes in the brain as fighting, rape or abuse.*

*What makes a life-negative event traumasing is not the literal life-threatening nature of the event, but the degree of helplessness that the individual experienced, and / or the history of previous trauma itself. "*

Robert Scaer, MD, The precarious gift. Posted in Psychotherapy Networker, November / December, 2006, p 49-53, 67

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## TRAUMA ...

- The intensity of the traumatic event does not predict the intensity of the trauma reaction
- Vulnerability to trauma is individual
  - The trauma increases if the person is young, and if they already have a history of previous trauma, especially pre-verbal trauma
  - The individual who is already traumatised will be much more susceptible to future trauma
  - Developmental trauma is the most common and most often ignored and misunderstood type of trauma

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## Trauma/Drama Spiral x Healing/Flow Spiral




A thought, or an event, can start dragging you down, toward the trauma/drama spiral, which ends in you feeling out of control / horrible, angry, sad, alone, drunk.

It only takes a small spark for the DRAMA spiral to become activated and drag it down, down, down.

Fortunately, there is also a “way out”. The healing spiral that you can engage in on a ride that takes you out of the trauma/drama spiral where life is more manageable.

It only takes one thought, action, behavior to engage the “healing” / Flow spiral.

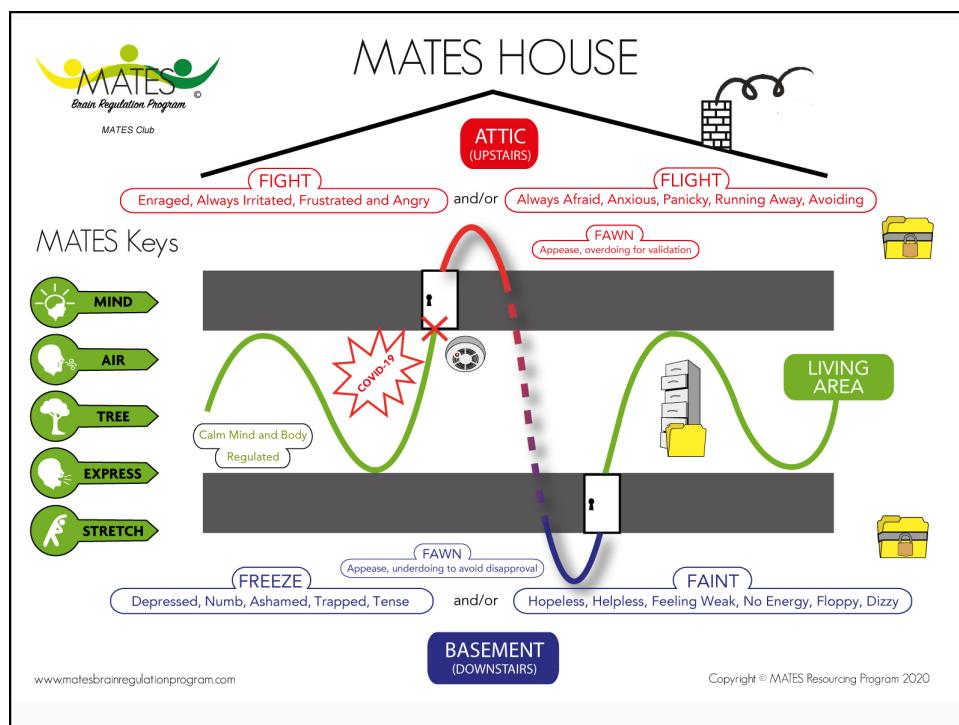
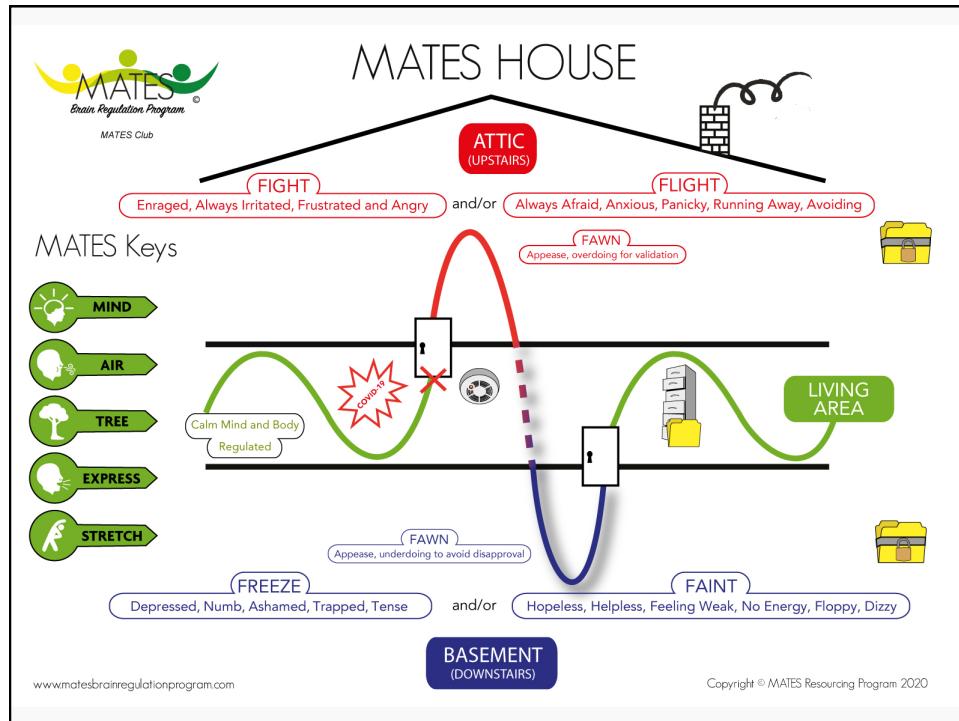
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## TRAUMA IMPACTS US ON MANY LEVELS:

