



**Making SPACE for Learning**

**Student Support Services**  
Department of Education

July 25<sup>th</sup> & Aug 1<sup>st</sup> 2023

Facilitator: Jen Knoll



Australian Childhood Foundation

1

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

2

## The Australian Childhood Foundation



### We Help Children Heal

On their own, children do not recover from the devastating impact of abuse, neglect and family violence. They need specialised support to heal. We provide therapeutic services to children.



### We Keep Children Safe

We build the ability and confidence of individuals and organisations to protect children. We provide parents with education and support to help them raise happy, safe and loved children.



### We Stand Up for Children

We advocate for changes to laws and policies that help to make all children safer. We work to strengthen community attitudes that prioritise the rights of children to love and safe relationships.



### We Create Understanding for Children

We educate and support adults who look after and work with traumatised children to be better able to understand and respond to their complex needs.



3

## Our Education Services

Access our latest offerings:  
<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/training-development/>

- Our Education Services co-create and amplify knowledge that changes children's lives for the better, by creating networks of learning in partnership with professionals and organisations working with children and young people.
- Our efforts include:
  - Accessible learning opportunities for professionals: a range of self-paced modules and virtual classrooms covering trauma prevention, relational healing and evidence-based approaches to best practice.
  - Customised organisational education: tailored training packages designed to support ongoing staff development, including Train The Trainer options for long-term success.
  - Accredited training: our unique Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma



4

## Our Safeguarding Services

- Over a decade, Safeguarding Services have partnered with over 300 organisations nationally and internationally to strengthen the capacity of institutions to keep children and young people safe.
- We offer a suite of standard and customised solutions that meet national and state Child Safe Standards, aimed at creating organisational culture change.
- We draw on best practice from the Foundation's experience and our network of partners, and evidence, including our recent Safeguarding Evaluation by the Centre for Social Impact.

Access our latest offerings:  
<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/safeguarding-children-services/>

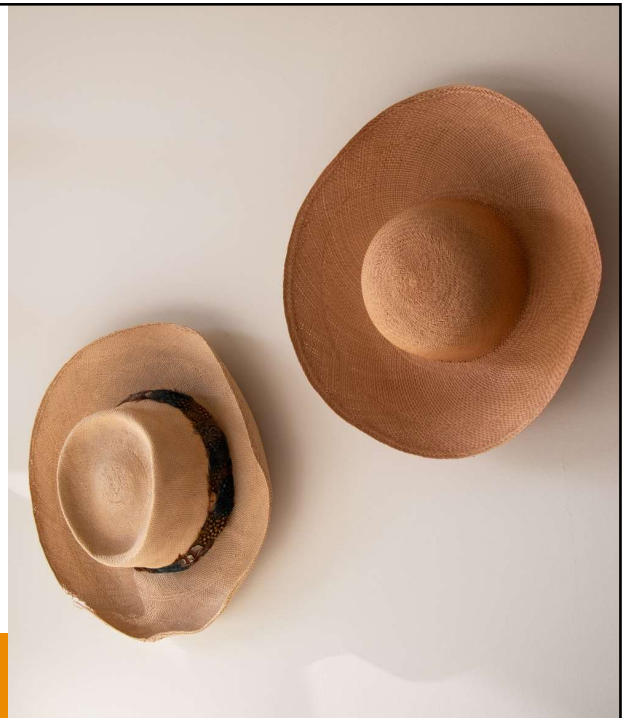


## Safety

The content of this training can evoke strong emotions and may stir up personal experiences of trauma.

Please be mindful of your own wellbeing during this training and if you need support please ask the facilitator.

If you feel you need to leave at any point you are welcome to do so.



## Learning Outcomes:

Develop an increased understanding of the impact of trauma on children and how it may present in the classroom.

Develop confidence in building strong and healing relationships with all students.

Develop strategies for working with students impacted by trauma that are accessible and applicable.



7

## Reflective Question:

All staff want children and young people to thrive in the spaces we create with them at school.

