

SMART Foundation and Strategies

Activities Booklet



©2021 Australian Childhood Foundation

This booklet is for your personal use and non-commercial use only

Any transmission, storage, redistribution of part or all content in any form for any further purpose is a breach of copyright, is strictly prohibited and remains the Intellectual Property of the Australian Childhood Foundation.

Contents

1. Brain development – Strategies

- Neuronal Connections
- Brainstem
- Cerebellum
- Diencephalon
- Amygdala
- Hippocampus
- Cortex
- Prefrontal Cortex
- Medial Prefrontal Cortex & Right Orbitofrontal Cortex
- Broca's area
- Wernicke's area
- Superior Colliculus

2. Working with the Window of Tolerance – Strategies

Working with students outside their Window of Tolerance

- Working with mobilised responses – Fight
- Working with mobilised responses – Flight
- Working with mobilised responses – Freeze
- Working with mobilised immobilised responses – Feign/Flop

Working with students to keep them in their Window of Tolerance

Breath based activities

Grounding activities

3. Session handouts

Bringing a child into the space

Brain food for the developing child

Strategies for transforming

Trauma and the impact on the brain

Tracking your own student's Window of Tolerance

Understanding what's beneath the behaviour

Group Activity - behaviour

4. SMART PRACTICE – documents

SMART PRACTICE Audit Tool

SMART PRACTICE Strategies Document

SMART PRACTICE - Strategies

5. Recommended resources & reading material

Neuronal Connections

SMART PRACTICE focus: **Predictable**

Discussion Paper 1: Responding to children who have experienced abuse related trauma – Ideas for school-based treatment

Transforming Neuronal Connections: building and strengthening

Repeated activities	Wool neuronal activity
Throwing a ball or hackysack	Memory games
Repeating a rhyme	Brain games – puzzles, crosswords
Clapping games	Physical repetitive activities
Positive relational connection	Fun and relational attunement

Building a “neuronally strong” classroom

- Provide opportunities for repeated experiences
- Ensure students have an opportunity to practice tasks over and over
- Provide encouragement when tasks are achieved as this will connect to the brains’ reward system
- Include lots of physical activities that are repetitive – playing musical instruments, skipping, dancing etc
- Model positive relational connections, emotion, fun and relational attunement

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Brainstem



SMART PRACTICE focus: Predictable and Calming

Discussion Paper 1: Responding to children who have experienced abuse related trauma – Ideas for school-based treatment

Transforming the brainstem: safe containment and deep pressure

Pea Pod/egg chairs/beanbags	Nestling in a hammock
Weighted toys	Heavy blankets or jackets
Wall squats	Giving/receiving safe hugs/self-hugs
Doing planks, push ups, wall presses	Carrying heavy items

Transforming the brainstem: rhythmic and repetitive for regulation

Allowing and using rocking	Swinging – provide swings/swinging chairs
Using singing activities	Clapping
Drumming activities – desktop	Rhyming activities
Playing musical instruments	Reading
Writing music and songs	Use audio books/read-a-long books
Using rote activities- times tables etc	Marching
Physical movement activities	Cardio activities
Brain gym activities	Zumba type/ Go Noodle activities
Playing music (60 – 80 bpm)	Jumping and bouncing
Practicing skipping	Patting or brushing animals/pets
Shooting hoops/bouncing balls	Provide water or crushed ice to swallow
Having “rhythmic furniture” - Stools	Allowing chewing/eating in class - snacks
Having class rocking chairs	Using movement through dance
Individual/class wobble boards	Brushing hair
Swinging in a hammock	Including water play
Using stationary bikes, treadmills	Hand Clapping Games * (see resources)
Playing with kinetic sand/other mediums	Having routine in all school aspects
Having structured lessons/breaks	Using circle time to provide routine
Integrating heart rate monitors into lessons – to teach about heart rate regulation	Wool based activities – knitting, crocheting, Knitting Nancy, gods eyes

Transforming the brainstem: sensory needs and soothing

Use soothing activities – ie music	Provide calming boxes
Provide cool water to drink	Provide different sensory options
Provide ice to suck and crunch on	See “Diencephalon” for more ideas

Cerebellum



SMART PRACTICE focus: **Predictable and Calming**

Discussion Paper 1: Responding to children who have experienced abuse related trauma – Ideas for school-based treatment

Transforming the cerebellum: movement and balance

Balancing activities	Yoga
Drumming activities	Painting nails
Stretching	Hand massage
Physical challenges	Aligning the spine activities
Spine support – lumbar supports	See “Brainstem” for more ideas

Building a “rhythmic/balance-connecting” classroom

- bring rhythm and balance into the classroom – physical movement breaks, short exercise bursts
- use brain breaks or “brain kits” – for regulation
- have “rhythmic, containing and balance supportive furniture” for regulation
- design school routines with a rhythmic sense to the lesson, day, week, year
- embed “circle” routines and morning meetings with a sense of rhythm, positive emotion, fun and relational attunement
- integrate heart rate activities and heart rate monitors in both personal and learning development (ie great to include in maths or science lessons)
- replace bells/sirens with music/metronome, initially set at 150 bpm, then reduce to between 60 – 80 bpm

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Brainstem & Cerebellum - Session Strategies and Activities

Roll a Brain Break Activities

<https://www.chino.k12.ca.us/cms/lib/CA01902308/Centricity/Domain/5723/RollaTaskBrainBreak.pdf>
https://www.yourtherapysource.com/files/Roll_Some_Fun_Freebie2.pdf
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Browse/Search:roll%20a%20brain%20break>



Cup Song – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5kYLOb6i5I>

Desktop Drumming - <https://youtu.be/2-MpzjxEVBU>

Hand Clapping Games - <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/resources/>

This that this that

This is a fun hand clapping game for groups of two or more. It is rhythmic, repetitive and has a focused element.

This this (two palms together)

That that (backs of palms together)

This this

That that

This

That

This

That

This this

That that



Diencephalon



SMART PRACTICE focus: **Responsive and Translating**

Discussion Paper 5: Extending our understanding of the role of specific brain structures in responding to trauma

Transforming the Diencephalon: sensory awareness

My Sensory Hand * (see resources)	Patting and caring for animals/pets
Soothing activities in young person's preferred sensory modality	Massage – hand massage, “weather” or “pizza” massage
Mindfulness activities	Grounding and meditation and activities
Art and craft activities – painting, drawing, colouring, doodling – combine this with listening to music	Playing music – audio or playing an instrument, drumming
Outside activities – nature walks, smelling flowers, touching different textures, looking up at the sky	Calm box objects – hand cream, playdough, calm visual cards, music, art mediums

Building a “sensory-connecting” classroom

- conduct a sensory audit – ie: is it too hot or too cold, too noisy?
- provide calm, positive sensory experiences – calming items, fidgets (age appropriate options), boxes or areas in the classroom and other areas
- provide regular and predictable brain and body breaks, that include movement, mindfulness, or breath-based activities – especially consider transition times

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Diencephalon - Session Strategies and Activities

My Sensory Hand Activity

Trace your hand on a piece of paper and label each finger with each of the five senses.

Alternatives – use face paints to write the senses at the base of your non-dominant hand's fingers or use a pre cut out hand shape or plastic/rubber glove to write the sense on

Think of your favourite thing/s associated with each of the senses ie taste – chocolate, smell – flowers/flower shop

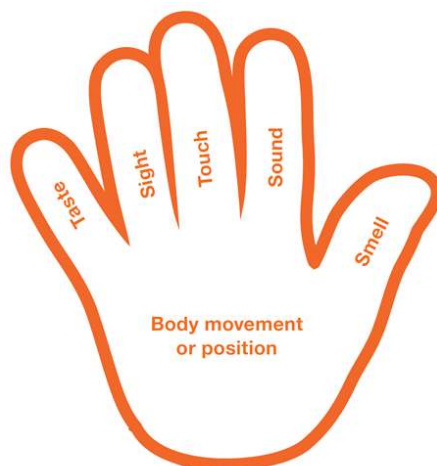
Write or draw a symbol of your favourite thing associated with each sense in the associated finger or about the finger

Alternative – paint a symbol or colour on each fingernail to remind the child of their favourite things associated with their senses.

Make copies of the drawings so they can be easily accessed.

Encourage the child to look at their real hand and remind themselves of their favourite things. Practice accessing their favourite things.

Encourage the child to think about their 5 Senses Hand when/if they begin feeling like they are drifting off or becoming activated. Explore with them if getting in touch with some senses are easier than others.



