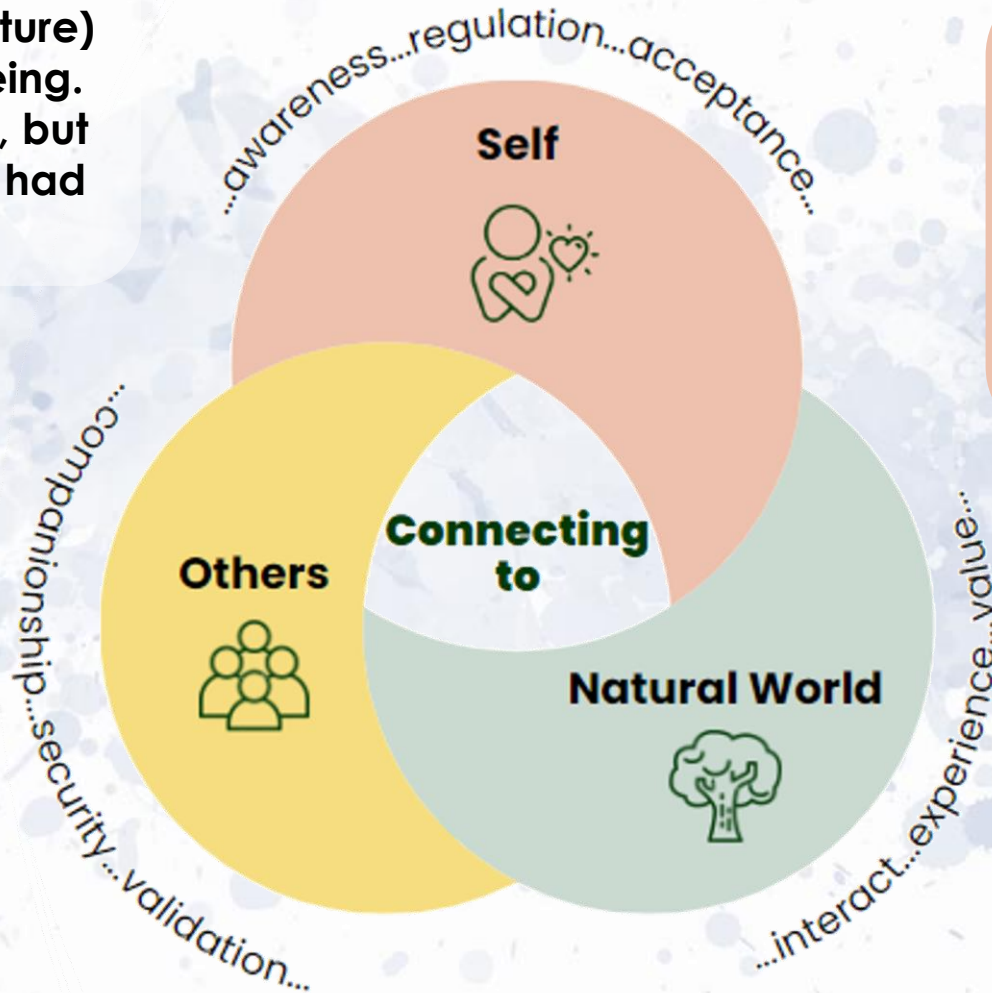


**Research suggests connection at three levels (to self, to others, and to nature) contributes significantly to wellbeing. These are important for everyone, but especially so for those who have had traumatic experiences.**

This is a fundamental human need, referring to the sense of closeness and belonging a person can experience during supportive relationships and interactions. We feel connection when we feel valued, seen, and heard by another person.



This means being attuned and attentive to the emotions, thoughts, and sensations within us. It's developing an awareness and understanding of ourselves, being aware of our own strengths and weaknesses, being compassionate to ourselves, and understanding what helps us in difficult situations.