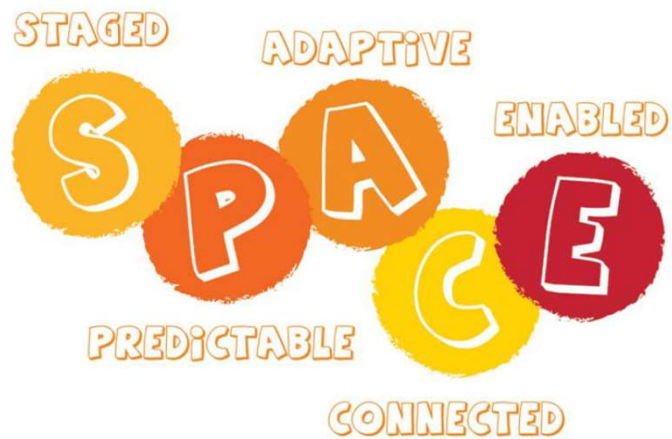
What makes the best kinds of learning spaces for children and young people?



8

## Making SPACE for Learning

SPACE is the central acronym of the program. It includes 5 domains to help educators better understand the needs of children who have experienced trauma and ways to support them in the educational setting.



9

Domains	Domain Explanation	Translated into needs statements
<b>Staged</b>	The brain develops sequentially. Sophisticated functions only emerge after basic functions are consolidated. We should resource children in line with what their developing brain's need.	Children's brains need support to grow and learn <b>My brain grows upwards step by step</b>
<b>Predictable</b>	Uncertainty and unpredictability can disrupt emotional wellbeing and threaten social competence. Strategies which promote stability and familiarity enhance social and emotional wellbeing.	Children need to know what they can count on <b>I feel better when I know what is coming next.</b>
<b>Adaptive</b>	Familiar behavioural routines are more likely to be enacted in response to life challenges than new ones. Familiar routines may not always be constructive. Strategies which promote adaptability in children's behavioural routines are ones that meet children creatively with multiple options for intervention.	Children need support to grow up healthy and strong <b>There are things I need to grow up healthy and strong.</b>
<b>Connected</b>	Children's internal maps for forming, maintaining and being in relationships are affected by their experiences of relationships throughout their lives. Negotiating relationships at school can be a source of stress when children have found them hard or unsafe in the past. Relationship with safe and consistent adults and peers form the foundation for change.	Children need to feel like they are connected. <b>I need to feel like I am connected.</b> Children need to feel safe and know about what makes a safe connection. <b>I need to feel safe.</b> <b>I need safe connections in my life.</b>
<b>Enabled</b>	All children can benefit from engaging in the process of understanding themselves more deeply. The capacity to identify feelings and learn how they relate to the body, thoughts, and behaviours is a worthwhile life skill. Learning to communicate feelings with each other enriches social cohesion. Making sense of our stories helps us to build coherent identities over time.	Children need to know more about what makes them who they are. <b>I grow stronger as I learn more about what makes me, me.</b>



10



James Jones is 14 and in Year 8 at Green Hill Secondary College.

James lives locally with his mother Jane. James's parents are separated after experiences of Family Violence. James currently does not see his father and an IVO is in place.

James's home routine's unpredictable and concern is present for food security. There are no known supports, formal or informal, in place. Jane is receptive to new referrals and has expressed a desire for assistance.

James is new to Green Hill S.C this year. At mid year feedback and observations from teachers suggest this has been a challenging experience for James. James attendance is low and he is often late to school.

James is a capable student but has difficulty engaging with schoolwork. Teachers observe that James does not often remember what was taught in class.

James has made friends with a few students. Concern has been raised with James and his Mother as his new friends are known to local Police and have been caught shoplifting in the past. James's interactions with other students have seen him sent to the coordinators office for verbal and physical fights.



James

### The Tree - Case Study

Bring to mind a child you have worked with or are currently working with who has been impacted by trauma. Consider the following:

**The Tree - C**  
Bring to mind a child you currently working with who has been impacted by trauma. Consider the following:

**Strengths**

**Hopes and Dreams**

**Classroom Strategies**

**Known Trauma**

**Underlying Needs**

**Survival Behaviours**

Australian Childhood Foundation



13

## Staged

- Brain development is sequential
- One of the ways our brain develops is vertically, from the bottom to the top
- Some neurodevelopmental delays such as those effected by trauma can cause brain changes. However with the right support the brain can be repaired through neuroplasticity.

