

# TECA

## Trauma Expression & Connection Assessment

Version 2



## Background

Children form their sense of self in the context of their relationships. When these relationships are unsafe or threatening, children's nervous systems become reactive and in turn become unable to self-regulate. If trauma can be assessed and intervened initially from a biological perspective, rather than a behavioural one, we can settle the very states of arousal which inhibit children from being able to engage in the relationships which can be a resource for their healing.

Infancy and early childhood are key periods for developing self-regulation of emotions. When regulated, a child can accept outside input and learn from their environment; while dysregulated, a child will experience a flood of hormones that changes their heart rate, breathing, digestion and other functions of their sympathetic nervous system.

The process of becoming regulated is scaffolded by attachment figures, as caregivers soothe distress and help children understand their internal state and gradually support them to self-calm. This co-regulation is the way that caregivers use their own state of calm (modelling) coupled with coaching to use strategies (the activities provided in this guide) to bring a child back into a state of regulation and use language to articulate their needs.

## Introduction to tool

The TECA is an assessment process which shapes the understanding of trauma expressions which a child or young person may be displaying. It helps to make sense of how their trauma history is impacting them in their behavioural, environmental, and relational presentations. The TECA understands that central to trauma responsive practice is the presence of safety and promotion of strong, safe, and healthy relationships which can be used as a resource to support healing.

The TECA is a tool to support co-regulation, decreasing a child/young person's trauma behaviours/symptomology by recommending prescribed therapeutic responses which are matched to their emotional and relational needs.

## Understanding the TECA and Fight, Flight, Freeze and Fawn/Appease

Fight, Flight, Freeze and Fawn/Appease are used to categorise the behavioural responses a child/ young person's body has gone into as a result of chronic stress. In response to a trauma, our bodies stress response system will activate and engage a fight, flight, freeze or fawn/appease response. All trauma experiences trigger stressors which activate responses. By knowing which response, the child/young person goes into, we can provide appropriate therapeutic recommendations for co-regulation. When using the TECA it is important to be mindful of normative age/stage development and include this information in your assessment.

## Description of the four expressions

- Fight resembles the body preparing to go into battle/fight.
- Flight appears as if the body is preparing to run away or flee from the danger.
- Freeze evokes the body to stop, pause and disconnect from the real or perceived threat freezing separates the body from the trauma it is experiencing.
- Fawn/Appease appears as submission and appeasing behaviour, as the child or young person attempts to please the person in charge/the person with power and control to avoid the danger/conflict.

**Categories of trauma behaviours - Behaviours occurring within the last 6 months**

Tick the box that is most appropriate for the behaviour listed. If the behaviour is not present for that child/young person, in the context of your relationship, leave it blank or tick never seen.

To add up an intensity score, use the sum of the numbers provided in the key below e.g., I tick the appropriate Freeze boxes giving scores of 3+3+0+2+1+1+0 leads to Freeze intensity rating: 10. These scores represent the intensity of the trauma expression.

- Often Seen = +3
- Sometimes Seen = +2
- Rarely Seen = +1
- Never Seen = 0

Child/Young Person Name:		Date completed	
Name of person completing TECA:		Relationship to child / young person:	

Behaviours	Often seen	Sometimes Seen	Rarely seen	Never seen
<b>Section 1: Fight</b>				
Hitting/punching				
Screaming				
Positioning body in a threatening way				
Verbal threats				
Aggression				
Tightening their muscles Clenching hands/fists				
Destroying possessions/ furniture/environment				
Defensive looks/glares				
Stand offs				
Swearing				
Outbursts				
Argumentative				
Fight intensity rating =				
Comments:				

Note: This score indicates the child/young person's fight response to the other survival responses, specific to the assessed relationship, context, and timeframe. It is not intended as a diagnostic tool.

Behaviours	Often seen	Sometimes Seen	Rarely seen	Never seen
<b>Section 2: Flight</b>				
Fidgeting and Restless				
Eyes darting around / Obvious change in blink rate				
Constantly scanning for danger				
Running away/absconding				
Rapid heartbeat/pounding heart				
Using risky climbing to escape a situation				
Hiding				
Feeling trapped				
Very sensitive to loud noises or sudden movements				
Difficulty with transitions and change				
Scanning for opportunities to run				
Flight intensity rating =				
Comments:				
<p>Note: This score indicates the child/young person's flight response to the other survival responses, specific to the assessed relationship, context, and timeframe. It is not intended as a diagnostic tool.</p>				