This activity can be found at:

<https://australianchildhoodfoundation.crackerhq.com/pvl/9b20e31a6fa3c43f414af2fcb00f1a52/share/v1/d72fdca7-2789-49a6-b126-a7add19e3a84>



Amygdala

SMART PRACTICE focus: **Responsive, Attuned and Connecting**

Discussion Paper 5: Extending our understanding of the role of specific brain structures in responding to trauma

Transforming the Amygdala: emotions and social cues

Include explicit teaching around emotional literacy	Model difference facial expressions and emotions and providing language
Provide feelings cards/tools to help student to identify emotions	Provide opportunities to experience and understand emotions in others
Have feelings card worksheets	Greet students each day

Transforming the Amygdala: implicit memory

Include explicit teaching around emotional literacy	Use pre-arrange non-verbal signals to communicate
Keep calm and regulated yourself	Ask few questions

Transforming the Amygdala: the alarm system

Include explicit teaching around emotional literacy	Remove trigger if possible – loud noise, light
Understand their triggers	Support child – reassure and calm, stay present
Minimise possible triggers	Use simple language “I am here” “You are safe”

Building an “amygdala-connecting” classroom

- provide opportunities to experience and understand emotions in others – through safe relationships, role modelling and game playing
- understand their background, their triggers and acknowledge their learning needs and successes.
- stay calm, stay present and with the child or young person. Reassure
- ensure re-entry to the classroom is a safe and positive transition

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Amygdala - Session Strategies and Activities

Memories....

Implicit memories are stored in our subconscious part of our brain, in our amygdala. These memories are also stored as sensory data – in our brains and bodies.

Show participants a picture of something rather generic – could be someone cutting the grass, a tray of biscuits baking in the oven, or a beach scene.

Reflect whether the image holds a memory for them, for example it could be that the tray of biscuits reminds them of cooking with a family member?

Reflective Questions:

- How does it make them feel?
- How old are they and where does this memory take them?
- What emotions does this evoke for them?
- Do they feel this in their body? If so, where?



Oh, What a feeling...

Show participants a variety of faces with emotions.... Alternatively, you could use the Cars R Us Cards from Innovative Resources or other cards

Reflect on what emotion the face may be displaying.

Reflective Questions:

Does this evoke any emotions or feelings or memories for them?

Was there any incongruence between the perceived emotion and what they felt?





Hippocampus

SMART PRACTICE focus: **Responsive and Translating Calming**

Discussion Paper 5: Extending our understanding of the role of specific brain structures in responding to trauma

Discussion Paper 3: Exploring the impact of abuse related trauma on memory functioning of children

Transforming the hippocampus: explicit memory

Provide opportunities for review	Remember that they may not remember
Practice activities over and over	Provide crosswords, and find it puzzles for students to use
Reinforce learning through repetition	Have visual reminders around room
Provide reminders verbally	Use visual timetables, planners
Use sticky notes to help remind	Use diaries/apps for older students
Use colour-coordinated stickers/folders	Allow extra time for activities
Use scaffolding with class activities	Break down tasks into manageable tasks
Use rhythmic & repetitive activities to remind and review – rhymes, rote learning	Use short, explicit explanations or questions when doing tasks
Play memory games – card games like “Memory” or “Uno”, Sudoku, “Guess Who” or “20 Questions”, chess and checkers to strengthen memory retention & recall	

Building a “memory-connecting” classroom

- provide lots of opportunities for students to embed their learning
- do this through practicing and reviewing activities
- assist students by “chunking” or breaking down instructions and tasks into manageable tasks
- use short explanations, rather than lengthy ones
- remember their memory will be impacted when stressed – regulate first.
- display visual reminders around the room

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Hippocampus - Session Strategies and Activities

The Grocery List Game

There are several variations of the grocery list game that improve memory function. This group game involves forming a circle, with the first person starting the game with, *"I went to the shop and bought..."* Each subsequent person adds an item to the end of the sentence, and the object of the game is to remember all items in correct order. The first person that messes up the order or cannot remember the items sits out or waits until the next round to continue.

This quick and easy game is great to play if you do not have any board games, cards, or other items handy. The Grocery List Game tests your ability to recall and properly order lists. The game builds connections and expands your brain's ability to remember, improving your memory over time.

To make the game more personal and challenging, you can replace the starting sentence with any topic, such as, *"I went on a holiday and I took my camera and my book"* (add two items) *"My favourite books are..."* Trying to recall long book titles increases the difficulty of the game.

Charades

Charades is a game suitable for all ages. It involves acting out words or phrases written on a slip of paper.

The object is to get your team to guess the answer using gestures alone. That's right, when a player is acting out the word or phrase, they aren't allowed to talk!

This game requires little preparation, a lot of imagination, and is great for a laugh and tests your memory of all sorts of things!

Cortex



SMART PRACTICE focus: **Translating and Involving**

Discussion Paper 8: Responding to some frequently asked questions about the impact of abuse related trauma on children.

Transforming the Cortex: connecting the cortex

Provide problem solving activities	Use thinking and choice games
Break down problems in to “chunks” and scaffold tasks	Play games such as Uno, Chess, Charades
Map out and plan activities or options	Involve students in class/group decision making
Use voluntary movement activities	Provide opportunities to give feedback
Use complex physical movement activities - clapping or drumming pattern	Help build their identity and life story through activities such as ACF’s “Identity Web” *

Building a “cognitive-connecting” classroom

- build student involvement in the decision-making about a range of school projects/issues and to co-design their learning.
- involve students in democratic processes and student voice by providing regular opportunities and teaching the skills required to be effective e.g. negotiation, meeting skills, planning, formative assessment, and feedback.
- help build their sense of identity through life story work activities – help them build a picture of their life – can the students each keep a notebook or scrap book of things they have done that year?

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Cortex - Session Strategies and Activities

Would You Rather Activity

There are lots of versions of this activity available on the internet. You can also write your own questions, making them age and developmentally appropriate

For example:

A pre-schooler – “Would you rather have a “bunny” or a “doggy” as a pet?”

A primary aged student – “Would you rather play outside on the playground or inside on the computers at lunch time?”

A high school aged student: “Would you rather do your exams online or in person?”

For this activity, ask participants to stand and to choose whether they agree with or relate to the first option or the second option.

Encourage participants to raise their right hand for the first option, their left hand for the second option.

You can include other ways to do this – step right or step left, or step and raise your arm right, step and raise your arm left.

This is a great brain and body break activity....

There are no right or wrong answers. If time permits, ask participants to reflect with a partner why they chose a particular option over another.



Do This Do That

This activity is based on the “Simon Says” game.

Activity leader explains that each time they say, “do this” and they do an action, the participants are to copy and “do” that action (ie put hands on head, or clap)

If the leader says, “do that”, and does an action, the participants are not to “do” that action”

Pre-frontal cortex/MPFC

SMART PRACTICE focus: **Attuning and Connecting**



Strategies for transforming maintaining focus

Provide activities that focus attention – a task or an activity	Movement activities – walking, jogging, running, dancing
Drawing and writing	Doodling and scribbling
Mindful outside activities – walks, water play, labyrinths	Include activities that have movement
Making mandalas with nature items – stones, shells, leaves	Colouring in or drawing mandalas
Reading or listening to books	Include activities that build in stillness and quiet
Doing arts and crafts	Focused breathing activities
Playing musical instruments	Wool based activities – knitting, crocheting, Knitting Nancy, gods eyes

Building a “focus-connecting” classroom...

- include activities that build on focussing attention, use the working memory, social cognition, attuned communication, involve self-regulation (mirror games), impulse control, and judgement and reasoning.
- involve children/young people in physical activities that include movement
- provide opportunities that build in focus and stillness – quiet times, reading times, focused activities for calm and regulation – writing, drawing, colouring in, reading, listening to music or read a long books, art and craft activities, jigsaws, word puzzles, find it books.

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Prefrontal Cortex/MPFC - Session Strategies and Activities

Feather or Leaf Breathing Activity

Raise a feather or leaf of your choice above your head, extending your hand as high up as you can, as you do so, take a big breath in (ideally through the nose).

Hold for 2 seconds.

As you release the feather, breathe out (ideally through the mouth) for as long as it takes for the feather to fall to the ground.

Experiment with different heights, as well as weights of the feather or leaf, noticing the effect on the body of extending the outbreath.

Mirroring activity

Working in pairs, practice some mirroring activities, to focus and attune into one another

Choose one person to be the first person to lead this activity, then swop.

You may like to make hand and arm movements up and down or in circles.

Another way to do this activity is to use an item such as a marker or pop stick.

Each person is to use their Pointer finger to “hold” on to the item. Working together, as above, try and follow each other patterns of movement.