- Mental
- Emotional
- Physical
- Spiritual
- Cultural
- Energetic
- Sexual
- Social
- Relational
- Environmental



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**WHAT DOES MATES STANDS FOR?**

- Mind - Mental exercise
- Air - Emotional exercise
- Tree - Grounding exercise
- Express – Naming/Sensory Exercise
- Stretch - Physical exercise

**THE 5 MATES KEYS/SKILLS**



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**MATES KEYS**

“when we are in crisis we need to wear our own oxygen masks first,  
and then help others to do the same.”



So MATES is here introduced as our “oxygen mask”



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## MATES KEYS

"The way to develop a calm adult presence is through experiential exercises that increase your ability to restore equilibrium, quickly and naturally, so you are more likely to experience grace under pressure."

Peter Levine and Maggie Kline



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### MIND

The mind key is a way of finding a "bridge" thought to quickly bring you out of negative thinking, which can quickly lead to the downward spiral of drama.



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# Bridge Thought Practice

If a client says that there isn't a positive thought:

1. Request a list of negative thoughts;
2. Ask your client to read the negative thoughts one by one (not out loud);
3. Ask your client to check where the client feels in the MATES House;
4. Then, ask for a list of positive thoughts;
5. Ask your client to mentally repeat each thought 3x and evaluate, on a scale from 0 to 100, how much that thought feels true;
6. If there is a thought that is felt 100% true, this is a Bridge thought, you ask your client to write it on the the 'Bridge Thinking' column (second column).
7. If there is no thought felt 100% true, you need to help your client to build a "Bridge Thought" by suggesting that your client start the thought with:  
I can ... / I can learn ... / I am learning to ... / I can choose ... / I choose ...
8. Once your client chooses the best way to start its thought, ask for confirmation by asking your client to, mentally, repeat it 3x and evaluate it, on a scale from 0 to 100, how much how much that thought feels true.
9. Check again if that bridge thought helps the client feels in the Living Area.



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PRACTICE 3 – MIND KEY



AIR

Each emotion has its own breathing pattern.



Notice how the brain becomes self-regulating, just drawing attention to the breath.  
Air in and air out.  
Hand on your heart.