Behaviours	Often seen	Sometimes Seen	Rarely seen	Never seen
<b>Section 3: Freeze</b>				
Lack of control and unaware of bodily functions. Encopresis/Enuresis				
Disconnected from themselves				
Frozen				
Numb				
Feel like they cannot move				
Unable to sense if they are full/hungry – overeating/ never hungry				
Low or high tolerance to pain / Do not feel pain				
Does not feel variations temperature, i.e. (wears jumper in summer, shorts in winter)				
“Spacey”/ appears to be daydreaming				
Withdrawn from peers/ relationships/a “loner”				
Difficulty trying new things				
Finds it hard to make decisions				
Freeze intensity rating =				
Comments:				
<p>Note: This score indicates the child/young person’s freeze response to the other survival responses, specific to the assessed relationship, context, and timeframe. it is not intended as a diagnostic tool.</p>				

Behaviours	Often seen	Sometimes Seen	Rarely seen	Never seen
<b>Section 4: Fawn/Appease</b>				
“People pleasing”/appeasing				
Difficulty identifying feelings				
Finds it difficult to ask for help				
Cannot get their own needs met/ignore own needs				
Telling adults what they want to hear				
Loss of identity				
“Submitting” to what adults/people around them expect				
Takes responsibility or blame for others actions				
Withdraws in social settings				
Relies on others to make their decisions for them				
Often the “unseen” child in the group or family				
Often seen as the resilient or robust child despite experiencing trauma				
Fawn/Appease intensity rating =				
Comments:				
<p>Note: This score indicates the child/young person’s fawn/appease response to the other survival responses, specific to the assessed relationship, context, and timeframe. it is not intended as a diagnostic tool.</p>				

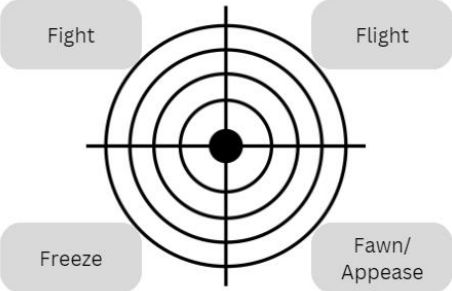
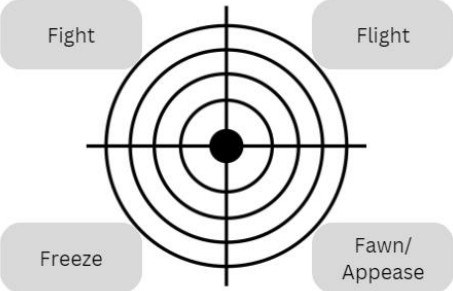
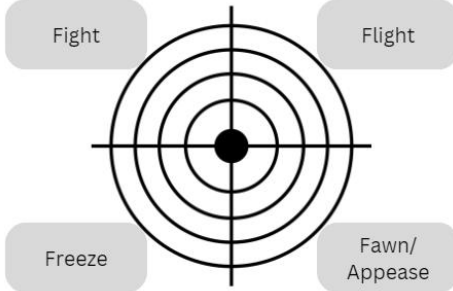
## Overall intensity rating

Overall Intensity Ratings:	Fight	Flight	Freeze	Fawn/Appease

# TECA Intensity Rating Summary

The Intensity Rating Summary can be used when multiple TECA's are completed for the child/young person.

Instruction: Colour the circles in priority order. For example, if the highest rating is fight, colour all circles, second highest priority colour 3, continuing with the lowest priority just having one section coloured in.

	TECA 1				TECA 2				TECA 3			
<b>Person completed &amp; relationship to child</b>												
<b>Date completed</b>												
	Fight	Flight	Freeze	Fawn/ Appease	Fight	Flight	Freeze	Fawn/ Appease	Fight	Flight	Freeze	Fawn/ Appease
<b>TECA Intensity rating</b>												
<b>Intensity focus area summary</b>												
<b>Comments</b>												