Broca's and Wernicke's Areas

SMART PRACTICE focus: **Translating and Engaging**



Strategies for transforming articulating and comprehending

Recognise that the student may not be able to understand what is said	Notice arousal level – mobilised or immobilised
Understand that the student may not be able to speak or use words	Use bottom up brain stem strategies to regulate
Recognise the non-verbal and body communication	Use pre-organised visuals, simple hand gestures or signals to communicate
Connect and reassure	Engage the MPFC

Superior Colliculus

SMART PRACTICE focus: **Predictable and Calming**



Strategies for transforming calming the chaos

Keeping spaces as clear and organised as possible	Be aware of external factors that can be a distraction - noise, flashing lights
Minimise hanging items and items in/stuck on windows	Reduce internal distractions
Minimise changes in the classroom, ie hanging up something new	Pre-warn about any changes – get students involved in the process

Left and Right Hemisphere and the Corpus Callosum



SMART PRACTICE focus: **Involving, Connecting, and Engaging**

Strategies for transforming strengthening the individual hemispheres

Building the Right Hemisphere	Building the Left Hemisphere
Use attunement activities	Provide language and logic activities
Use relational-based activities	Play strategy games
Practice mutual smiling, laughing	Have discussion times in class
Play mirroring games based on facial expressions	Incorporate cognitive processes into calming or stimulating activities
Practice voice copying	Count when doing breathing activities
Model appropriate gestures and proximity	Involve students in debates

Strategies for transforming strengthening the corpus callosum and integrating the hemispheres

Emotionally	Physically
Attune into students' facial expressions & body language	Have activities that cross the "imaginary midline" in the body
Notice how they may be feeling	Clapping games
Provide language: <i>"I notice that you are/have... (ie tears in your eyes, you are yawning...."</i>	Doing physical activities and sport activities – ie playing tennis
Be curious <i>"I wonder if you are feeling..."</i>	Play games and sing songs such as "The "Hokey Pokey"
Use emotion cards/worksheets	Desktop drumming activities
See "Amygdala" for more ideas	Cup song games

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Left & Right Hemisphere - Session Strategies and Activities

The Wright Family Activity

There are lots of versions of this activity available on the internet.

The goal of this activity is for participants to be able to undertake the activity task whilst listening to a story.

Instruct participants to either step or pass an object (or both) to the right when they hear the word “right” or a word that sounds like “right” and left when they hear the word “left”. You could add another layer of challenge and get them to jump when they hear another word (ie “on”)

To add another element of challenge or stress, try reading the last part of the story faster and louder. This may cause participants to be unable to remember or step left or right quick enough, or they may drop the item they are passing.

At the end of the story get the participants to:

- **Check their heart rate – has it increased?**
- **Ask questions about the story...how many people were in the story, what were their names?**
- **What happened in the story?**

Depending on whether you added a “stress” element, they may or may not remember these details.

- **Ask participants why? What were they focusing on?**
- **Get them to reflect on this and to contextualise this into a school or classroom context.**
- **What made it difficult?**
- **What could have made it easier?**
- **What does this look like for your students?**
- **How can you assist them?**

Crossing the midline activities

Left hand, right foot, right hand left foot challenge

This fun activity involves crossing the midline but also uses balance and repetition, as well as attunement and connection

In pairs invite participants to do the following pattern

Left hand (*touch on or near each other's left palms together*)

Right foot (*touch right toes together*)

Right hand (*touch on or near each other's right palms together*)

Left foot (*touch left toes together*)

At first participants may struggle with this. Invite them to keep repeating until it becomes more familiar.

Invite them to both say the words, "*left hand, right foot, right hand, left foot*" as they do this. Challenge them to even try a melodic/sing song voice as they do.

Do they notice a change in their ability to focus and achieve the activity?

Then invite participants to attune in and connect to each other, by focusing on each other's faces, not their hands and feet.

Do they notice a change in their ability to focus and being able to do this activity?

Other activities

Invite participants to work in pairs or threes to come up with two age and developmentally appropriate "*crossing the midline activities*". Share these with the whole group

Resources

<https://www.teachstarter.com/us/blog/crossing-the-midline-activities-us/>

<https://www.growinghandsonkids.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/20-Crossing-Midline-Activities-Printable-UpdatedAug2019-791x1024.jpg>



Working with the Window of Tolerance

SMART PRACTICE focus: **all elements**

Discussion Paper 15: Working with the window of tolerance in the classroom

Overshooting or undershooting the Window of Tolerance

Strategies - MOBILISED responses – *Fight*

Have opportunity to stabilize their hyper-aroused nervous system
Use rhythmic, containing and grounding activities – match their energy
Use co-regulating movements - hang, swing, climb, march
Use big movements to move energy - stomp, jump on the spot, drum

Strategies – MOBILISED responses - *Flight*

Be kind & patient when “finding” or collecting students who have “flown”
Offer then an easy task/chore to do to ground them
Help them to settle their body – see above brain strategies
Encourage them to hang/swing/carry something heavy – see brain strategies

Strategies – MOBILISED responses - *Freeze*

Be curious about the freeze state- are there any places that are less frozen
Gently facilitate movement e.g. Wiggling one finger or toes, blink,
Encourage breathing or use breath-based activities
Help them to engage their senses – see “Diencephalon” strategies

Strategies – IMMOBILISED responses – *Feign/Flop*

Orienting to the space/grounding exercises
Orienting the senses – Senses Activity below
Alignment- engaging the spine
Safe Containment activities – see “Brain Stem” activities

Extra Strategies – Calming - for mobilised responses



Holding/patting a pet	Blowing bubbles
Wrapping in a heavy blanket	Bubble wrap
Massage/deep pressure touch	Soothing scents (oils/candles)
Isometric exercises/yoga	Soft materials/textures
Taking walks	Rocking in a rocking/glider chair
Slow/rhythmic music	Have soft/low lighting
Warm temperature	Chewy or crunchy foods/lollies/gum
Mandalas	Holding a soft toy
Weighted blanket or lap pad	Co-regulatory activities

Extra strategies - Alerting - for immobilised responses



Drink or splash face with cold water	Fast paced/upbeat music
Holding ice in hand or mouth	Smell strong scents
Try being in a cool room	Touch Rough or prickly textures
Use light touch i.e. feather	Try fast and or jerky movements
Aerobic exercise	Use bright or flashing lights
Practice stretches/yoga	Eat sour or spicy foods/candy
Go for a power walk	Chew on crunchy food
Try rubber band wrist snapping	Spine alignment activities

What I am already doing.....

What I would like to do...

Arousal & Regulation - Session Strategies and Activities

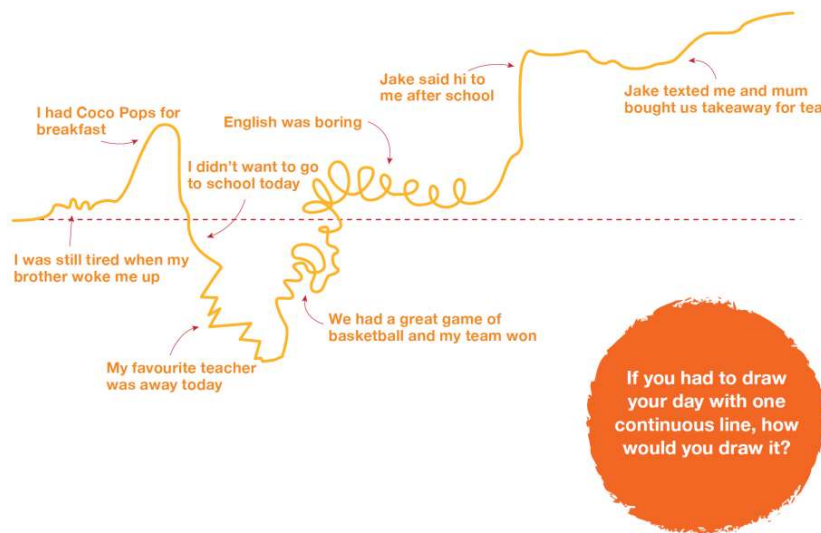
Line of My Day Activity

The goal of this activity is to map out with or for an individual student's arousal over a time continuum. This could be over a lesson period, a day at school, or over a week.

Using the document "Tracking your student's Own Window of Tolerance" (in the Handouts section), track the movement in and outside of the Window of Tolerance over your chosen time frame.

The purpose of the activity is for the child or young person to gain an understanding of how they are throughout their day and to anticipate when they may be feeling, say, more anxious or worried or excited. This can then assist to help both the adult and child to know what they need the most at that time.

For those working with children and young people, this can be used as an assessment or reflection tool to monitor their hyper arousal and hypo arousal, and when they are in their Window of Tolerance or overshooting or undershooting it.



This activity can be found at:

<https://australianchildhoodfoundation.crackerhq.com/pvl/9b20e31a6fa3c43f414af2fcb00f1a52/share/v1/1aaffc3d-7c3c-4df1-993f-50c0d5062a16>

Senses Activities

Engage the senses

Set up table stations or stations around the room. Have different items available to engage the participant's senses. ie use fruit smelling textas or scratch and sniff stickers, wrapped peppermint lollies to eat, essential oil on a cotton wool ball to smell or various textures to touch. Which ones calm? Which ones alert?

Notice and name

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch/feel/sense
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 thing you can taste
- 1 thing you can smell

Aligning the Spine Activities

Our midline extends down our spine and when it is aligned there is no collapse or compression of the spine.

Under stress it is hard to maintain spinal alignment

Think, too, about seating options for students.

