

# Safety and Understanding and Responding to Behaviour using the SMART PRACTICE Audit Tool

Mount Gambier North PS  
Trauma Aware Schools Initiative Project

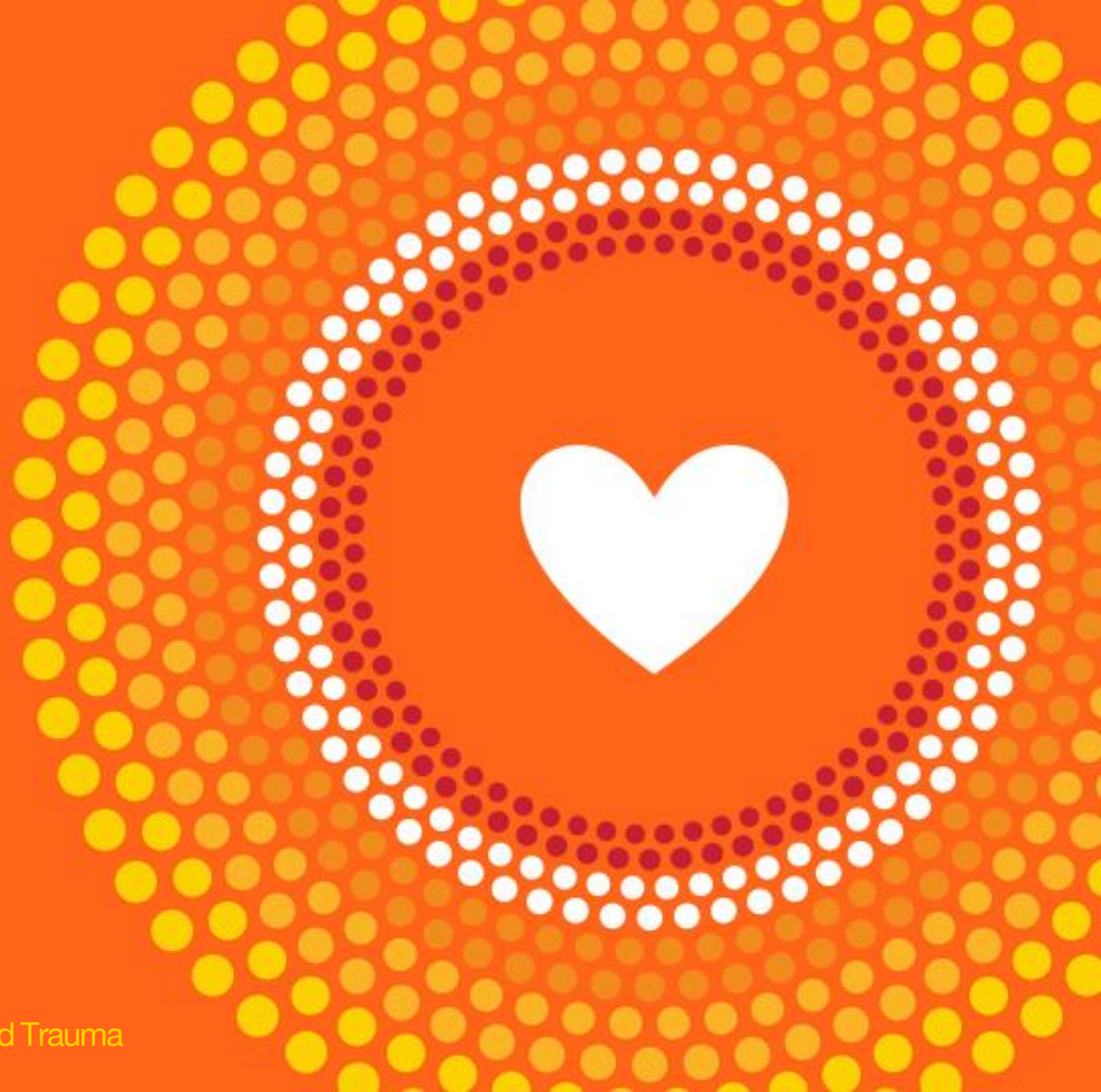
June 20<sup>th</sup> 2022  
Online training

Trainer: Carolyn Grace



Australian  
Childhood  
Foundation

SMART  
Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma



**The Australian Childhood Foundation  
acknowledges Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander peoples as the  
traditional custodians and owners of this  
land and waters. We pay our respects to  
their Elders past and present and to the  
children who are their leaders of tomorrow.  
We acknowledge their history and living  
culture and the many thousands of years  
in which they have raised their children to  
be safe and strong.**



**Australian  
Childhood  
Foundation**

# Success Criteria – Part 1

- Explored the Window of Tolerance as a framework to guide observation, reflection and action, and provide an understanding for arousal
- Reflected on strategies to support regulation and dysregulation
- Gained a deeper understanding of the feelings and needs behind behaviour
- Understood the concept of the neuroception of safety and how to create safety