Cortex, reasoning and judgement centre

Limbic system Emotional centre

Brain stem Basic life functions: breathing; heart rate; blood pressure ; respiration

**My brain grows upwards, step by step.**

Australian Childhood Foundation

14

## The Importance of Culture

How did you become who you are?

**Safety:** Belonging

**Relationships:** Connection

**Meaning making:** Identity



Australian  
Childhood  
Foundation

15

## Staged- A brain development metaphor - My Brain House

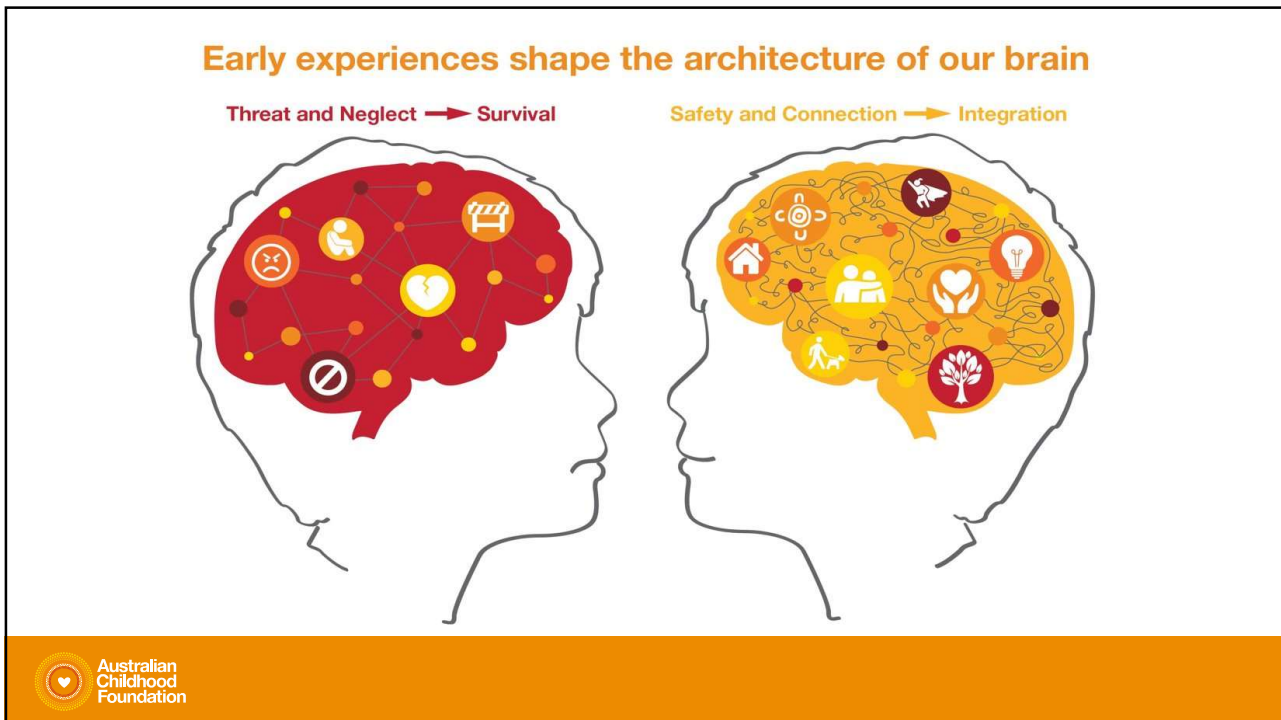
- We build our brain from the bottom to the top- like building a house
- We reinforce parts of our house as we grow, with our roof continuing to develop into our mid 20s.
- A student who is calm and focused at school will likely be functioning with a strong standing brain house, from foundation to roof.
- In times of great stress bits of our brain house can come down and require repair. This is achievable and our brain house can stand strong again.