Movement breaks help

Activities to try:

- Move like you have a tail
- Tick tock like a clock until you find your centre
- Imagine being lifted by a hook from the top of your head, while feeling the pull of gravity on the tail of your spine.
- Zip yourself up or pull yourself up with an imaginary string
- Walk with a toy balanced on your head
- Stretch up and become a tree or a tall tower

Strategies – remaining in the Window of Tolerance

Creating safety – using and supporting the social engagement system

Use of self

Creating safety – supporting the social engagement system	
Environment 	<p>A safe environment is paramount. Consider physical, emotional and cultural safety. Is the environment free from violence and abuse, responsive to physical and emotional needs and inclusive of cultural needs. Also ensure the environment considers the sensory needs of the child. Spaces that have too much stimulation - loud noises, bright lights, strong smells or too many pictures on the walls can be overwhelming for children experiencing trauma. Understanding the child's individual needs and providing enough sensory stimulation for growth but not too much so that the child is overwhelmed is the key. Remember safety is an individual experience. What seems safe for one person may not be for another.</p>
Proximity 	<p>Consider the child's need for closeness or space. Each child is different. Take into account the context, your relationship and the developmental age of the child. Being attuned to the child will help you to navigate what the child needs. If a child is dysregulated always remain within the line of sight of the child, unless your safety or the safety of others is at risk. Remember time in rather than time out. Any direct contact with the child should be initiated by the child.</p>
Eye contact 	<p>Eye contact is an important aspect of social engagement and enables feelings of connectedness and validation. Eye contact can be threatening though to a child who has experienced trauma as their social engagement system is usually on high alert. Consider ways to engage with the child using minimal eye contact. Chatting while driving along in the car, creating art or shooting hoops is a great way to engage the child in conversation and is less threatening than sitting face to face. Remember, each child is different so be guided by the child.</p>
Facial expressions 	<p>Children who have experienced trauma can often have trouble reading facial expressions and will often interpret expressions as anger or disappointment. Be aware of your facial expressions when engaging with the child. Aim for contingent facial expressions that look to mirror the child's inner experience – this conveys empathy and helps the child to understand themselves and feel heard. When the child is regulated, look for opportunities to assist the child to develop emotional literacy by using cards/games that match faces to feelings.</p>
Tone of voice 	<p>Prosody is the rhythm, pitch and tone of the voice, like when a mother alters her voice to soothe her baby. Tone of voice can have a powerful impact on a child's sense of safety. In situations where a child is dysregulated, consider the tone and pitch of your voice. A soft and gentle voice is more likely to deescalate an overwhelmed child.</p>
Posture and gestures 	<p>Consider your posture and gestures. How you approach the child will determine how safe or unsafe they may feel. If your posture is puffed up with your shoulders back, the child may read you as defensive and primed to fight. A posture that is strong, yet open and welcoming will help to calm the child. The child's implicit memory system may interpret certain postures or gestures as threatening, so stay attuned to the child and again be guided by them. Mirroring (whilst staying within your window of tolerance) is also important. Mirroring can convey empathy and a sense of feeling heard and this will help with coregulation.</p>

Breath-based activities

Bee and Snake breathing	Shape breathing – squares, triangles, stars
Sighing activity (1 2 3 Sigh - then repeat)	Tracing around fingers – breathing in on the up tracing, breathing out on the down tracing
Falling feathers or silk scarves or leaf	Blowing a pin wheel
Blowing bubbles/Bubble Tennis	3-dimensional breathing
Blowing up balloons	Breathing apps

Grounding Activities

Name objects in the room out loud	Open a window or door to let in fresh air
Encourage the child to look up and out rather than down	Move outside if you're inside and inside if you're outside
hang an interesting object at height in the space	Encourage students to take their shoes off and feel their feet on the floor
Ask she/he the time	Offer the student a cold drink
Ask student to point to a particular item – something green, something square	See – diencephalon for more strategies
Count how many things you can see in the room – ie circle shapes	Tree Roots Grounding activity (see below)

Movement Activities

See activities for brainstem and cerebellum	See activities for left and right hemisphere
Include regular brain and body breaks throughout the lesson or day	Provide movement and play equipment in both classes and in the school yard

Tree Roots Grounding activity

1. Find a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes or look downward and turn your attention to your tailbone at base of your spine.
3. Imagine that from the base of your spine you are a tree connected into the earth with roots growing very, very deeply into the ground.
4. Feel your roots held strongly in the soil connecting down from your tailbone into the deep center of the earth.
5. Feel how deep your roots grow.
6. As you are imagining your deep, deep roots, take a few slow, deep breaths. Breathe slowly in then pause, then out and pause.
7. Now that your roots are deeply planted, pay attention to your body that is the trunk of the tree. Does it feel strong and solid? What happens if you imagine some wind right now? When the wind comes, does your body feel strong? If you feel like the wind can still push your body around, then add a bigger root system. Imagine that you have heaps and heaps of roots holding you firmly to the ground. You might even grow kilometers into the earth. Feel how great it is to be strongly connected to the earth, how strong your body feels. Let's stay with that for a while.
8. Now let's take three more breaths before coming back into the room



Strategies understanding behaviour: understanding triggers

SMART PRACTICE focus: **Translating and Engaging**

Discussion Paper 1: Responding to children who have experienced abuse related trauma – Ideas for school-based treatment

Keeping a Trigger Diary

This is a great tool for teachers to use.

You could either keep a notebook/sections in a notebook for each child

For older students they could be assisted to use one of these together with a supportive adult.

Reflective questions:

What is a trigger?

Times I've/the student has been triggered.

What kinds of things trigger me/the student?

What happened after I/the student got triggered?



- What I/they thought
- What I/they felt
- What I/they did
- How I/they know I've /they've been triggered

What I/the student could do so that I/they wouldn't get triggered

Trigger Grid

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/app/uploads/2019/11/Trigger-Grid-Briere-and-Lanktree-2011.pdf>

based on: Briere & Lanktree (2011)

The Behaviour Iceberg or Ant Hill

Use the example in this book to identify either yourself or with your student about what are the behaviours "seen".

Explore together about possible "feelings" and "needs" underneath the behaviour.

Reflection Questions:

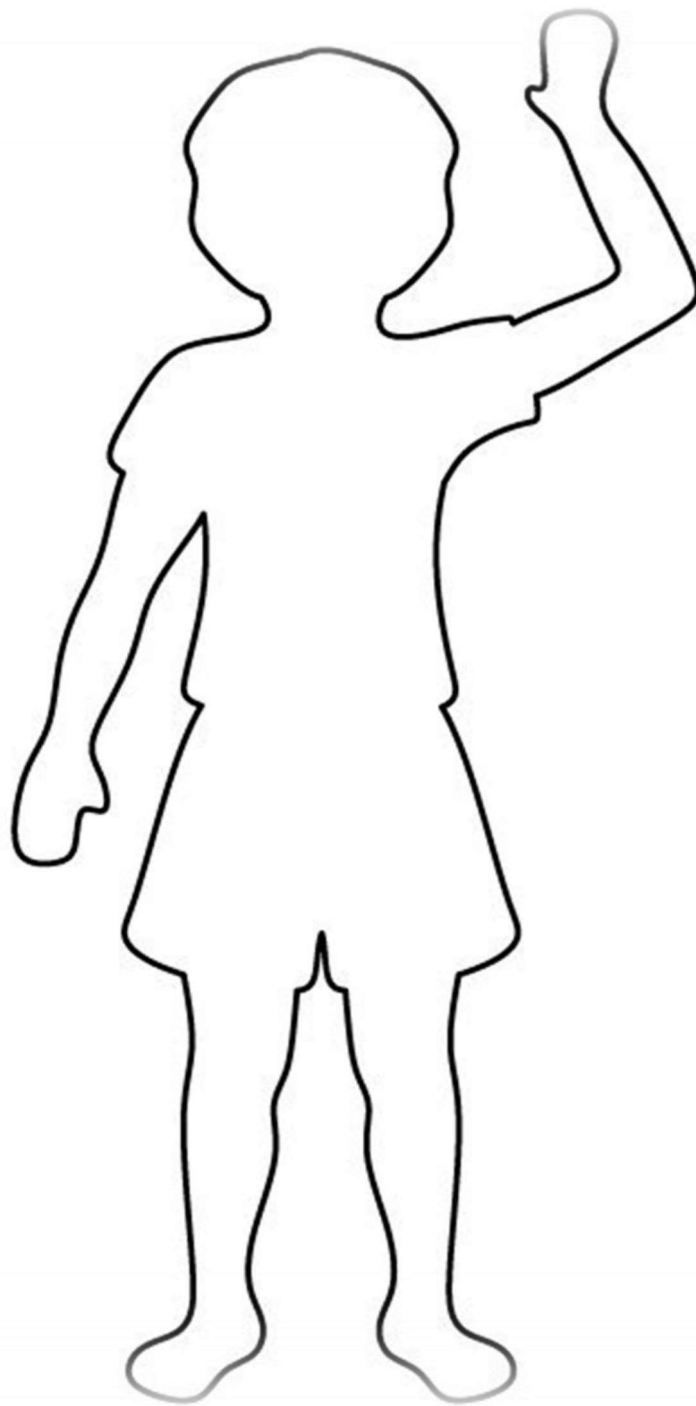
What is this behaviour telling me/the student?