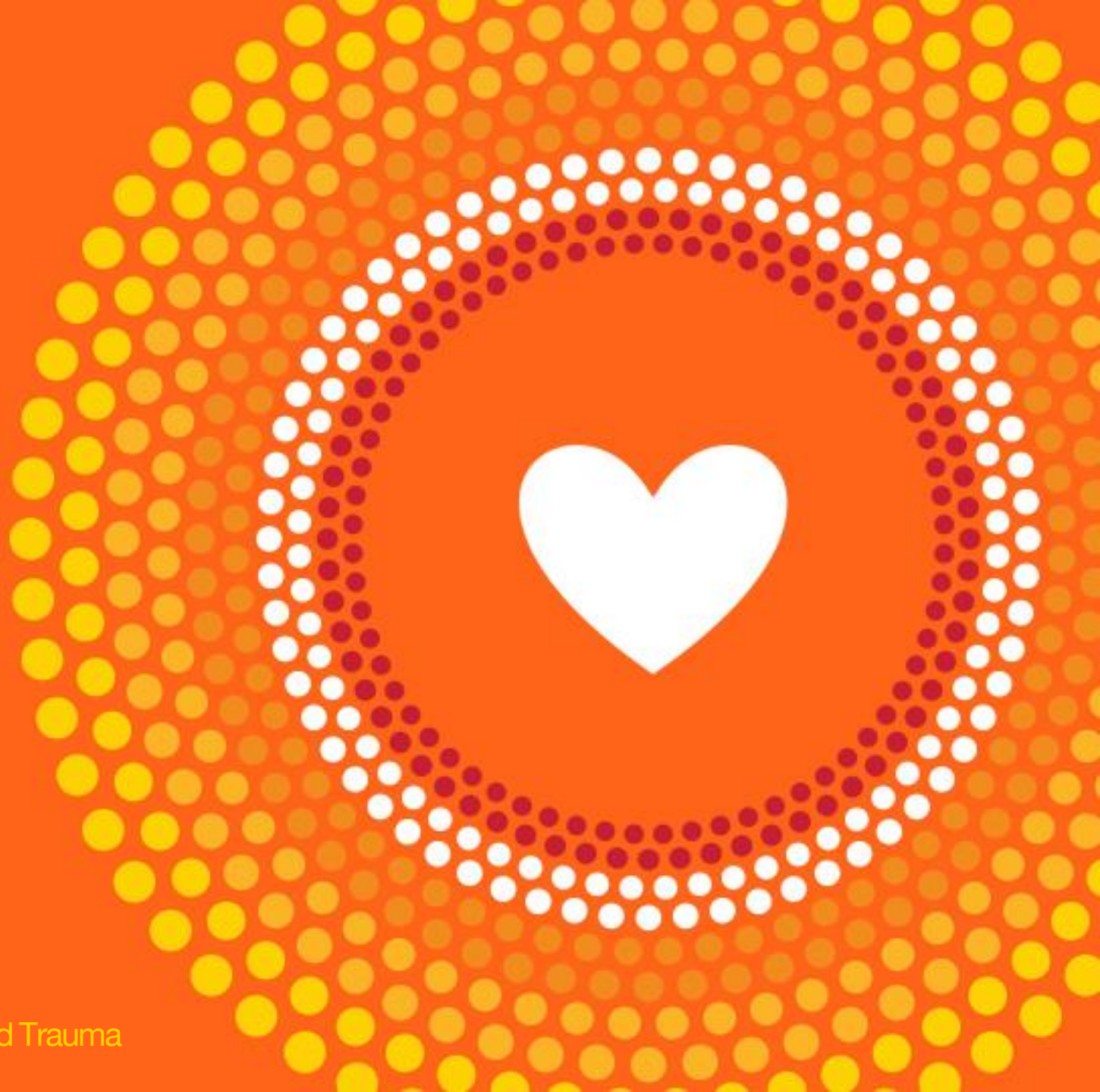
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# Success criteria – Part 2

- Expanded our knowledge of the SMART PRACTICE Framework.
- Built our knowledge of how to assist sites in their understanding how to use the SMART Audit Tool to complete a review of current trauma responsive practices;
- Considered our responses and strategies to support students and build a plan of action to enable effective support and healing outcomes; and
- Reflected on how to develop a plan for ongoing monitoring and review

# Part 1 - Safety and Understanding and Responding to Behaviour



# Neuroception and safety

**Relationships shape  
our sense of self and  
safety**

**“Before we can engage in  
social behaviour and  
learning we must first fe  
safe.”**



Image source: ©ACF2021

(Porges, 2015, p.115).

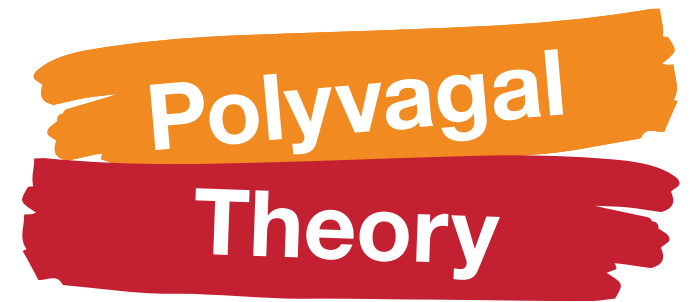


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# Polyvagal theory and protective responses

## Behavioural Functions

## Body Functions

by Stephen Porges

### Social Engagement

Soothing and calming  
Indicates safety

- Lowers or raises vocalisation pitch
- Regulates middle ear muscles to perceive human voice
- Changes facial expressivity
- Head turning
- Tears and eyelids
- Slows or speeds heart rate

### Mobilisation

Fight or Flight  
Active Freeze  
Moderate or extreme danger

### Hyper arousal

- Increases heart rate
- Sweat increases
- Inhibits gastrointestinal function
- Narrowing blood vessels - to slow blood flow to extremities
- Release of adrenaline

### Immobilisation

Collapse or submission  
Death feigning  
Increased pain threshold  
Conserves metabolic resources  
Life threatening situations

### Hypo - arousal

- Slows heart rate
- Constricts bronchi
- Stimulates gastrointestinal function

(Porges, 2012)

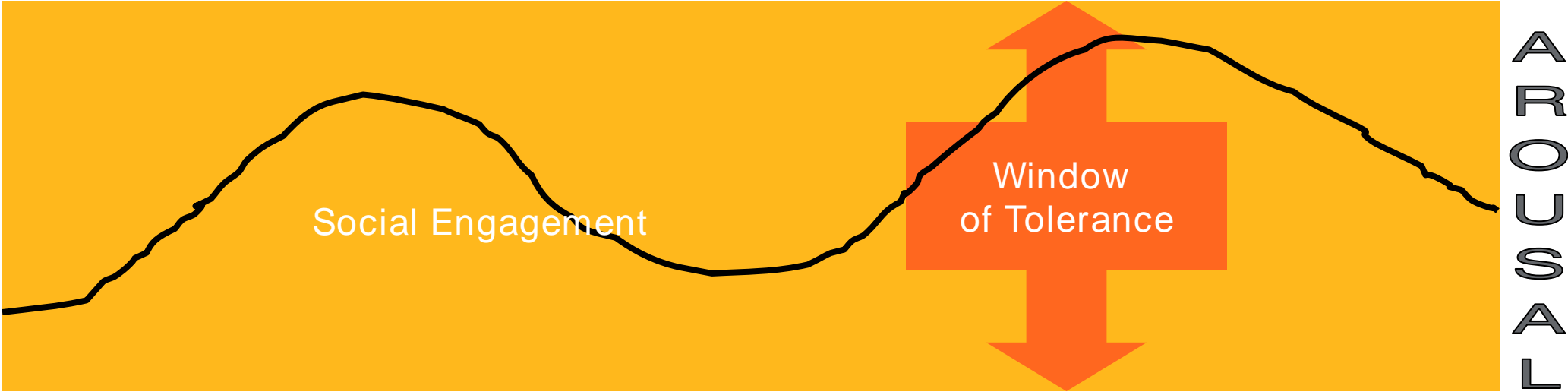
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# Regulated Arousal