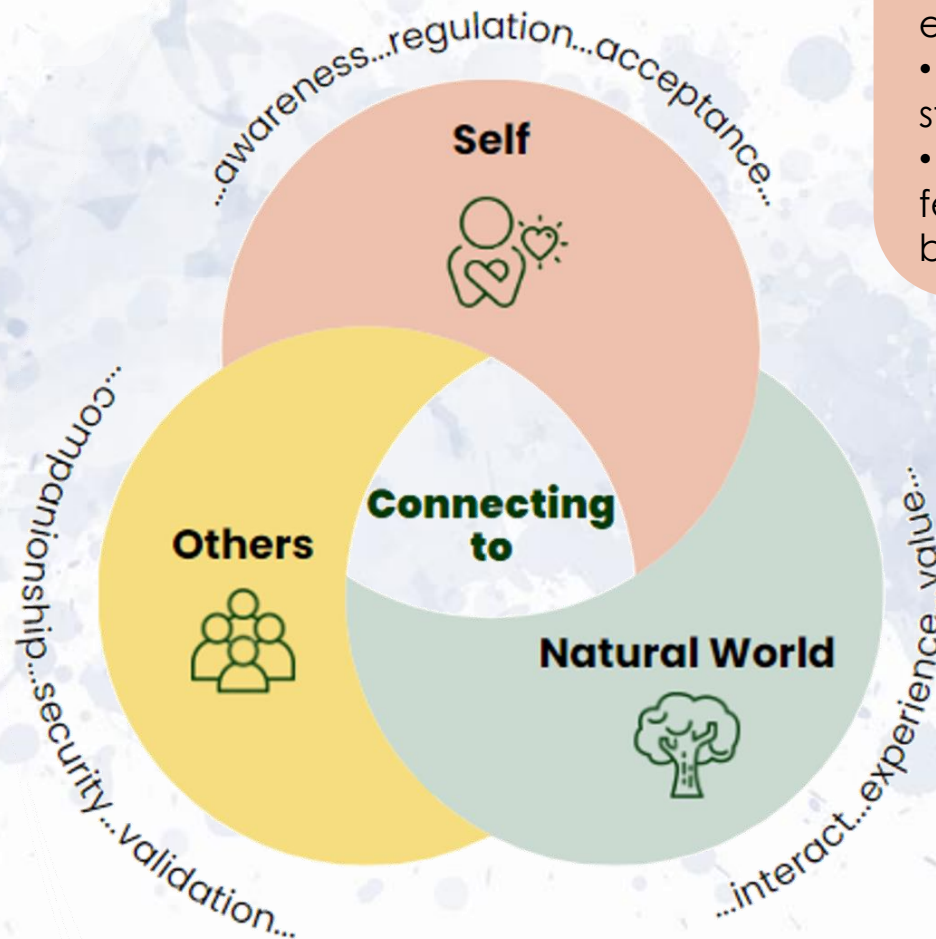
This means tuning in to your surroundings and noticing what is happening around you in the environment. It involves a sense of meaningful involvement in something larger than oneself and an understanding of how an individual fits into this.

Based on research by Bessel Van Der Kolk and Gabor Mate.

# Connection in the Classroom

To support children's wellbeing, we need to create learning environments which promote connection at these 3 levels. To do this, we can:

- Develop **companionship**, foster relationships between staff and pupils, be curious, show a genuine interest in the child and their world. Activities such as dance and sport allow synchronicity between people. Support peer relationships - help them feel part of something bigger than themselves.
- Support their sense of **security**, provide supportive environments and pastoral support.
- **Validate**, give young people a language to normalise and share their experiences, use relational approaches to understand what behaviour communicates, whilst recognising everyone's unique contribution.



- Support their **self-awareness**, develop their understanding of who they are and what is important to them, provide opportunities for them to shape their own environments
- Help young people to notice/label and start to **regulate** their emotions
- Support their **acceptance** of how they feel and who they are, mindfulness, yoga, breath exercises, sport are helpful tools

- Support **interactions** with the environment, use the senses, what can they smell, hear, see, touch?
- Support the **experience** of being in their environment (incorporate principles of forest school allow exploration and learner driven experiences)
- Providing opportunities for **collaboration** with peers in nature.
- Support young people to **value** and notice the environment, try art (photography, drawing, writing, collages, drama) and mindfulness as tools