

From Mistrust to Trust

A Trauma Informed Relational Approach to Behavioural Change

with Veronica George (NZ) - Certified DDP Consultant



The first 1000 days of our tamariki's lives have a profound impact on their brain development and how they experience the world. If a young person's need for safety and nurturing relationships is not met during this time, it ultimately leads to a sense of mistrust in the world, sometimes manifesting in challenging behaviour. All too often, the focus is on trying to 'fix' this behaviour, however this needs to shift to trying to understand the inner world of these children (their thoughts and feelings), as well as viewing their behaviour through a neurological and physiological lens, in order for true change to occur. This begins with creating safe and trusting relationships whereby adults learn how to stay open, non-judgemental, empathetic and curious in the face of challenging behaviour, co-regulating their emotions, so that the hidden needs of these young people are identified. This relational and co-regulatory approach includes whole-brain integration, nervous system regulation, and the development of a more positive sense of self. As adults encourage young people to positively organise their emotional experiences, the often-negative life trajectory of those who have experienced childhood adversity can be altered, allowing the growth and development necessary to thrive.

This seminar will provide participants with practical evidence-based interventions and tools that can be used across a variety of settings such as home, school and the community. As a parent or caregiver, shifting from a behavioural to a relational focus is instrumental in fostering secure attachment relationships, leading to more positive parent-child interactions and a greater ability to coregulate with their young person. In the school setting, trusting relationships and a 'felt sense of safety' are foundational for young people to be in a 'ready to learn state,' so this approach will help to increase engagement in learning over time, as well as enhance the wellbeing of staff.

This approach is also applicable across a variety of other settings, such as social work, therapy, mentoring, residential homes and youth justice etc, as it supports a deeper understanding and connection between the adult and young person. The safety and trust that develops allows defences to lessen, reflected in positive shifts in behaviour. As a new understanding of self emerges, healing begins to happen.

Veronica will explore:

- Relational approaches for dealing with challenging behaviour and emotions (such as P.A.C.E.- Dan Hughes) to help a young person regulate their emotions, make sense of their world in less shame-based ways, and learn how to trust relationships (including using 'storytelling').
- The impact of Blocked Trust and the importance of creating safe and trusting connections to foster growth and development.
- Insecure and disorganised attachment patterns and the relevance for ongoing development, including how to foster more secure attachment relationships.
- The Neuro-sequential model of brain development (Bruce Perry) and whole-brain integration (Dan Siegal).
- Polyvagal Theory and how to convey 'Safety Signals' to promote regulation of the autonomic nervous system (Stephen Porges).
- The hidden vulnerabilities underlying challenging behaviour, recognising how such behaviour has developed as a form of 'self-protection.'
- Mindfulness practices to stay regulated when dealing with challenging behaviour, as well as utilising 'relationship repair' when necessary, along with practicing self-compassion.



Veronica George is a Northland based registered Psychologist, DDP therapist and consultant who splits her time between training, consultancy, supervision and case work. Veronica is New Zealand's first certified Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) consultant. She utilises this framework in her therapeutic work with children, adults, and families, and also in her training and consultancy within the education, health and community sectors to promote trauma-informed practice. Veronica speaks with a contemporary, practical, and uniquely NZ focused perspective, providing numerous examples of this approach across a variety of settings, ensuring that this workshop is one not to be missed for all professionals working at the coal face with children and young people with trauma backgrounds.

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Seminar Details:

- 🕒 Friday 4 September 2026 9.00 - 3.30pm
- 📍 NEW PLYMOUTH - The Devon Hotel, 390 Devon Street East, Strandon
- 💰 \$325 (inc GST) Includes full catering, notes, attendance certificate and live bookstore
- 📞 Contact the Compass Seminars team on 06 759 1647 or office@compass.ac.nz

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