Fight or Flight hyper-vigilant, action-orientated, impulsive, emotionally flooded, reactive, defensive, self-destructive

Freeze Physically immobilized, frozen, tense musculature

Sympathetic Hyper-arousal



Submit Collapsed, weak, defeated, flat affect, numb, empty, helpless, hopeless

Parasympathetic Hypo-arousal

Image source: ©ACF2021

Ogden, Minton, Pain 2006



# Dys-regulated Arousal

Fight or Flight Hyper-vigilant, action-orientated, impulsive, emotionally flooded, reactive, defensive, self-destructive

Freeze Physically immobilized, frozen, tense musculature

Sympathetic Hyper-arousal

A  
R  
O  
U  
S  
A  
L



Submit Collapsed, weak, defeated, flat affect, numb, empty, helpless, hopeless

Parasympathetic Hypo-arousal

Image source: ©ACF2021

Ogden, Minton, Pain 2006

# Reflecting on Regulation

**My 5 point scale**

Feels like:		What it looks like:
MAD	5	
FRUSTRATED	4	
JUST RIGHT	3	
QUIET	2	
SLEEPY	1	

What zone am I in?

REST AREA GO SLOW STOP

SAD	TIRED	CALM	HAPPY	FRUSTRATED	MAD	ANGRY
CRYING	BORED	FRUSTRATED	HAPPY	CRYING	YELLING	HITTING

Use tools to get in the green zone.

DRINK WATER	COUNT TO 10	TAKE DEEP BREATHS	WALK THE DOG	GO FOR A RUN	USE A STRESS BALL	LISTEN TO MUSIC	WATCH TV	TALK TO AN ADULT
ASK FOR HELP	GET A PET	TALK TO A FRIEND	PRACTICE BREATHING	GET A MASSAGE	TALK TO A TEACHER	GET A HAIRCUT	GET A HAIRCUT	TALK TO A FRIEND

<b>5</b>	I am not safe. I need to leave before anyone gets hurt.	
<b>4</b>	I am losing control. I need a Chillville break to calm down.	
<b>3</b>	I am not fully in control. I need to take deep breaths.	
<b>2</b>	Things are ok. I can handle it.	
<b>1</b>	I feel super	



# Teaching students about the WOT

## Hyperarousal

Fight  
Flight  
Active Freeze



## Social engagement

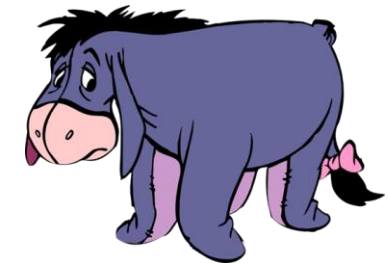
When we feel and are safe we will be able to:

- Play well
- Engage well with others and our environment
- Think well and make decisions



## Hypoarousal

Feigned death  
Flop  
Collapse





### Overshooting your Window of Tolerance:

- Upset and hyped up
- Angry and agitated
- Frustrated
- Heart beating fast
- Tense and can't think clearly
- Unable to regulate your emotions



### Within your Window of Tolerance:

- Feeling safe, calm and peaceful
- Happy and able to think clearly
- Ready to learn
- Settled and content
- Mindful and able to regulate your emotions



### Undershooting your Window of Tolerance:

- Sad and tired
- Unmotivated with no energy
- Feel empty and withdrawn
- Don't want to listen, talk or play
- Can't think about learning



Making Space for Learning – Action Research Project - St Thomas More School, Elizabeth Park, S.A.





We couldn't complete the updates  
Undoing changes  
Don't turn off your computer