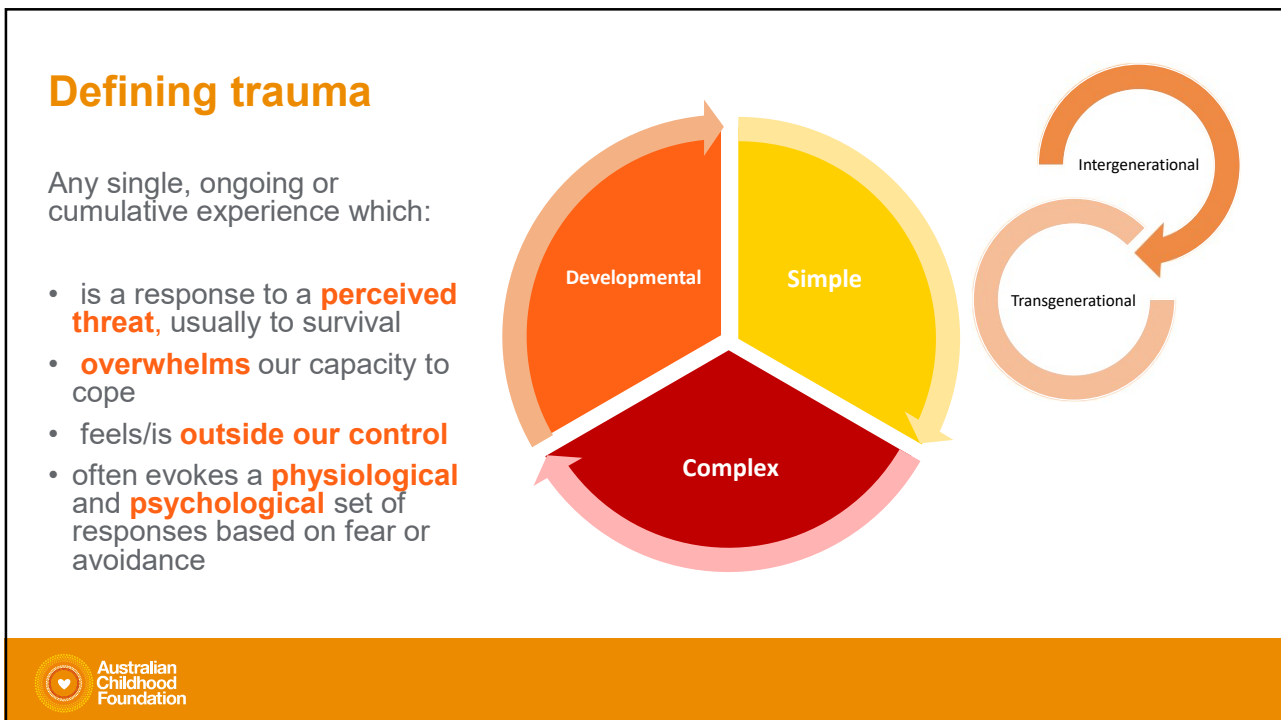
Australian  
Childhood  
Foundation

16





17



18

## Simple Trauma

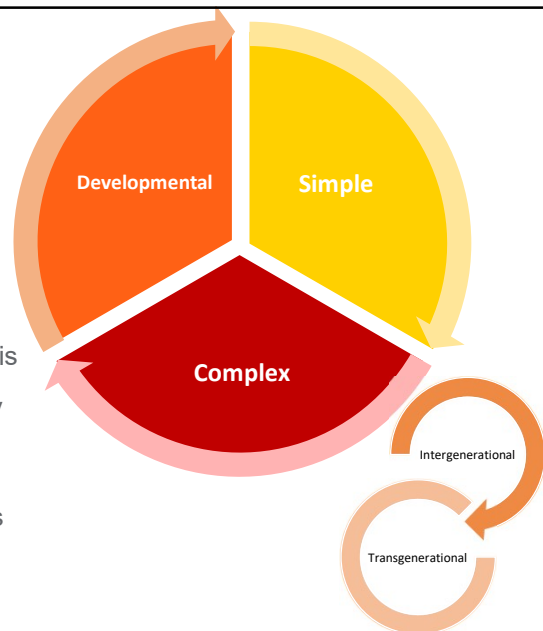
Simple trauma is overwhelming and painful. It involves experiences of events that are life threatening and/or have the potential to cause serious injury.

These are often:

- Single incidents
- Shorter in duration
- Involving a discrete crises
- Have less stigma associated with them, where this is no social blaming of the victims
- Generally have a supportive and helpful community response

Simple trauma includes experiences of being in car accidents, house fires, bushfires, earthquakes and cyclones for instance.

Experiencing one traumatic event will increase a person's likelihood of experiencing another traumatic event.