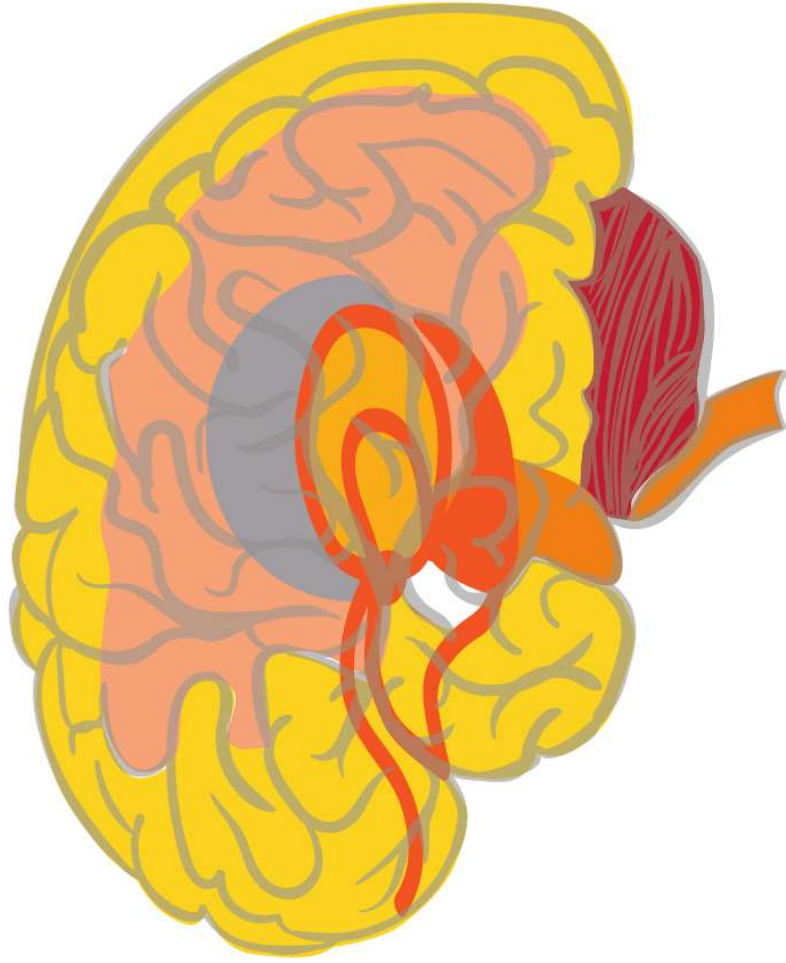
What is the feeling/s associated with this behaviour?

Activity Sheets



Bringing a child or young person into the space





● Neocortex

● Limbic

● Hippocampus

○ Amygdala

● Diencephalon

Hypothalamus

Thalamus

● Corpus Callosum

● Cerebellum

● Brainstem

Brain food for the developing child

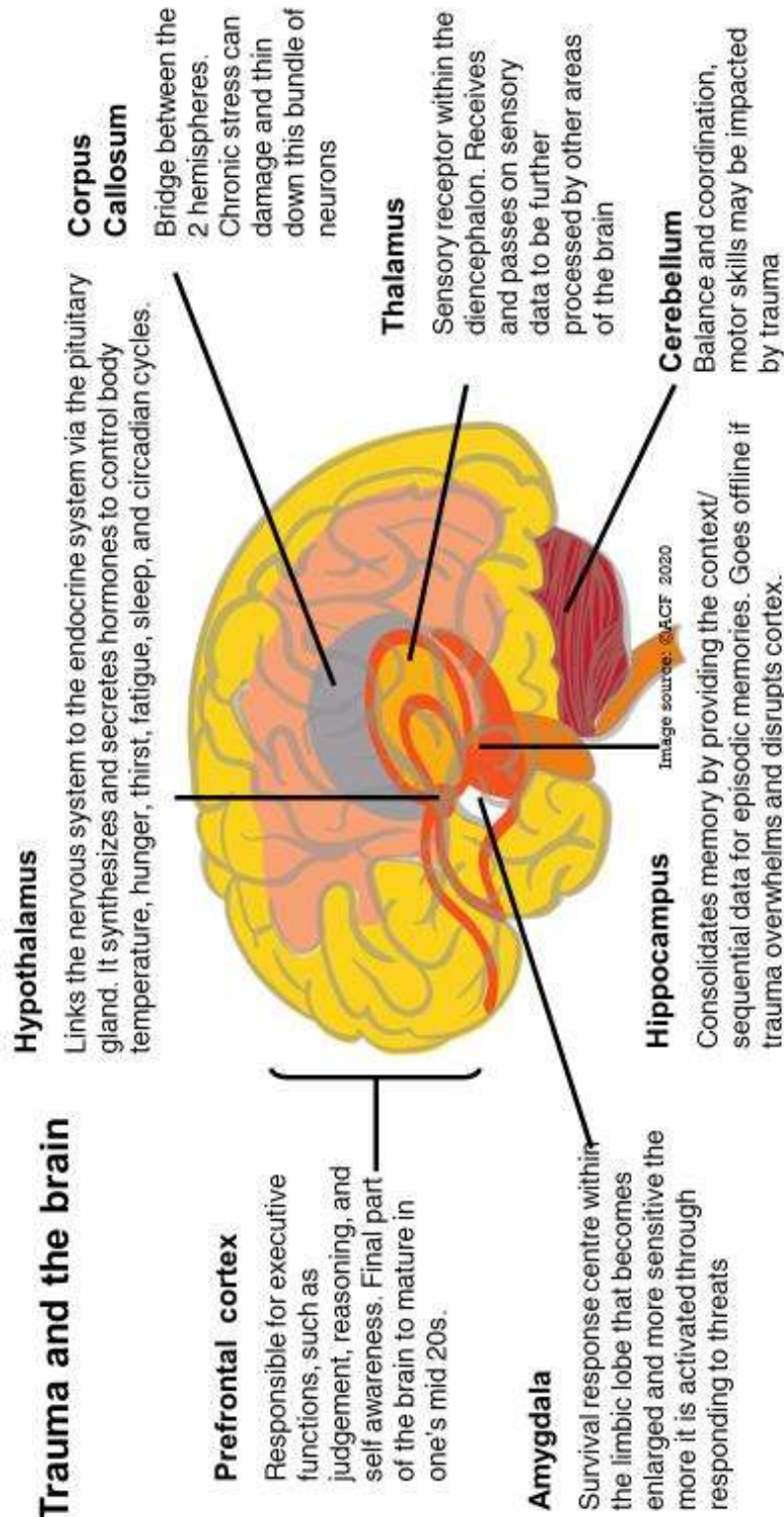
Age	Brain function focus	Brain food
12-25 years	Abstract thinking, decision making, analysing and problem solving	Opportunities to practise making decisions, to weigh up consequences, to take risks in non life and death settings, to learn boundaries. Integrative activities such as outdoor adventures, ropes courses, group work, yoga, meditation, mindfulness.
7-12 years	Consolidation and Exploration	Problem processing opportunities to concentrate on areas of interest, to challenge and be supported, games requiring skill, strength and agility, experiences of raised and lowered heart rate.
3 - 6 years	Maturing thinking functions	Reading, playing games, counting, talking, storytelling, games with siblings and in teams
1 - 4 years	Emotional functions	Playing games with parents, dress ups, acting stories, act out feelings, sharing, taking turns, dress ups
6 months – 2 years	Coordination of body movements	Dancing, painting, blocks, threading, sliding, crawling, rolling, running, clapping
In utero – 9 months	Basic Survival	Tactile play, peek a boo, lots of touch, being rocked