# My Line of the Day

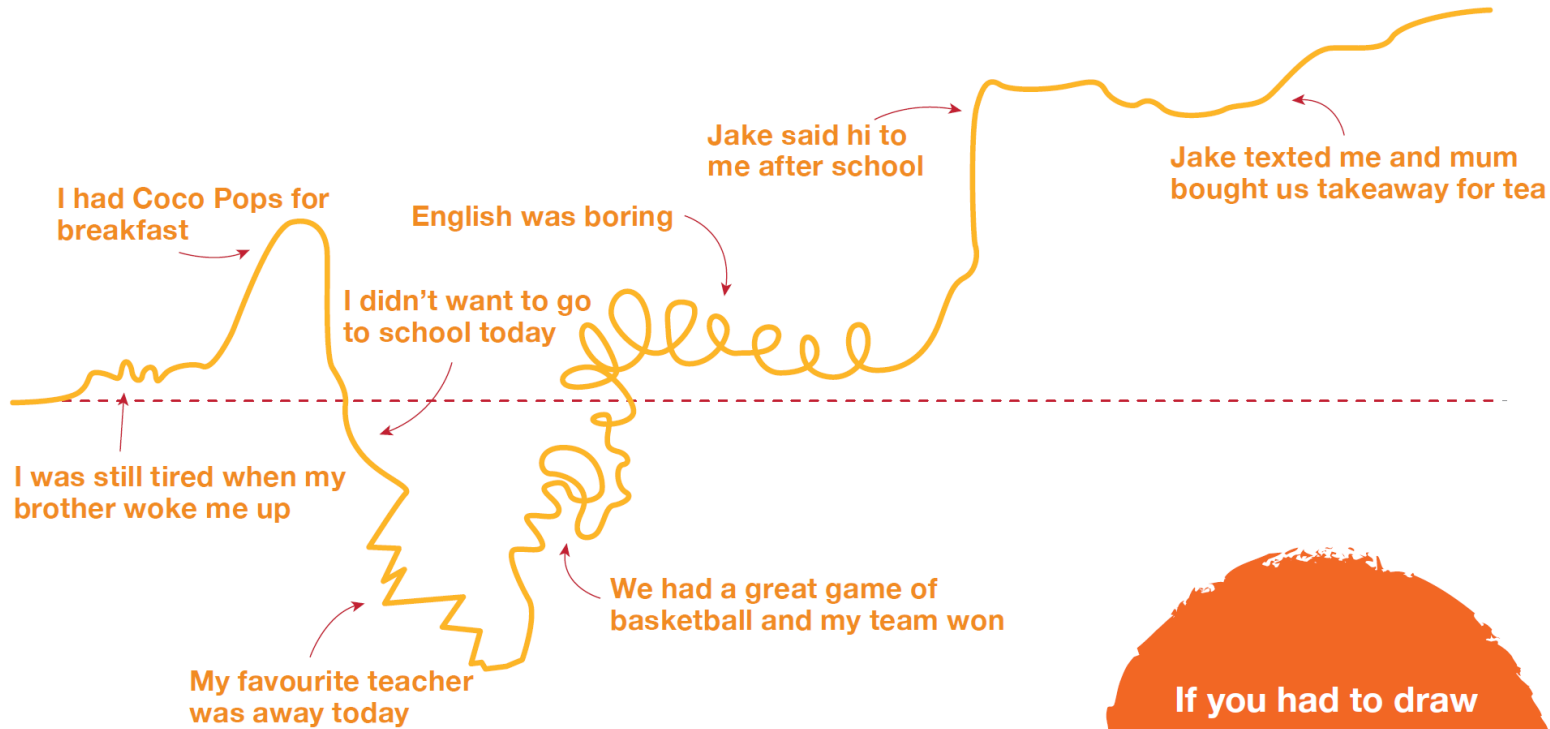
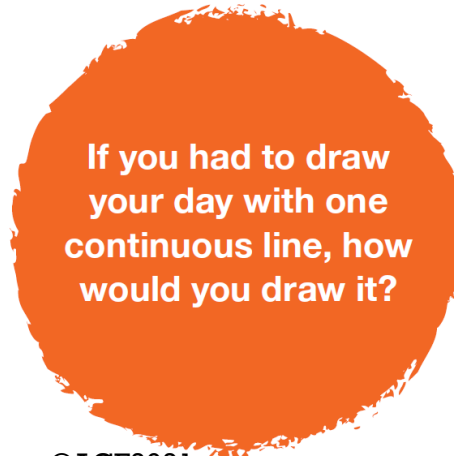


Image source: ©ACF2021



Image source: ©ACF2021



# Polyvagal Theory



Grounded in the work of Dr Dan Siegel, Dr Stephen Porges and Dr Bruce Perry

# Understanding behaviour

**Rather than asking “What’s wrong with you, ask, what happened to you...”**

- What is the behaviour telling me?
- What might have triggered this behaviour?
- How does this behaviour serve to protect the child/young person and help him/her survive?
- What is the impact on me?



Image source: ©ACF2021



# Trauma organised behaviour

Most likely the defence state they used at the time of the initial trauma

Child/YP is startled by event or trigger

The lack of explicit, logical memory, means the child does not know what started the trigger behaviour

Child/YP is in state of heightened defense— either hyper or hypo arousal

Child's/YP's subcortical, right hemisphere enacts response

Developing brain imprints the emotions felt at the core of the trauma, as well as the defence used against it

Child/YP is still in their right hemisphere and so is not using their cortex to read or interpret your response...and is primed to perceive ongoing threat

This reaction is perceived as an additional threat

Behaviour provokes a reaction in others

The behaviour pushes another's "buttons"

Image source: ©2018 ACF

# Behaviour

**REFOCUS FORM**  
**REDO**

Name: Harold H.  
Grade: 1.1  
Teacher: Ms. Constance

I engaged in unacceptable behavior  
by: making copies of  
dog man comic in  
office.

My behavior caused other students and teachers to  
feel: freak out


How will my behavior change in the future? be  
more quieter when  
making copies of dog man  
comic in office.