## The importance of intervention Matching

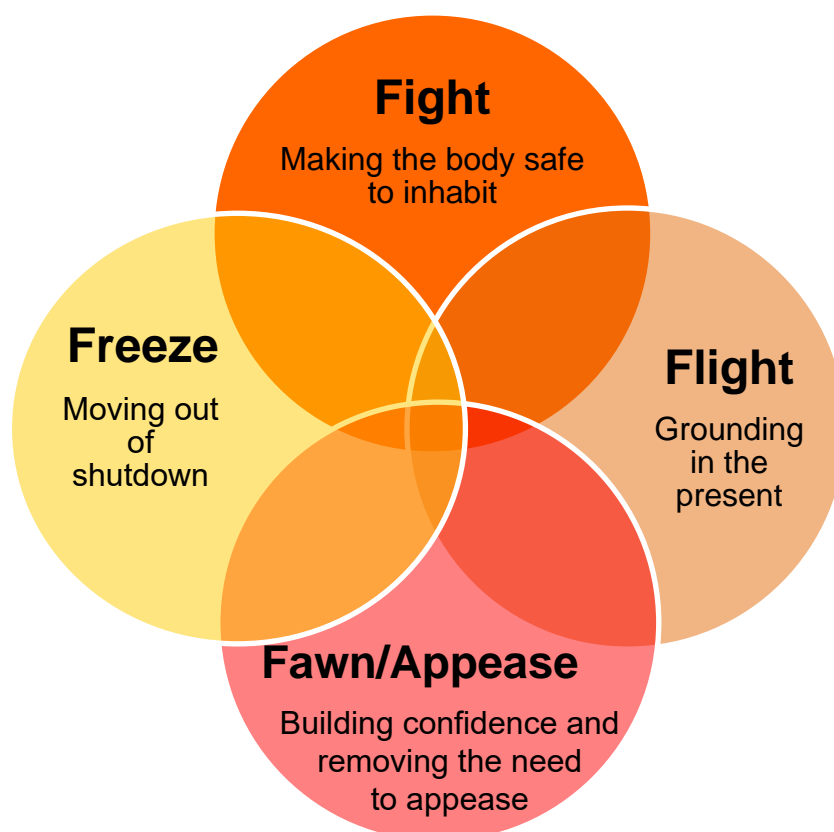
Intervention matching is crucial to using the TECA. In considering it, we can tailor the interventions to meet the specific needs of the relationship and address the expression of distress in children and young people we are assessing. It ensures that the interventions are targeted and effective in promoting the best outcomes. A key consideration in intervention matching is the intensity rating for each domain: fight, flight, freeze, and fawn/appease. The activities used in the TECA should be adjusted based on the intensity of the specific domain experienced by the child or young person.

It's essential to acknowledge that no one-size-fits-all intervention exists. Each assessment may require different considerations based on the child's unique trauma history and circumstances. Additionally, the interventions should always be carried out in the presence of a relationally safe and regulated adult. This ensures that the child feels secure and supported throughout the process.

The activities used in the TECA approach are centred around mirroring, serve and return, and kindness. These activities create connection and attunement with the child or young person. By doing so, they can help bring them back into a regulated state of arousal, where they feel calmer and more in control of their emotions and behaviours.

The ultimate goal of these activities is to enable the use of language to discuss the child's needs and fears. When the child is in a regulated state, they can better communicate their emotions and thoughts verbally. These interventions must be experienced as joyful and safe by the child and the regulated adult involved. When enjoyable the activities are more likely to be effective and promote positive outcomes. The preferences of the child should be considered when selecting appropriate activities.

Lastly, it is crucial to recognize that if an activity does not keep the child or the adult regulated, its intended outcome may be less effective. Therefore, the activities used should be carefully chosen to ensure they promote regulation and emotional well-being in both parties involved. Overall, intervention matching in the TECA approach helps create a tailored and practical therapeutic experience, fostering emotional regulation and supporting the child or young person in developing healthy coping strategies and enriched relationships.