Strategies for transforming

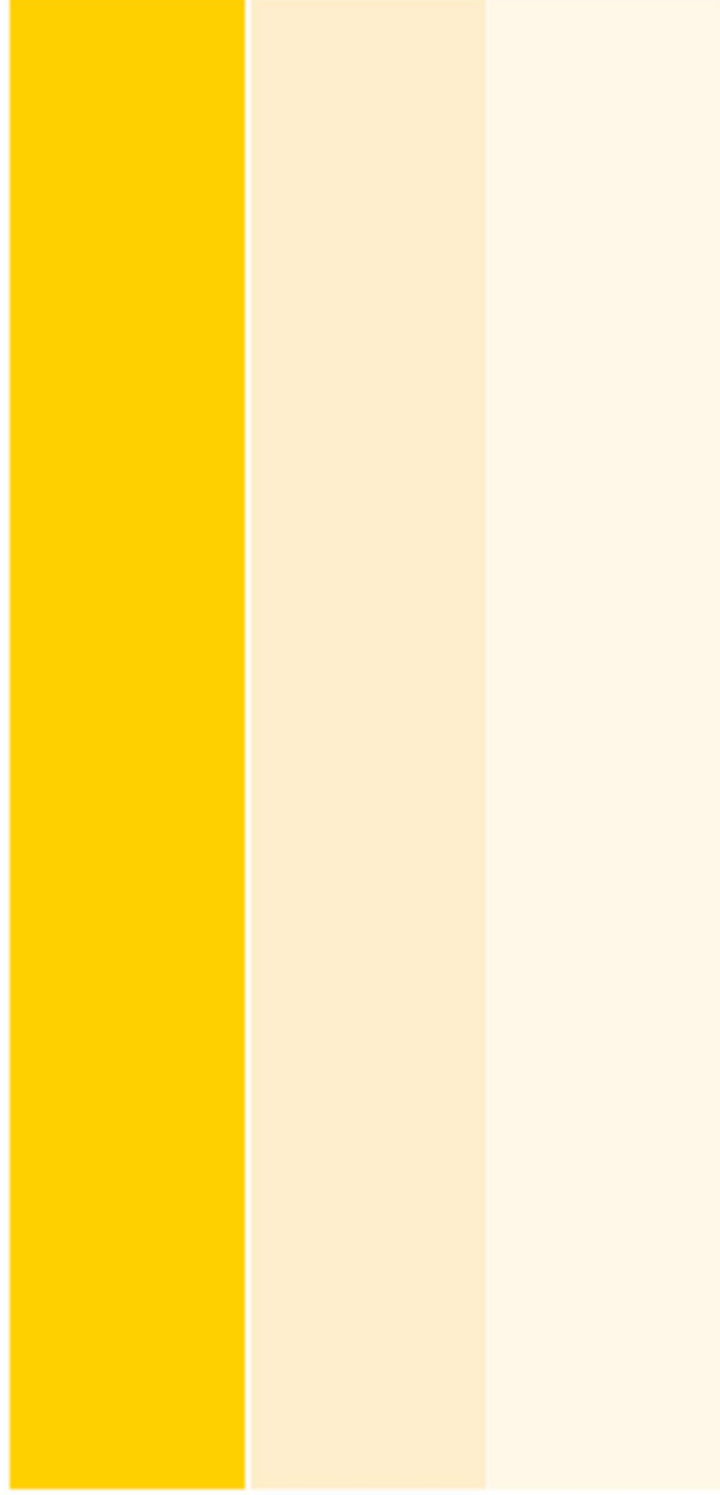
Brain area	Function	Activity ideas
Brainstem & Diencephalon	Basic survival & sensory processing	Pacification or stimulation. Activities in the child's preferred sensory modality
Cerebellum	Coordination of movement	Using music, rhyme and movement activities
Limbic	Emotional processing	Building relational connection through plays, animals, games
Cortex	Thinking processes	Linking experiences and sensations to words and descriptions
Prefrontal cortex	Analytical and abstract thinking	Challenges and safe risk taking activities

Image source: ©2018 ACF

Trauma and the brain



Tracking your student's own Window of Tolerance



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

SMART

Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma

Understanding what's beneath the behaviour



Group activity – behaviour

Observed behaviour	Assumed Meaning (how we might interpret the behaviour)	Possibly underlying cause/need (needs might include: safety, calm, connection/engaging)
Eg refuses to make eye contact when spoken to, despite being asked several times to look at the teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defiance Wants to assert dominance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physiological response to feelings of unsafety – their body won't allow them to make eye contact (NEED – safety) Student has withdrawn and cannot hear/process instructions (NEED – connection/engaging)

© 2018 Australian Childhood Foundation



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

SMART

Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma

SMART PRACTICE DOCUMENTS



Predictable

Responsive

Attuned

Connecting

Translating

Involving

Calming

Engaging



SMART PRACTICE – Site Audit Tool

- Discussion Paper 2:** Ideas for integrating SMART into school policies & processes
- Discussion Paper 10:** Revisiting the SMART PRACTICE framework for supporting traumatized children
- Discussion Paper 9:** Engaging collegial support for the implementation of SMART



SMART
Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma

SMART PRACTICE – Site Audit Tool

This is an opportunity to reflect on the current application of the SMART PRACTICE framework across your site. This tool can also be used to plan further implementation strategies as a site plan. It is acknowledged that not all areas will be relevant to all sites however each area has value in terms of a holistic application of the skills and knowledge underpinning SMART PRACTICE.

In the following table, list strategies, policies or other processes that are currently undertaken that support each of the listed groups in each of the elements of the SMART PRACTICE framework.

SMART PRACTICE	Whole Site	Staff	Classroom/Group	Small Group	Individual Student/Child
PREDICTABLE					
RESPONSIVE					
ATTUNED					
CONNECTING					
TRANSLATING					
INVOLVING					
CALMING					
ENGAGING					

Framework for supporting traumatised children at school

Predictable



Principle:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma may experience any change as a potential threat. Even if the familiar is difficult and destructive, the familiar is safer for them than the unfamiliar.

Strategies:

- Have the student identify another adult with whom they feel comfortable in case the significant reference point/adult is unavailable.
- Visual/pictorial class timetable displayed in classroom or hallway as appropriate.
- Where possible, let student know 1:1 of significant changes occurring within the class/timetable/day. Provide explanations.
- Have a familiar or safe area or person the student can access if a situation is unfamiliar and threatening.
- Use short, explicit instructions- keeping in mind possible short-term memory impairments.
- Make individual contact with the student at the start of each day.
- Consider classroom management strategies- such as moving desks- with an eye for the student who has experienced trauma.
- Consider student being placed in another class on days where a relief teacher is teaching. This would obviously be a teacher with whom there is a connection.
- Prepare peers to support student through transition points in the day.
- Classroom rules or expectations displayed. Some meaningful negotiation of these with the students can be considered.
- Think about induction of new staff around the issues of predictability.
- Develop plans for the lead up to excursions and camps that enable the student to adjust to the new experience.
- Ensure predictability is provided across the whole school environment
- Communicate with caregivers regarding any significant changes, which will enable them to support and prepare the student as well
- Buddy programs may enable child to manage change with some support.

- Support personnel are welcoming, consistent, have predictable responses and provide explicit instructions
- Look at planning around relief teachers where possible, who might be in the classroom first thing when the relief teacher and student arrive to mediate the experience?
- Set up a shadow board outlining what children will need for each class/lesson/subject.
- Keep all children informed if the room or other element of their environment is being changed or moved around.
- Have only one “messy day” per week, wherever possible.
- Have a shared behaviour code for all classes within the school. Everyone is provided with these codes.
- Whole school Professional Development around responding to traumatised students.
- Work on specific responses to individual behaviour e.g.: when the student goes under the desk, what do we do now? What could we do instead? What has worked in the past? etc
- Mentoring regarding classroom practices. Having a colleague revisit strategies, you use may identify that the child is responding to a trigger that you manifest rather than the strategies you are using.
- Whole school ownership of working with all traumatised children ensuring everyone is “in the loop”.

Outcomes:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, will come to trust, and rely on their reference point(s) as an interpreter of their environment. They will respond in a less volatile way to changes in the classroom and build a platform for responding to change overall. The child will learn to use others as a resource to support them at school.

Responsive



Principle:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, will often display behaviour which is experienced as difficult or challenging by others but often makes sense in the context of their trauma. They find it hard to internalise external rules and consequences.

Secondary reactions are experienced as threats and responded to as such by these children and young people.

Strategies:

- Provide praise that is concrete, specific, and delivered without effusiveness.
- Whole school approach which responds to challenging behaviour calmly.
Recognise triggering behaviours and develop plan for diffusion but also an “after plan” if diffusion isn’t possible.
- Provide “cool down” time and space for child or young person- that is clearly not delineated as punishment. Allow them to verbalise their feelings when able.
- Stay calm and think about your tone of voice, facial affect, body language & proximity.
- Make a commitment to see the incident through to resolution. Not passing the child or young person on because it gets difficult. Restorative practice rather than punitive.
- Have ongoing reviews with other professionals involved with the child or young person to ensure consistency of response to behaviours.
- Utilise predictable, consistent language and provide scripts for this to all those involved with the child or young person.
- Provide transparent, clear, and known guidelines/behaviour codes or rules and ensure these are displayed.
- Observation and feedback regarding behaviour needs to be provided- but in a factual and neutral way.
- Provide a range of methods to reinforce behavioural expectations i.e.: visual, auditory, words and pictures.

- Recognise that trust underpins this whole process.
- Ensure the response plan is known, taught, and revised by all key people involved with the child or young person. Don't forget the office staff in this process.
- Utilise naturally occurring "breaks" during the day to try to de-escalate behaviour. These might include toilet, messages or monitor tasks.
- Access challenging behaviour funding to improve school resources and response options.
- Adults should convey a message of "never giving up" on the child or young person.
- School behaviour should be dealt with at school- try to avoid "double dipping" in terms of consequences.
- Work on behavioural choices in calm times.
- Point out escalating body language in a non-blaming way to assist child or young person in making links.
- Remember to think about the meaning your gestures might hold for the child or young person. Try to be non-confronting but firm.
- Provide the student with a clear plan or pathway that enables them to remove themselves if required. Individual action plans- which promote a sense of co-ownership.
- Individual action plans- which promote a sense of co-ownership.
- Remember to include positive and realistic comments in the communication book with home.
- Access community-based programs which can reinforce school-based expectations.
- At the start of day, set the child or young person up for success with positive statements e.g.: rather than "I hope you have a good day."

Outcomes:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, will be less likely to over-react to limit setting.

They will experience the present as different from the past and will feel personal exchanges are reaffirming to themselves.

Attuned



Principle:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, do not easily know how they feel and have had limited experience of having their feelings recognised by others.

Feelings are experienced as separate to traumatised children's knowledge of themselves.