I am ready to re-join the classroom. Yes  No

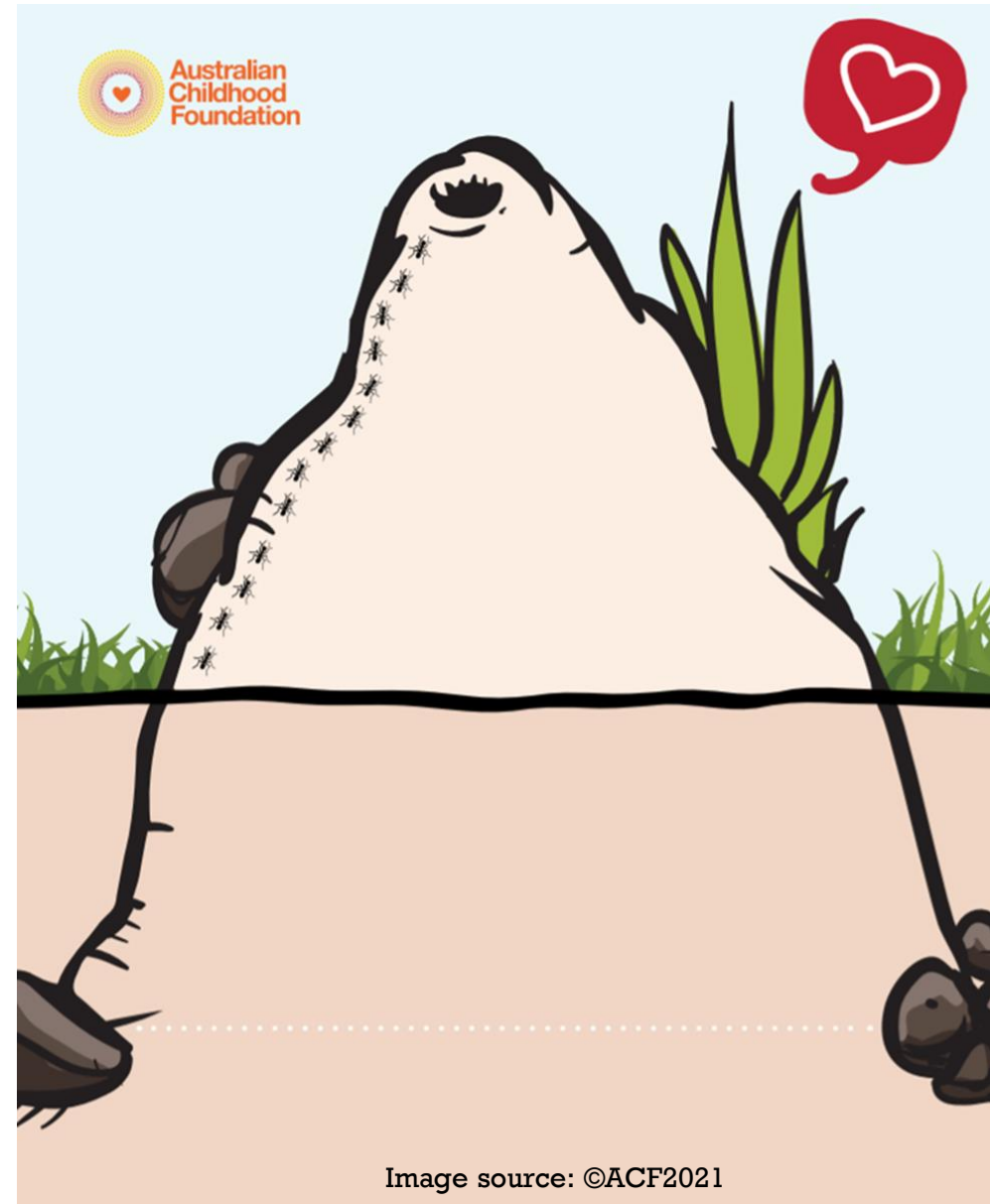
Why? too busy making  
dog man comic

Student signature: Harold H.

NO  
DRAWING  
HOW MANY TIMES  
DO WE HAVE TO  
TALK ABOUT THIS ???



# Understanding the feelings and needs 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)
<p>Eg refuses to make eye contact when spoken to, despite being asked several times to look at the teacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Defiance</li> <li>▪ Wants to assert dominance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Physiological response to feelings of unsafety – their body won't allow them to make eye contact (NEED – safety)</li> <li>▪ Student has withdrawn and cannot hear/process instructions (NEED – connection/engaging)</li> </ul>

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# Strategies to help students remain in their WOT.

- Breath based activities
- Grounding activities
- Movement & Regulation activities
- Use of self



Image source: ©ACF2021

# Creating Safety – the environment and use of self

## Creating safety – supporting the social engagement system

<p>Environment</p> 	<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>
<p>Proximity</p> 	<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>
<p>Eye contact</p> 	<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>
<p>Facial expressions</p> 	<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>
<p>Tone of voice</p> 	<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>
<p>Posture and gestures</p> 	<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>

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# Creating an environment of SAFETY

***Physical environment:*** Consider sensory factors – what promotes calm? What might trigger defensive/threat response?

***“Human” environment:*** How do we use our voice, face and bodies to communicate safety? Do our interactions with students embody empathy and acceptance? Do our relationships prioritise predictability and consistency?



Image source: ©ACF2021

# What might safety look like in practice?

Safety is connected  
to predictability (Porges, 2012)