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AIR



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• Feel your feet on the earth, as if you were a TREE;  
 • Trauma / stress makes us lose the ability to stay in the present moment, grounding helps bring us back to the here and now  
 • Being aware of our feet is a simple way to begin this process  
 • The more grounded you feel, the less worried you will get  
 • Being present in our feet makes us feel stronger to make decisions

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## Advanced TREE Key Practice

PRACTICE 4 – TREE KEY

1. Check where the client feels in the MATES House;
2. You read the TREE key exercise as it is written and check what happens and where your client feel in the MATES House;
3. Then, invite your client to experience an advance way of feeling the TREE key. They are in charge of the pace of the activity and they can stop at any time.
4. Put the weight on one of your client's foot and ask your client to share what happens;
5. Put the other weight on the other foot your client and ask you client to share what happens;
7. After placing the weights, check where in the MATES House the client feels;
8. You and your client just for few minutes observe what comes up;
9. Then, ask them to let you know when they are ready to remove the weight from one of their feet;
10. Remove the weight of the other foot when the client signals that he/she is ready, and say to them: **Observe what stays when there is no weight anymore; What stays in your experience.**
11. Ask your client to share what (is happening) happens;
12. Check where in the MATES House the client feels.




**EXPRESS** is a way to help people become aware of their emotional state.

If you name the feeling, and accept that you are having that feeling, then you may have a greater ability to understand and perceive how the other feels.

It is important to name what we feel:

- For example:

Angry	Grateful	Calm	Fear	Sad
Happy	Guilty	Hopeful		Shame

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It is important to find words for your emotions and sensations and their location in the body.

For example:

Sleeper	Light	Heavy
Trembling	Hot	Cold
Tight	Spacious	Hard
		Soft

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What to do when you are triggered:

- 1. NAMING THE EMOTION FOR YOURSELF**  
Eg.: I am angry about what you have said.
- 2. NAMING THE SENSATION**  
Eg.: My jaw is tight. My blood is boiling.
- 3. ACCEPTING THE FEELING**  
Eg.: I accept [admit] that my partner, boss or colleague called me a name. And I accept [admit] that I am angry and/or hurt about it.

**NEXT STEP (Making your choice)**  
First take a time-out and practise all your MATES Keys, until you are completely back in your 'Living Area'.

Then, from your Living Area, think about what you want to do next, rather than just react the way you always react.

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## **How to ask for support**

(TIPS to help you get support):

**DO's:**

- Do ask people who are professionals or trained to help you with your issue or problem;
- Do ask people who are less stressed than you;
- Do ask people if they have the time to let you talk;
- Do ask if the person is available to listen to you;
- Do respect the 'no' of the other, and ask for another time to be heard;
- Do ask yourself what is your need before;
- Do understand the power of your 'no';
- Do the **MATES Keys** if you start to become stressed;

This will lead you on a new road – to the place you'd like to end up.

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## How to ask for support

(TIPS to help you get support):

**DON'Ts:**

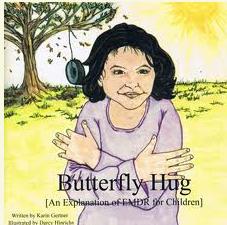
- Don't ask people who you know are not good listeners to help support you;
- Don't ask people who will be overwhelmed by your situation and won't know what to say;
- Don't ask people who have enough problems of their own;
- Don't ask people with whom you have a difficult relationship to help or support you emotionally. This is a setup for another argument or at the least, some angry words, disappointments, and maybe tears and regrets

This road leads you to the place you always end up, but don't want to go anymore.

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## Hugs: butterfly, gorilla and ladybug


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- The trauma is held in the body. The body is in the brain
- Body language is touch and movement
- The movement evokes comfort and discomfort
- Movement allows the energy to flow, in trauma often energy stagnates in the joints, muscles, and in the internal organs

Prenatal, trans-generational, and developmental trauma tend to settle in the body more deeply, all the way down to the bone

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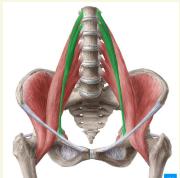


## Músculo PSOAS

PSOAS is the main muscle involved in the body's "fight or flight" response. When you get scared, your psoas contracts; when you experience mental or emotional stress, the psoas responds with a squeeze. Physically, the hips are similar to a Central station: many muscles and forces come together and are distributed throughout the rest of the body. The hips have many deep, strong muscles, necessary for stability, movement and mobility. Hip tension isn't just caused by mental stress or physical fitness; lifestyle, age, genetics, physical accidents and trauma also have an impact on tightening the hips."