Strategies:

- Model dealing with feelings in appropriate ways- and talk through the process.
- Reflect on the teaching strategies that have caused conflict. This can be done as a whole staff team- where are the “explosions” and, more importantly, where are the periods of calm.
- Specific skills development with the child or young person that also extends into whole class programs- recognising, naming, managing own feelings and responding to others’ expression of feelings.
- Seek support and strategies from parents/family regarding patterns, cues, and what works (or doesn’t work).
- Utilise visual cues to assist in identifying feelings based social skills.
- Initiate pathways for students’ positive memories, linking in with supporting meaning making.
- Recognise and acknowledge the student’s involvement in school activities and experiences.
- Have a clearly defined and developed student at risk model (this may include guidelines around who to see, what to record, what to do, key personnel inside and outside the school etc.) Make this known to all staff.
- Explicit teaching of language related to feelings. One example is to ‘bubble thought’ another person’s thoughts and the feelings that stem from that.
- Think about using the welfare/care team involved with a child or young person to identify possible cues or triggers- putting the pieces of this child’s/young person’s response jigsaw into place.

- Enable activities that promote the giving and receiving of compliments.
- Do not underestimate the value of modelling both your own feelings awareness but also responses to those feelings.
- Value the emotional insight and thoughts the child or young person can identify. They provide a path for understanding further- for ourselves and them.
- Show an interest in the child's/young person's interests and share your own. This enables modelling of feelings such as joy, commitment, and enjoyment.
- Recognise early warning signs and flag these to the child or young person in a range of ways- verbal and non-verbal.
- Utilise a tracking sheet or tick sheet to enable all those who work with the student for the day/week to provide feedback about how they're feeling. This information can be examined to see if any patterns emerge and provide an opportunity to put strategies in place.
- Build a relationship vocabulary as well as a feelings vocabulary.
- Consider the language of a restorative approach- "tell me what happened?" "What were you thinking when that happened?" "What do you think of that now?" "Have you ever thought about how you feel when you think like that?"
- Help colleagues to make sense of strategies the students are trying to use to manage triggering events. This means they can also acknowledge attempts and not just successes.
- Admin/leadership take the class to facilitate the class teacher having some 1:1 time listening, talking and/or drawing with the student.
- Tactile experiences to explore a situation e.g.: blow up a balloon to the size of this issue or fold a piece of paper to the size of the issue. Validate the child's assessment.

Outcomes:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, will be better at tracking their own feelings/concerns/worries.

They will practice enjoying and marking experiences of positive feelings.

The child or young person will develop experiences of having his/her feelings validated.

Connecting



Principle:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma will often feel disconnected from their feelings, memories of experiences and their sense of identity.

They need support to get in touch with how they're feeling, what they are feeling and linking their perceptions and experiences to their feelings.

Strategies:

- Hold their story. Have a Memory or "About Me" box or folder - include a story about child or young person, personal item, or anything else they would like included.
- Use feelings faces in a range of ways. This might include the students drawing them as a group, colouring them in, making 3D faces or playing feelings bingo.
- Think about what Education Programs may support emotional literacy and connection: For example, "Mind Matters", "Kids Matter", "Rock and Water",
- Provide a safe place to go when not feeling OK.
- Talk about happy/positive events- including questioning, recounting stories, and reflecting on the experience.
- Utilise strategies to recall information- remembering when....
- Relaxation activities. Providing a Milo opportunity.
- Utilise symbols for feelings e.g.: colours, pictures, bear cards, Stones cards.
- Sensory "toys" to enable calming down or experiencing different feelings and trying to name them. An example might be squeeze balls or linking textures to feelings.
- Continually work on different strategies/actions to deal with a feeling.
Give alternatives and don't expect children to just "get on with it."
- Ensure that the Child Protection curriculum is embedded in policy and practice.
- Work with the student to understand the link between the behaviour, the impact on their own feelings and the impact on the feelings of others (could incorporate restorative justice principles.)
- Pacing - when student is angry walk with them and start pace where they're at and then gradually slow them down.

- Develop your own “feelings faces”- using the creative talents of students in the group.
- Incorporate “circle time”- especially after breaks where students can talk about their feelings during that time. No blame. Community building.
- Think about videos (films, music clips), magazine pictures and stories, online articles that can help with discussion of feelings.
- Have books available that explore emotions, feelings, and links to behaviour
- Encourage writing and journaling - with or without teacher input or feedback.
- Repetition of the one story to examine the emotional content in a range of ways e.g.: acting out, puppets, role plays, songs, sharing story with a range of adults.
- Using full body outlines to link physical and emotional responses.
- Use other tools to explore feelings – Innovative Resources, and other resource providers have great tools
- Draw the day’s journey- think about the media you might use for this e.g.: chalk, textas/markers, wool, clay etc – Line of My Day activity.
- Utilise an Identity Web to explore children’s connections to extended family.
- Facilitate opportunities for self-monitoring. You might think about scoring, feelings magnets or visual cues.
- Link sensory activities with understanding early warning signs e.g.: tactile feelings linked to emotional responses, smells as linked with build-up etc.
- Explicit teaching around feelings- link the limbic response to a cortical label and control.

Outcomes:

Children and young people who have experience trauma will build capacity to express themselves in language.

They will come to know how their feelings are affected by past experiences and can be better supported to be in control of their feelings and reactions.

Translating



Principle:

Children and young people who have experience trauma will find it difficult to make stories about their day to day experiences because their memory and interpretive functions have been impaired.

They struggle to make sense of their past, feel separate from their present and have no starting point for making their path into the future.

Strategies:

- Focus on setting short term, clear goals with a specific reward- including a chance to reflect on the achievement. Reference point weekly reflection.
- Challenge the “absolute” statements e.g.: “I’m always hopeless”. Give concrete examples in a neutral tone to challenge these.
- Make copies of work and photograph school involvement. Scrapbook and save.
- Teacher(s) to monitor references/stories/events in artwork and writing for possible current trauma requiring further action.
- As there is often a verbal block to meaning making, use creative methods to assist in the process e.g.: lead lighting, craft activity, art, drawing.
- Use physical activity to link the child to their school/community.
- Doing specific work on putting the day’s events into chronological order and categorising.
- Make physical recordings of children’s and young people’s stories- ie audio and video recordings or photos/photo book of their year
- Involve the student in decision making processes about them.
Consider different ways to do this that are non-threatening and of value.
- Utilise a no-blame approach where appropriate in story development. It may be worth discussion blame issues and why blame is sometimes apportioned and why sometimes it has no value. This would be a whole class discussion.
- Work through a “chase your dreams” process.
- Identify the student’s strengths, skills, or interests in terms of projecting those into the near future as well as the medium to long term future. “How do you think you could use that when you’re?”

- Set achievable goals and somehow record these for later weeks, months, years
- Provide impromptu fun experiences which are not a “reward” for something- simply because they are themselves and everyone deserves something positive (unconditional rewards/celebrations).
- Create DVD’s or videos which provide a history of the year/class/week/camp etc and enable a review of this work.
- Utilise circle time from a story-based perspective- incorporating restorative questions and practices.
- Utilise mentoring, peer skills and cross age tutoring to build storying exercises and experiences amongst the students. Build positive experiences.
- Continually allude to future activities- next session, tomorrow, next week, next term, next year, next school. Provide opportunities to experience future careers to provide a sense of future.
- Provide sentence starters or structured ways for journaling processes.
- Use objects from the present to link to a picture of the future for each child.
- Develop a “sack of my life”- which holds items that evoke a memory.
- Look for cues i.e. foot tapping, fist clenching, body tensing. Note these.
- Do a check-in at the start of each week and each term: “What do you remember from last week/term? What stands out? Why? What would you like to be the same this week/term? What would you like to be different?” etc

Outcomes:

Traumatised children will build better memory for events and experiences, including their capacity to learn and retain information.

They will build a base for being able to explore their history and begin to make conscious sense of their experiences of abuse and/or violence.

Involving



Principle:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, will find it difficult to make friends, having poorly developed maps to guide them.

They often fail to constructively interpret social cues and will often feel isolated and different from their peers. They may use socially inappropriate behaviour to try to engage with peers and this often leads to ostracization.

Strategies:

- Role model and practice a range of social skills. These could include interpreting body language, listening skills, how to enter a group, how to say hello, how to respond to rejection and how to be part of a conversation.
- Carefully introduce the student to small group projects, with the emphasis on small groups and consider the process rather than the group outcomes.
- Consider developing a cross-age tutoring program which can draw on the student's strengths. Develop peer-support networks.
- Look at building groups around areas of interest, rather than social ability.
- Building relationships with teachers, other staff, and other significant adults.
- Expect and consider responses to emotional outbursts as these are challenging processes for traumatised children.
- Using a digital camera in class to "catch" students doing the right thing and helping them to process their own behaviour and strengths.
- Provide immediate, neutral, feedback to students re: use of social skills.
- Do class puzzles and improvisational games
- Try drumming (using phone books) with the whole class or a whole small group.
- Consider looking after an animal as a group.
- Making a friendship quilt or another group craft activity to help students feel included.
- Involve students in specific programs identified as valuable ie Mind Matters.
- Work with the whole class, rather than small (separate) groups.