relationships

physical  
environment

routines

instructions

learning  
tasks

behavioural  
expectations

Image source: ©ACF2021

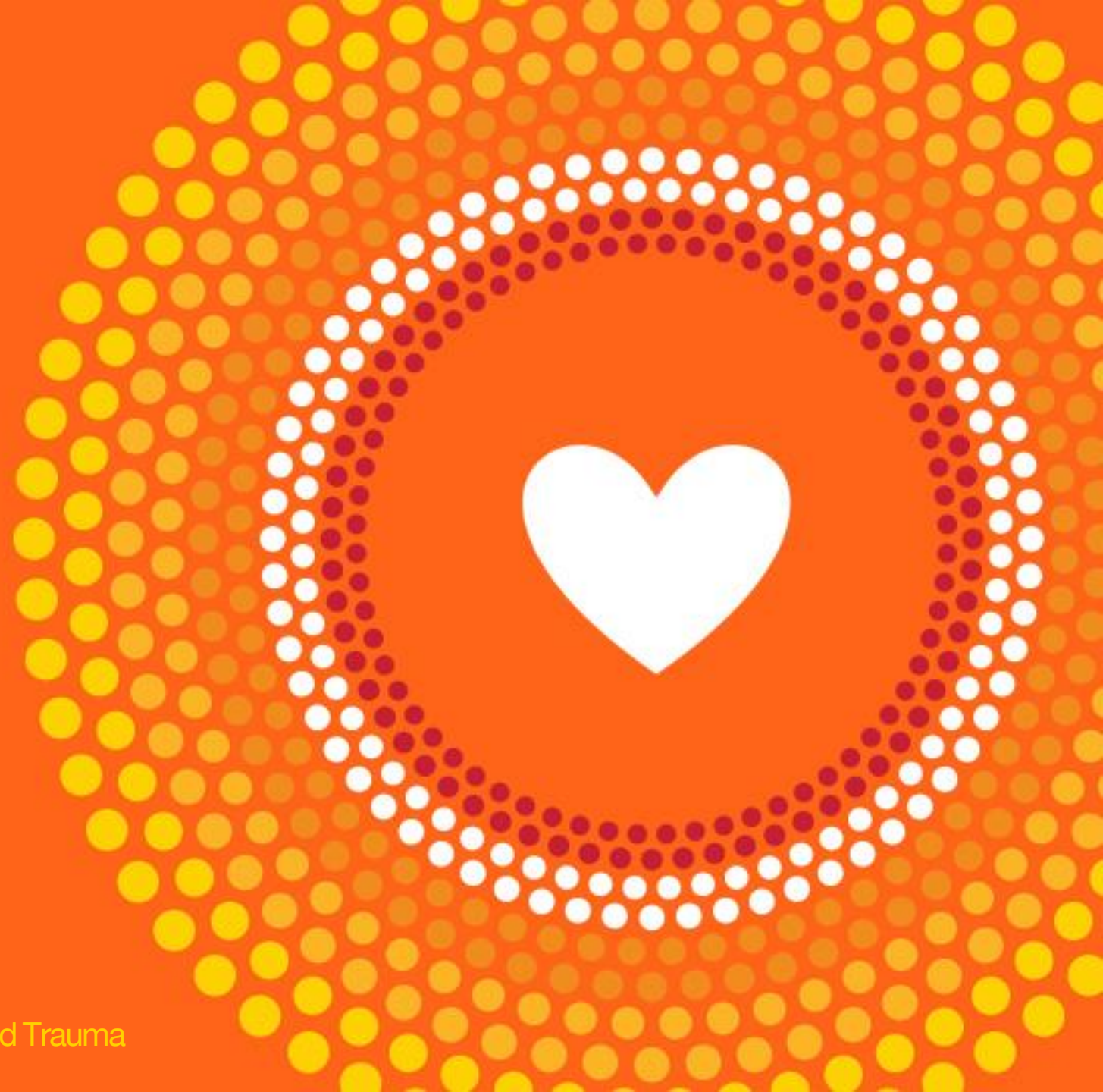


# My Safety Map

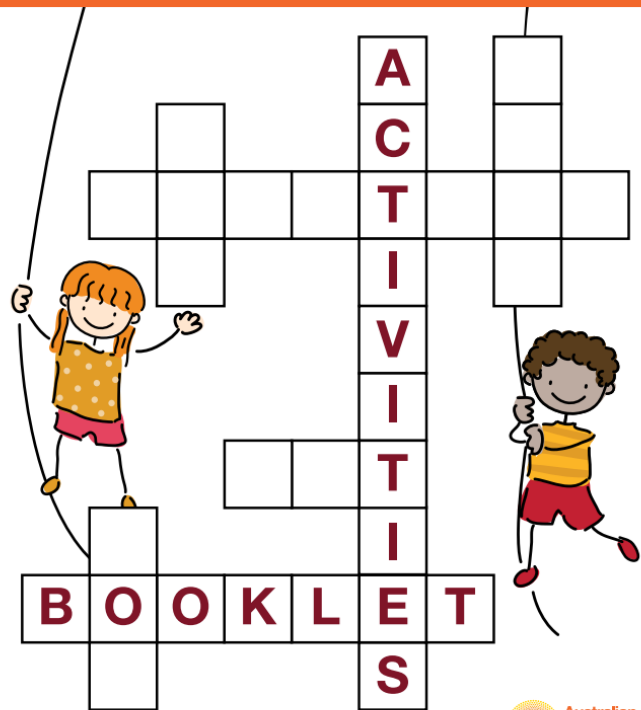


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# Part 2 – Responding to Behaviour using the SMART PRACTICE Audit Tool



# Documents to assist you...



**SMART Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma**

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 on 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 – Site Audit Tool**

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.

# SMART Discussion Papers

**SMART** Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma

## Discussion Paper 2

Ideas for integrating SMART into school policies and processes



### Introduction

This is a short discussion paper that outlines ways in which the SMART program can be integrated into school policies and processes.

The second SMART discussion paper encourages readers to share with each other ideas for reviewing and developing policies to support children in schools who have experienced chronic traumatisation.

In particular it examines how to incorporate SMART into child protection policies at school. It also explores how SMART PRACTICE fits into the auditing requirements of the National Safe Schools Framework.



### Section 1. SMART considerations in reviewing school child protection policies

This framework provides some key questions to consider when developing or reviewing a child protection policy for your school. It also offers some pointers as to what you might include in the policy.



#### What are the commitments that underpin our policy?

- The safety and wellbeing of students and staff are paramount.
- We take action to protect children and young people.
- We listen to children and young people.
- We work to create a safe, predictable and nurturing learning environment.
- We support of all staff in their role of protecting children.
- We understand that the behaviour of traumatised children and young people results from their experiences of abuse and violation.
- Our responses to traumatised children and young people will be sensitive to the impact of trauma on their capacities to learn, moderate their behaviour and develop supportive and positive relationships.



Discussion Paper 2: Ideas for integrating SMART into school policies and processes  
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**SMART** Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma

## Discussion Paper 9

Engaging collegial support for the implementation of SMART



### Introduction

The intent of this paper is to generate discussion. The paper provides an opportunity for readers to share specific knowledge and strategies. It also poses a series of questions to further enhance reader responses to building a SMART school or early childhood program.

This discussion paper acknowledges the critical importance of SMART PRACTICE being implemented as a whole site program to facilitate real change for children who are at risk of, or who have experienced, abuse related trauma. During the SMART seminar four key questions are posed to consider how this collegial support can be generated. This paper looks at examples of responses to each of those questions in more detail. The ideas presented in this discussion paper stem from the work of the SMART team as well as those of schools and early childhood settings across South Australia who have incorporated the program into their everyday work.



### Section 1: 4 key questions to build collegial support for SMART

#### Question 1: To what extent is the impact of abuse and trauma on a child's behaviour and learning widely understood and identified across the setting?

Understanding the impact and manifestations of abuse related trauma is a key element to implementing SMART strategies because it facilitates a shared response framework and supports all staff to interpret the behaviours of traumatised children.

Having a shared response framework is crucial to supporting children who have experienced trauma because it:

- enables consistency and repetition of response which supports brain "re-wiring";
- ensures no one person within the site carries the challenging load of supporting these children;
- facilitates creative and flexible response options such as being able to move a child between rooms;
- particularly reduces playground issues as all staff have a clear plan.