<b>Fight – making the body safe to inhabit</b>			
<p><b>Bubble blowing</b> Blowing bubbles in any size, way, or configuration. Taking turns, blowing towards each other, see who gets theirs highest. Try blowing them back and forth and seeing how long can keep the one bubble floating in tact.</p>	<p><b>Resistance bands</b> Using resistance bands individually or wrapped around both child and adult to see how far/close they can stretch. Wrap around toes and see how high you can stretch to the sky. Consider intensity of feelings and if can use bands so show how big or small your feelings are.</p>	<p><b>Medicine ball toss</b> Throw the weighted ball to each other and use variations in timing. i.e., quick throw, slow throw, high throw, low throw.  Note: Vary the weight of the medicine ball based on age and ability of the child.</p>	<p><b>Gardening</b> Any type of gardening including: planting, digging, sowing seeds, weeding. Undertake some gardening together.</p>
<p><b>Feather tennis</b> Blow the feather back and forth like a game of tennis.</p>	<p><b>Rhythmic Dance</b> Choose a song to rock, sway or move rhythmically to. Child and adult move and sway in time with each other. Mirroring each other with moves and pace of movements.</p>	<p><b>Row your boat</b> Sitting opposite each other holding hands. Singing and rocking back and forward to old rhyme.</p>	<p><b>Ribbon circles</b> Making large, small, slow, quick circles and shapes with a ribbon. Ribbon can also be attached to a stick.</p>
<p><b>Body sock</b> Use the Body sock to stretch and move whilst contained in the space. Try different postures and movement until you find ways to move that feels good within the body sock.</p>	<p><b>Bean bag falling</b> Take turns falling safely into a bean bag. Child can choose to be caught by an adult prior to landing in the bean bag.</p>	<p><b>Sand Timer and Rocking</b> Record how many times you can rock from side to side until the sand timer has emptied. Take turns or do together at the same time mirroring each other's pace.</p>	<p><b>Simon Says</b> Play game Simon Says. Child or adult is Simon and you only copy the actions if they say "Simon Says". Take turns being Simon. Can be played in many different settings.</p>
<p><b>Lava lamp mirroring</b> Be a lava lamp. What does it feel like to be that blob? Move fluidly, sway or rock. What colour are you?</p>	<p><b>Bubble wrappopping</b> Using bubble wrap to pop or squeeze. This activity can be done with a timer to see who can pop the most in the allotted time.</p>	<p><b>Shaving cream statues</b> Make statues from shaving cream. Be as creative as you like!</p>	<p><b>Ping Pong Breath</b> Using a ping pong ball and big breath to see how far with each breath either one can get the ball to go.</p>
<p><b>Pet grooming</b> Wash or brush suitable pet. If no pet available you can groom a toy animal.</p>	<p><b>Hair brushing</b> Brushing with a range of strokes. Slow, fast, zig zag. Alternative between child and adult.</p>		

<b>Flight – grounding in the present</b>			
<p><b>Hand and foot massage</b> Give each other a hand or foot massage using oil or cream if you want. Alternate between adult and child. Child and adult to consent to massage before beginning activity.</p>	<p><b>Seated twisting</b> Whilst seated opposite each other twist as far to the right and then twist as far to the left as you can go.</p>	<p><b>Blowing out candles</b> Light candles and blow them out. One by one or all at once. Repeat. Take turns blowing out the candles. Or try blowing them out together.</p>	<p><b>Toilet paper mummy game</b> Take turns wrapping each other like a mummy in toilet paper. Once you are all wrapped up bust out of the toilet paper- use all your energy to break free!</p>
<p><b>Weighted activities</b> Lie under a weighted blanket/item or have it on your lap, as you spend time together noticing some of the sensations. *Consider appropriate weight limits for children</p>	<p><b>Walking backwards</b> Decide on a target and walk backwards to the designated spot. You can count steps or adapt steps to be small or big.</p>	<p><b>Bubble gum</b> Chewing gum or food that has texture which requires rigorous jaw motion i.e., Minties.</p>	<p><b>Wheelbarrow walking</b> Inviting the child to walk around on their hands whilst the adult uses their legs to “push the wheelbarrow”.</p>
<p><b>Balance on a string</b> Place a string on the ground. Using imagination pretend to “walk the tightrope”.</p>	<p><b>Party blowers</b> Blow the party blowers or Kazoos make a song taking turns to complete the song verse by verse.</p>	<p><b>Blowing up balloons</b> Blow up balloons to different sizes then let go and repeat.</p>	<p><b>Torch Spotto</b> Using a torch to spotlight things in the dark so the other person can guess. Take turns each spotlighting.</p>
<p><b>Guided relaxation</b> Use guided relaxation to provide an opportunity for a pleasurable experience which is safe and grounding. You can develop a narrative with the child going to a place they choose, seeing the things they want to see i.e., beach, forest, Outer Space.</p>	<p><b>Slime/playdough/ waterplay</b> Either make or use premade slime or playdough to create an object or discuss the sensations felt in your hands as you touch them.</p>	<p><b>Cuddling a Pet</b> Cuddling a pet or emulating the touch with a toy if no pet is available.</p>	<p><b>Baking- bread, kneading dough</b> Bake or cook together noting the sensory experience. i.e., smells, touch and taste when finished.</p>
<p><b>Gym ball rolling</b> Rolling around on a large gym ball frontwards, backwards, touching the ground.</p>	<p><b>Drinking thick drink through a straw</b> Make a smoothie or thick drink together and drink through a straw.</p>	<p><b>Headphones with nature sounds</b> While wearing headphones play nature sounds or calming music.</p>	