Sandra Carson

<https://www.ekhartyoga.com/articles/anatomy/stretching-your-stress-out-meet-your-psoas>



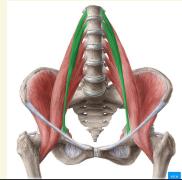
 **SOLTAR**

## TRE – Exercícios de liberação da tensão e dos traumas

“... through a conscious therapeutic physical exercises, TRE triggers the self-regulating mechanisms of the autonomic nervous system, releasing deep stress patterns. The parasympathetic nervous system is activated, providing the body with the opportunity to release the energy trapped during the traumatic episode. The release occurs through neurogenic tremors, similar to those felt in risky situations that generate fear, anger or great pleasure. The results are immediate, providing relief, relaxation, well-being and emotional balance, integrating the body-mind unit.”

*David Bercili*

<http://clinicaflordamanha.com.br/2019/04/01/tre-tension-and-trauma-release-exercises-exercicios-de-liberacao-da-tensao-e-dos-traumas/>



 **STRETCH**

## TO YAWN

Yawning helps the brain get more oxygen, it helps slow down the heart.



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**How can you best help someone who has unresolved trauma in their nervous system?**

By being their source of safety!

Through your presence, by holding the space for whatever is present in the moment.




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**The Invisible Magical Cord and Attunement**

- The professional who uses the MATES Brain Regulation Program will naturally improve the therapeutic relationship and increase the sense of security in the client.
- If the professional's nervous system is calm and relaxed, it will be detected by the client's nervous system as they will resonate, and use the therapist's nervous system as a scaffold for their own nervous system
- The caregiver should repeatedly be a role model for the client, who will start his or her self-regulatory practice indirectly.



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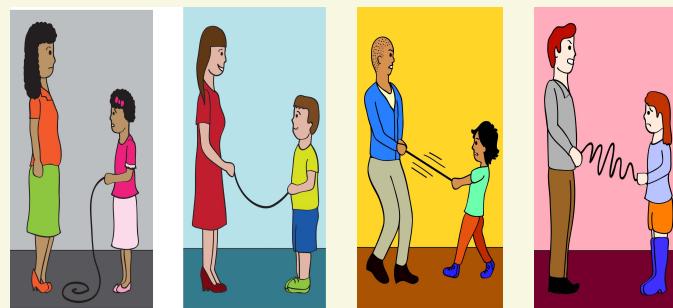
## Invisible Magical Cord

The MATES Program will primarily support containment and stabilization of the client's nervous system through the Invisible Magical Cord by bringing them back to within their window of tolerance (the living area), which is where they feel more present, rational and organised.



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## MAGICAL INVISIBLE CORD Practice



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**PRACTICE 5 – Invisible Magical cord  
(in person)**

1. Invite your client to explore his /her nervous system through the magical cord;
2. Hold one end of the cord, hand the other end over to your client and observe how he/she holds it;
3. Check where your client feels in the 'MATES House'.  
If your client is in the 'Living Area', ask your client to demonstrate through the Magical Cord what it is like to be in the 'Living Area';
4. If your client is not in the "Living Area", invite your client to practice one of the MATES keys until he/she feels in the 'Living Area';
5. Ask your client to demonstrate using the Magical Cord what it is like to be in the 'Living Area';
6. Invite your client to choose which part of the MATES house they would like to explore first.
7. During each visit your client must demonstrate through the Magical Cord what it is like to be in that place, if necessary, offer to practice some of 'MATES Keys' during the process.
8. Between each visit it is suggested that you return to the 'Living Area' and ask your client to demonstrate through the Magical Cord what it is like to be there.  
End the practice with your client in the 'Living Area'



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## Why the MATES BR Program is effective?

It promotes the development of awareness of the individual's emotional state and empowers him to “turn off” the survival mode of fight / flight / freeze / collapse / self-abandonment, facilitating the return to adaptive self-regulation.

Consequently, adaptive self-regulation allows for social engagement.

And social engagement allows you to connect with yourself and with others to find security.



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## How can you use MATES?