Discussion Paper 9: Engaging collegial support for the implementation of SMART  
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**SMART** Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma

## Discussion Paper 10

Revisiting the SMART PRACTICE framework for supporting traumatized children



### Introduction

The intent of this paper is to generate discussion. The paper provides an opportunity for readers to share specific knowledge and strategies. It also poses a series of questions to further enhance reader responses to working with the SMART PRACTICE framework.

This discussion paper acknowledges the SMART-ER program (Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma = Educational Reform) as an extension of the program and its application in South Australian schools through action based research. Given the focus of the SMART-ER program is the application of the SMART PRACTICE framework, this paper comes at an opportune time to review the framework and provide specific strategy ideas for each of the SMART PRACTICE elements. This paper gives readers the opportunity to reflect on their current application of the framework, suggested strategies and provide their own ideas and applications to build their practice repertoire.



### Section 1: Reviewing the SMART PRACTICE framework

#### Predictable

Traumatized children experience any change as a possible threat. Building an environment that is as sensorily familiar as possible reduces threat responses.

**Reflection:** In your school or workplace, what processes or procedures do you have in place to help traumatised children manage staff changes?

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- Induction processes for new staff and TRT's reflect the consistent model of responding to children at the site.
- Set up a "shadow board" of items student/child will need for each session or class.
- Transition warnings could be multi-modal eg: music, cue cards, colours.
- Involve the children in any room changes



Discussion Paper 10: Revisiting the SMART PRACTICE framework for supporting traumatized children  
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**SMART** Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma

## Discussion Paper 11

Exploring SMART PRACTICE with adolescents



### Introduction

The intent of this paper is to generate discussion. It poses a series of questions to further enhance reader responses to understanding and working with traumatized adolescents. These discussions can take place in a range of settings including staff meetings, year level meetings or during individual reflective and training and development opportunities.

This discussion paper explores the application of the SMART PRACTICE framework with adolescents. It begins by considering some of the key messages of a neurobiological perspective regarding adolescent development and then looks at how this developmental process may be influenced by experiences of relational or abuse related trauma. It then uses the SMART PRACTICE framework as a basis for specific strategy ideas. This paper gives readers the opportunity to reflect on their current application of the framework, suggested strategies and provide their own ideas and applications to build their practice repertoire specifically with young people.



### Section 1: Adolescent development and the impacts of trauma

#### Adolescent brain development

As with all brain development processes, we now know much more than we did in the past and this is particularly true of the adolescent brain. It is clearly demonstrated that the architecture and functioning of an adolescent brain differs from that of a child or an adult and affects their day to day experience.

One key area is understanding synaptic pruning and myelination. In childhood there is a period of synaptic excess in the brain- the brain is building synaptic, or neuronal, connections at a great rate. It is suggested that the brain will develop some 50% more than will be preserved in adulthood. The process of reviewing this myriad of connections is undertaken particularly in adolescence.

During this critical review period, a young person's experience determines which of these connections will be preserved, through "pruning" of the least useful connections and strengthening (myelination) of the useful ones. This process is the brain's way of setting itself up for your future. The brain works out what it thinks you will want to do in the future by taking note of what you are doing now. In this way, each young person's brain becomes tuned to meet the challenges of her or his particular environment.



Discussion Paper 11: Exploring SMART PRACTICE with adolescents  
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# Reflection

## Discussion Paper Reflection



### Section 2. Questions for reflection or discussion

1. How does this knowledge facilitate further understanding of a specific student at your school?
2. Does this knowledge change the ways in which you would work with this student?
3. Which element(s) of SMART PRACTICE are of most value when working with the ways that trauma can affect children's memory functioning?
4. What have you utilized as an effective strategy for working with students to support their memory functioning? Is this a strategy specifically for the individual student or a whole class or whole school plan?
5. Do you have a challenge you would like to share with colleagues in looking for a different support path?

# Reflection



## Section 2. Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What do you see as the biggest issue that influences the level of collegiate support for SMART at your site - be it positively or negatively?
2. Which of these questions is of most relevance to your site and your work? Why?
3. How have you engaged your colleagues effectively with the SMART PRACTICE framework?
4. Please share one example of a collaborative process or strategy that has worked well for your site.

# PRACTICE Frameworks

What are practice frameworks?

How do they guide your practice?

What practice frameworks guide your practice?

What does a developmental trauma-informed practice framework offer us?



**A practice framework is a co-ordinated articulation of a set of aspirations of professionals working together to make a difference to the people they are supporting. It allows professionals to know that their approach is in keeping with the values and principles of the organisation. It guides decision making and reflects the outcomes that are being aimed for – particularly when working with children and young people.**

Dr Joe Tucci, CEO, Australian Childhood Foundation

**S M A R T**

**Strategies for Managing  
Abuse Related Trauma**



# What is the SMART PRACTICE Framework

- The SMART PRACTICE Framework and Site Audit Tool is a framework to **guide practice** through a trauma-informed lens
- This framework is a starting point for **responding** and outlines the key points in terms of effective and healing work with traumatised children.
- The framework should inform best **practice** when supporting children and young people who have experienced trauma



# PRACTICE Acronym

The PRACTICE acronym was developed:

- in conjunction with the Department of Education and ACF.
- to provide people a way to remember the areas of responding.



# Site Audit Tool Reflection



## SMART PRACTICE – Site Audit Tool

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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.

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PREDICTABLE					
RESPONSIVE					
ATTUNED					
CONNECTING					
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INVOLVING					
CALMING					
ENGAGING					




# Using the Site Audit Tool – celebration and reflection....



The Site Audit Tool INVITES Educators, Leaders and Support Staff to celebrate and reflect on their current practices, policies and processes

Invite your participants to consider their main area of influence/work and what processes/policies and strategies support staff and students.

- **Leadership** – Whole Site and Staff
- **Classroom Teachers** – Classroom/Group and Individual Student/Child
- **Specialist Teachers/SSO's/BSSO's** – small groups and Individual Student/Child

 **SMART Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma** **SMART PRACTICE – Site Audit Tool**

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# Implementing trauma responsive practice

- What do you already do well across your school/site in terms of trauma responsive practice?
- Is the focus of that practice on individual students, small groups, classroom groups, year levels or whole of school?
- In thinking about these practices, we know that:
  - many are already being implemented
  - these practices are relationally based
  - these actions are not always reflected in policies and procedures
  - consistent application is key

# Opportunity for review and planning

Utilisation the SMART PRACTICE Framework provides an opportunity to consider what is already being done and how it can be enhanced or improved



# Transforming trauma through PRACTICE

How will you encourage your participants to use the PRACTICE Site Audit Tool to reflect?