<b>Freeze – moving out of shut down</b>			
<p><b>Roll up/unroll body</b> On the floor roll up using a blanket and unroll to a stretch.</p>	<p><b>Skipping and counting</b> Whist skipping (with or without a rope) keep counting until you forget where you are up to.</p>	<p><b>Align to environment</b> Talk about the things that you are experiencing what can I see? what can I hear? What can I smell? What can I taste? What can I touch?</p>	<p><b>Hammock swinging</b> Swaying gently in a hammock – can be swayed by two adults standing on either side gently pushing the hammock.</p>
<p><b>Yoga poses</b> Do yoga poses together. i.e., child's post, cat pose. Child directs adult pose and vice versa.</p>	<p><b>Clapping to a beat</b> Either child or adult begin by creating a beat for the other to follow in clapping.</p>	<p><b>Lions' Breath</b> Taking a big breath in then letting out with a big ROAR.</p>	<p><b>Being pulled around in a blanket</b> Wrap the child in a blanket and pull them around gently so they feel the pressure underneath their body.</p>
<p><b>Animal stomping/jumping</b> Choose a large animal each and stomp and embody that animal i.e., elephant, giraffe.</p>	<p><b>Food smells and textures</b> Discuss each other's favourite food smells and textures.</p>	<p><b>Hot/Cold Temperature game</b> Using a heat/cool pack hold and talk about environments/things which are cold and hot whilst holding the corresponding temperature.</p>	<p><b>Laying on lambswool/snow angels</b> Lay on lambs wool or rug and make snow angels moving your arms and legs up and down.</p>
<p><b>Frog jumps</b> Crouch down like a frog and have a frog jump race leaping to the finish line.</p>	<p><b>What is in the bag?</b> Sensory and tactile lucky dip. Create a sensory bag with smells and textures and choose whilst blindfolded.</p>	<p><b>Pillow fight</b> Playful pillow fighting</p>	<p><b>Electric toothbrush</b> Whilst using the toothbrush take turns to hum a song whilst brushing and guess it.</p>
<p><b>Jumping Trampoline</b> Jumping on a trampoline to different heights and pressures. e.g. try some soft jumps and hard jumps.</p>	<p><b>Spinning on a chair</b> Using an office type chair, safety spin</p>	<p><b>Kinetic Sandcastles</b> Using Kinetic sand make sandcastles.</p>	<p><b>Bilateral Patting to Music</b> Tapping your body from your shoulders to ankles. Put right hand to left shoulder and left hand to right shoulder and pat alternatively down the body.</p>

<b>Fawn/Appease – building confidence and removing the need to appease</b>			
<p><b>Yoga</b> Strong and rigid yoga poses i.e., Warrior pose – strong pose.</p>	<p><b>Karaoke/Singalong</b> Sing songs together taking turns choosing the songs.</p>	<p><b>Forced choice game</b> Similar but different choices. e.g. bike riding or dancing, television or reading, bath or shower.</p>	<p><b>Climbing competency games</b> Using ladders, play equipment, park equipment to find ways of achieving competency through climbing and balance-oriented activities.</p>
<p><b>Line dancing, Hokey Pokey</b> Together participate in line dancing or doing the hokey pokey.</p>	<p><b>Dress ups</b> Using the concept of heroes and villains choose dress up clothes and act out the character you are dressed as.</p>	<p><b>Puppets</b> Make or use premade puppets to act out a story or conversation.</p>	<p><b>Emotional and affect mirroring</b> Whilst looking at each other mirror the others facial expressions.</p>
<p><b>My medal a day</b> Award a medal a day to each other for something that you notice has gone well, or you have achieved, or a meaningful reflection. This can be done by telling each other what their medal is for each day.</p>	<p><b>Mirroring dance moves</b> Be a mirror to each other as you take turns in doing dance moves.</p>	<p><b>Parents jobs, kids' jobs list</b> Making lists of which jobs are for kids and which ones are for adults.</p>	<p><b>Menu Planning</b> Sitting together and menu planning for the week. Considering the others likes and dislikes.</p>
<p><b>Role Play</b> Role playing/drama creating scenarios which allow positive role modelling.</p>	<p><b>My hero and Me</b> Making a list or collage of the same traits as your favourite hero.</p>	<p><b>Mirror me, mirror you</b> Taking turns to hold up a mirror in front ea. others face and pull faces which show emotions.</p>	<p><b>My box of goodness</b> Using a tissue box, creating a box of all things good and joyful – magazine cuttings, shells, symbols, and icons.</p>
<p><b>Pet therapy</b> Pet, bathe or brush a pet who is happy to be groomed. You can use the pet as a friend, as someone to tell your thoughts to.</p>	<p><b>The I am poem</b> Writing a poem that highlights all the strengths and positive attributes of the child and the safe adult. Each line begins with "I am".</p>	<p><b>Making homemade and other therapeutic tools</b> i.e., stress balls, playdough, pasta.</p>	