- Take whole class to community outings/places e.g.: elderly people's home to develop alternative friendship models.
- Teach realistic friendship philosophies e.g.: friendships are not forever.
- Develop a pen pal or email communication system which can be within the school or with students at other schools. This can assist in friendship skill development without the pressure of meeting and having to utilise all the non-verbal skills as well.
- Give clear parameters of what is acceptable behaviour within groups.
- Provide structured play opportunities during breaks. These could focus on social skills, teamwork or sharing (as examples).
- Find an activity the child or young person is good at and facilitate them being able to invite others into it.
- Specific teaching about the qualities that underpin friendship skills, particularly trust and honesty.
- Limit the length of time spent on one activity to give all a chance at "leadership".
- Play "my interests" bingo. This can help identify peers the student has some affinity with.

Outcomes:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, will feel they belong and will be able to engage in appropriate behaviours as attempts to become part of a friendship group.

They will be better able to understand social cues and will be less likely to feel peer interactions are threatening.

Calming



Principle:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, find it difficult to shape or change their own feelings of stress/distress.

Trauma has impaired their cortical capacity to regulate sub cortical functioning.

Strategies:

- Teach children and young people about their brains and what helps to calm them.
- Provide cool down space/chair/tree/room.
- Think about a variety of calming strategies: draw, run, walk, play doh, puzzles, music, fish-watching, soft toys.....
- Whole school approach to understanding trauma and recognising the importance of calm and space. What does the school look/feel like?
- Raising awareness of staff's own behaviour on students: cool, calm, and firm.
- Utilise music in the classroom- particularly rhythmic music -drumming.
- Remember that you will be acting as the student's cortex in some regards in terms of keeping calm and thinking about the calming process.
- Utilise time out cards- initiated by staff member or student. Have a set plan of calming place and strategies when this is invoked. Some other strategies might include journaling, yoga, guided fantasies, doodling or drawing, humming, and whistling or drumming.
- Use anecdotal observations to identify possible triggers/situations that create stress/distress.
- Incorporate regular relaxation activities into class time.
- Provide explicit commentary, modelling or coaching of strategies to manage stressful situations. Model and discuss your own calming strategies.
- Provide a visual support system to promote self-calming, could be a "manual" for the child

- Relay some of the calming strategies to the parents/carers. There may be some opportunities for skill building within this environment.
- Be realistic about your role with this child- it is a shared responsibility.
- Ensure SELF-CARE in terms of maintaining your own sense of calm. This can be achieved through formal and informal means.
- Provide all staff with opportunities to de-brief.
- Consider all strategies for building and maintaining calm at both a broader environmental level and at an individual level. How calming is the school?
- Have stretching and relaxing activities at predictable times each day.
- Create a calm box with a reference point with things that help that child feel calm. This might include sensory toys, photos of favourite things, a toy to hug or other visual reminder which is age appropriate.
- Do not discount the value of just “being with” the student- silence can be very calming.
- Provide both structured and free choice relaxation times.
- Could focus on “peacefulness” in your virtues/values program.
- Know your own “buttons” and take responsibility for your response to them being pushed. Don’t enter into arguments with students. Calmly state what needs to happen and repeat it if necessary. Consider your own mantra.
- Encouraging individual identification of what works as a relaxation/calming technique.

Outcomes:

Children and young people who have experience trauma, will feel more supported and connected to school community by feeling less blamed.

They will not feel singled out because everyone is learning how to stay calm and will be able to come up with and use plans to stay calm or become calm that make sense to them.

You will be able to respond rather than react.

Engaging



Principle:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, have insecure blueprints for forming, maintaining, understanding and being in relationships.

Changing relational representations comes with repetitive opportunities to practice and experience difference in exchanges with others.

Strategies:

- Modelling relationship skills- such as language and friendship behaviour.
- Mentoring programs- formal and informal- between teacher/student and older student/younger student.
- Enable different levels of relationship with a range of adults within the school community. Collaboration with outside agencies. Significant adult/reference point can negotiate exchanges. All staff to be made aware of reference points.
- Provide small challenges with achievable goals.
- Reflect and acknowledge positive experiences and feelings.
- Encourage positive reflections from family/parents.
- Repetition e.g.: positive greeting each day to be similar.
- Connecting activities such as footy tipping competition or class lunches.
- Ring two families per week with positive comments about their child's/young person's week.
- Think about class placement- based on the capacity of the teacher and class.
- Ensure that reference points are the children's choice- don't assume who will be an effective reference point.
- Consider a broad range of adults within the school community who could fulfil the role e.g.: groundsman, SSO's, Principal etc
- Ensure reference points give a clear message that they will be there for the student, no matter what.
- Build relationship building skills into the curriculum. Explore the differences between relationships with adults and relationships with peers.

- Develop special interest groups within the whole school. Craft. Dance. Sport.
- Include a process of de-briefing for the reference point.
- Explore opportunities to interact with the student and provide feedback in non-threatening ways.
- Utilise a “commentary for action” approach.
- Set up a reflection book- the student can record their own experiences but also have feedback provided by the reference point or other key adults.
- Explicit training for staff around being a mentor or reference point. This should include avenues of support for those in the role.
- Curriculum based activities to reinforce concepts around support networks. This might include circles of friendship, child protection curriculum, Mind Matters, Student Matters and accessing the Kids Helpline.
- Ensure important information is transferred on transition (between year levels as well as between schools).
- Regular case conferences enable reference points to hear about what is working well, where areas of difficulty are and planning for future goals.
- Look for groups or individuals outside the school who could be reference points. How do you manage keeping them informed?
- The reference point should provide emotional validation as well as validation of the child’s contribution to a range of exchanges.
- Be aware of how much non-verbal signals can influence other people’s perceptions of a child or young person.

Outcomes:

Children and young people who have experienced trauma, will learn to tolerate adults at school with different levels of intimacy.

They will experience opportunities to review their relationship representations.

They will practice maintaining connection with important adults.

The child or young person will be more likely to feel safe.

A snapshot of SMART PRACTICE Strategies

Predictable

Provide predictability through pictorial timetables

Plan and prepare schedules in advance



Responsive

Recognise and reflect the meaning of the behaviour

Rehearse developed scripts for educator and student



Attuned

Acknowledge and reflect feelings and emotions

Acknowledge body states - body mapping & activities – “Hand Clapping Games”



Connecting

Create a story of what’s happening for them – use sentence starters

Create environments that are relationally safe and connected – “My Safety Detective”



Translating

Talk to students about their feelings and thoughts

Track these through the “Line of my Day” * activity



Involving

Include students in a variety of relationship-connecting activities

Inviting exploration of self through activities such as “Get to know you Jenga” *



Calming

Connect students with individual calming tools

Create environments that are and feel safe – use “My Sensory Hand” * activity



Engaging

Exploring opportunities to engage in relational connection

Explore their own narrative and story, ie complete an Identity Web



Resources

Further information, resources and activity ideas and worksheets can be found at:

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/centre-trauma-aware-responsive-education/>

These activities included in this booklet,

- Line of My Day
- Hand Clapping Games
- Get to Know You Jenga
- Safety Detective
- My Sensory Hand

as well as other resources can be found at

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/resources/>

Sign up to ACF and you will be able to access even more resources including these helpful tools...

- Polyvagal Theory
- Unpacking and Responding to Behaviour
- Mindful Walking
- Volcano Head

Keep in touch with ACF and SMART

ACF - Centre for Trauma Aware and Responsive Education

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/centre-trauma-aware-responsive-education/>

ACF - Training and resources

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/professional-community-network/>

SMART Online training (register via Plink)

SMART training (register via Plink)

www.childhood.org.au

Further reading:

National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Education

The Australian Childhood Foundation, in collaboration with the Queensland University of Technology has developed a consolidated set of National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Schooling.

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/centre-trauma-aware-responsive-education/>

Making Space for Learning: Trauma informed practice in schools

<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/centre-trauma-aware-responsive-education/>

Baylin, J. & Hughes, D.A. (2016). *The neurobiology of attachment-focused therapy*. New York: W.W Norton Company.

Bombér, L. M., & Hughes, D. A. (2013). *Settling to learn: Settling troubled pupils to learn: Why relationships matter in school*. Worth Publishing.

Golding, K., Turner, M., Worrall, H., Cadman, A., & Roberts, J. (2016). *Observing Adolescents with attachment difficulties in educational settings: A tool for Identifying and supporting emotional and social difficulties in young people Aged 11-16*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. (other ages also available)

Porges, S. W. (2015). Making the World Safe for our Children: Down-regulating Defence and Up-regulating Social Engagement to 'Optimise' the Human Experience. *Children Australia*, 40(02), 114-123.

Porges, S. (2012). *Understanding Polyvagal Theory: Emotion, Attachment and Self-Regulation* [Video file]. Psychotherapy Networker. Retrieved July 2, 2016, from Counselling and Therapy in Video: Volume III.

Siegel, D. (2014). *Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain*. London: Scribe Publications Pty Ltd

Seigel, D. & Bryson, T. (2012). *The whole-brain child*. Brunswick: Scribe Publications Pty Ltd

van der Kolk, B. (2015). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. Penguin: New York