The next slides provide you with an opportunity to reflect on each element of the PRACTICE Framework, and ideas to encourage your participants to consider in their own practice.



# SMART Audit Tool



## SMART PRACTICE – Site Audit Tool

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# Predictable



## Section 1: Reviewing the SMART PRACTICE framework

### Predictable

Traumatised children experience any change as a possible threat. Building an environment that is as sensorily familiar as possible reduces threat responses.

**Reflection:** *In your school or workplace, what processes or procedures do you have in place to help traumatised children manage staff changes?*

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- Induction processes for new staff and TRT's reflect the consistent model of responding to children at the site.
- Set up a “shadow board” of items student/child will need for each session or class.
- Transition warnings could be multi-modal eg: music, cue cards, colours.
- Involve the child/ren in any room changes



# Responsive



## Responsive

Responses to children’s behaviour should always stem from an understanding of the trauma-based origins of that behaviour. This may mean a disciplining framework is not always the best path.

**Reflection:** *How have you specifically responded to a child or young person’s behaviour while maintaining your relationship with them?*

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- Provide a space for calming down that contains reminders of the individual teacher or key person eg: photos, pieces of clothing, specific pen etc.
- Explore and incorporate the idea of “time in” rather than “time out”. What will it look like in the context of your school/centre?
- Utilise restorative principles and questions but clear about expectations. In many instances, you may need to lead the restorative responses.
- Notice attempts at behaviour changes, not just successes. Provide positive feedback quietly and non-effusively.

# Attuned



## Attuned

Because trauma is fundamentally a disintegrative process, children are often disconnected from their own emotional and physiological responses. The more we can understand patterns and processes of responding, the better able we are to understand the child and help them to understand their own reactions.

**Reflection:** *In reflecting on the children with whom you work, what patterns of emotional responding have you identified? How did you undertake that tracking process?*

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- Reflect on teaching strategies that seem to escalate behaviour and equally, that support calm. Feed this back to the whole staff team.
- Set up a feelings feedback loop between school/centre and home and/or after care.
- Support the child to understand experiences of happiness and joy- and any patterns associated with those.
- Ensure that attunement incorporates physiological responses and is not just a linguistic exercise.

# Connecting



## Connecting

To begin the healing process, traumatised children need to start with a process of feeling reconnected to themselves- their feelings, their physical responses and their strengths.

**Reflection:** *Children who have experienced trauma need to build a repertoire of success, rather than a litany of failure. How often do you help these children experience success? How?*

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- Build a symbolic emotional vocabulary considering accessing all the senses eg: textures, sounds/music, colours.
- Use photography to connect the child's inner sensations with external representation.
- Make specific links between activities and capacity or skills.
- Understand the child may feel overwhelmed by their own emotional responses so provide an environment that enables them to experience regulation.

# Translating



## Translating

The way we structure a story of understanding about our experiences is a crucial integrative process for engaging with life. Children who have experienced trauma struggle to build those stories of understanding because of the impacts of that trauma.

**Reflection:** *How do you provide a record of the children's time with you to each individual child? How often do you review it with the child?*

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- Link current work/activities to possible futures.
- Meaning making does not need to be language based.
- Provide fun experiences for all children “just because”- not as a reward for a particular behaviour.
- Do calendar activities leading up to significant school/centre events eg: excursion, camp, concert.



# Involving



## Involving

Children who have experienced trauma often struggle with relationships with their peers. However, these relationships can be a source of healing and nurturing when developed and supported.

**Reflection:** *What strategies or programs do you have in place that build friendship skills, tolerance, respect and safety?*

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- Building social groups around areas of interest not social capacity.
- Consider developmental sequencing of play. Provide opportunities for parallel play- regardless of the age of the child (including into adolescence)
- Provide structured activities for recess and lunchtime- this does not have to be teacher directed and does not have to include implements.
- The value of staff modelling social skills cannot be underestimated.



# Calming



## Calming

Invariably, traumatised children are in a constant state of high arousal. To facilitate positive outcomes for these children at all levels (ie: educationally, socially, emotionally etc) we need to provide and support experiences of calm on a consistent and repetitive basis.

**Reflection:** *Within your role and your site, how can you provide consistent, rhythmic experiences of lowered arousal which is non-verbal? Does this mirror the soothing actions we might use with a very young child?*

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- Provide rhythmic repeated calming activities or environments that mirror early soothing.
- Utilise calming activities that focus the child's attention eg: fishtank, mindfulness, yoga poses.
- Be very clear of your own calmness levels to maintain your own capacity to think clearly and effectively.
- Work specifically around understanding what calm "feels like".

# Engaging



## Engaging

As with calming, the element of engaging children in relationship is fundamental to our work with traumatised children. The experience of appropriate, supportive adult-child relational exchanges is instrumental to supporting children who have experienced abuse related trauma.

**Reflection:** *How do you ensure that all adults in your workplace respond in a consistent way to traumatised children?*

Specific strategies to support this element might include:

- How do staff access support in their work with traumatised children? Is it with external agencies and/or processes within the school/centre?
- Understand the child's experience of relationships within the school/centre.
- Ongoing support and T&D for staff is important for consistency of response.
- Link to all other relationship based policies and processes eg: anti-bullying, code of conduct.

# Reflective questions – review, gap analysis and action plan

- In reviewing the audit tool, what can we include regarding what we already do?
- Where are the gaps or areas for improvement based on the audit tool?
- What do we need to be able to reinforce what we already do, address the identified gaps or work on the areas for improvement?
- What is our action plan?



# Holding Hope



Image source: ©ACF 2021

What are your hopes for  
the children/young  
people  
you work with?

What are your hopes for  
your school?

# Thank you for your participation!

## Keep in touch with us....



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