Teaching directly - Using educational materials, along with simple language to “not pathologize”, and “not stigmatise” and to normalise each other’s experiences



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## How can you use MATES?

- Teaching indirectly - practicing MATES with yourself, especially when attending to other people’s crisis situations

“Attachment is the interactive regulation of emotion between and within organism.”

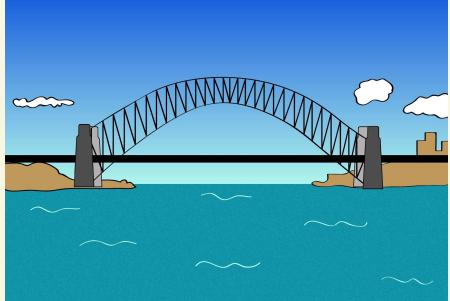
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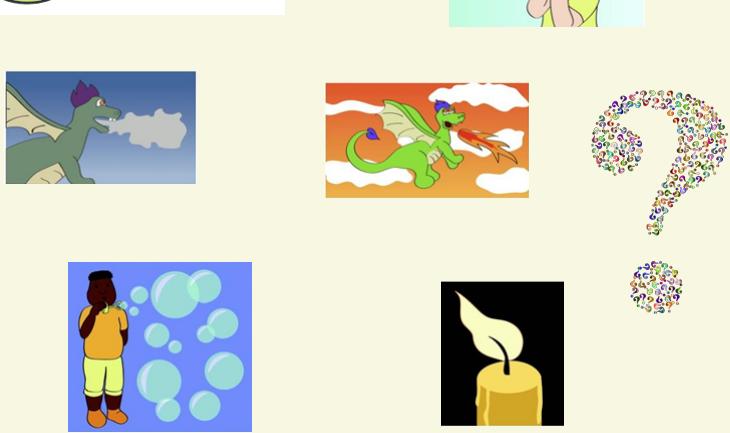
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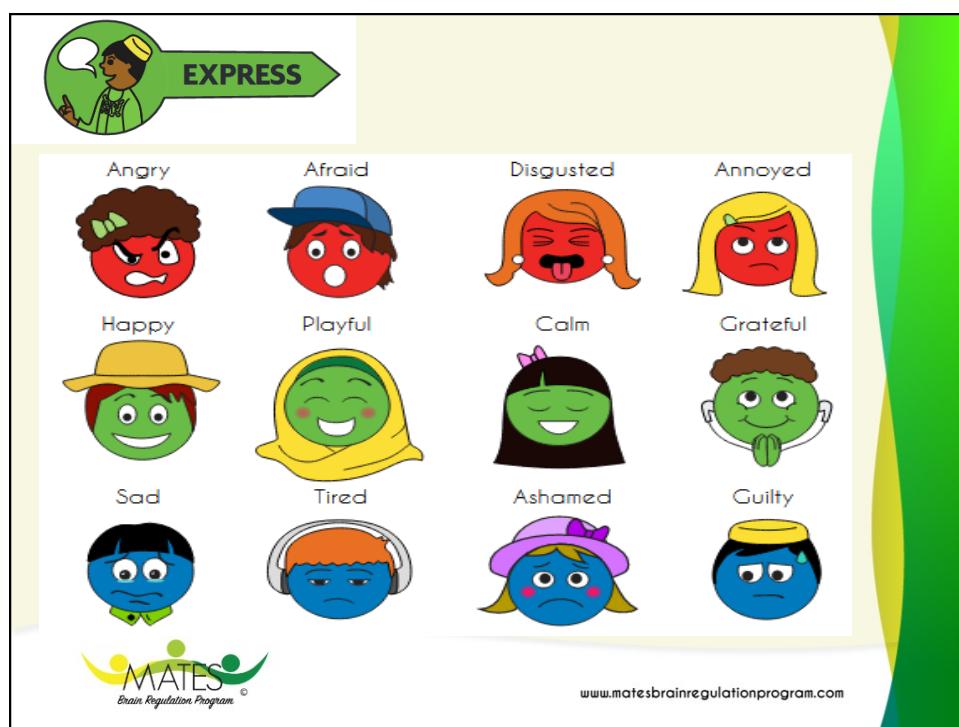


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