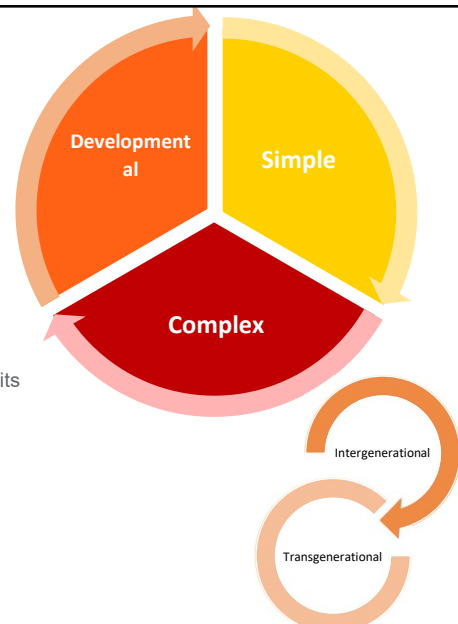


19

## Complex Relational Trauma

The term 'complex trauma' was adopted by the traumatic stress field to describe the experience of multiple and/or chronic and prolonged, developmentally adverse traumatic events. This is most often of an interpersonal nature (e.g. sexual or physical abuse, war, community violence) and has an early-life onset. It generally:

- Includes multiple incidents over an extended period of time
- Is longer in duration
- Occurs within a child's caregiving system
- Interferes with neurobiological development and the capacity to integrate sensory, emotional and cognitive information into a cohesive whole
- Is almost always associated with stigma, blaming and a sense of shame experienced by its victims
- Is an isolating experience due to the interpersonal element, often underpinned by intentionality
- Includes a sense of disconnection from others and their support
- Community responses are often not helpful with further blaming and disempowering the targets of the violence
- Has a powerful relationship to adult health later in life
- Examples of complex trauma include experiences of child abuse, neglect, bullying, domestic violence, rape, war and imprisonment.



20

Trauma can impact all elements of Student's development: brain, body, memory, learning, behaviour, emotions, relationships.

Australian Childhood Foundation

21

## Trauma Impacts

The residue of trauma becomes an experience of unmet needs for children.

Children are left with needs that in the moment of hurt, pain and fear are unfulfilled. These needs stay activated ready for available relationships to respond to them, see them and gradually help them to be met.

These needs are physiological, developmental, and interpersonal, requiring relational investment and presence in order to be resolved

***“ It is like they are on a loop hoping that their needs for safety, attention and validation that were not fulfilled will eventually find at least one relationship in the present that meets these needs consistently over time “ Joe Tucci***

Australian Childhood Foundation

22

## Trauma Impacts

Connected relationships can restore safety by understanding and addressing the needs that were not met.

For example:

An experience of being alone, can be met with accompaniment

An experience of fear met with protection, and

An experience of shame met with acceptance.

Needs can be identified within the domains of trauma and can be responded to by reparative experiences described in the Making SPACE for learning framework.

## Staged



## Predictable

- Changes to routines and uncertainty can be a source of stress to student
- Predictability in students' relationships and activities modulates their stress systems
- This then promotes flexibility and adaptability



**I feel better when I know what is coming next.**



25

## Predictable

“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

Hiam Ginott



26



# Predictable

What might predictability look like in practice?

- For students
- For families
- For all staff
- Systemically

relationships	physical activities
routines	instructions
learning tasks	behavioural expectations



# Predictable



## Adaptive

- Most of us have a set of behavioural routines that we draw from to respond to challenges when they emerge. These routines are likely based in what has helped us get by in the past and the experiences of relationships through which these routines were interpreted and responded to.
- To broaden children's behavioural repertoires and promote increased adaptability we need to maintain multiple meanings for the behaviour and remain open to multiple options for interventions.



29

## Adaptive

### Behaviour is communication

If we can understand what drives a behaviour, we can work out how to respond to it.

If we can meet the need that is driving a behaviour, the behaviour can start to reduce.

**Behaviours are functional** and almost always makes sense given their specific experiences of trauma.

Openness and curiosity about behaviour is an important response.



30

## What does safety look like at school?

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

Dr Steven Porges




31

## Safe & Unsafe States of Being

<div style="background-color: #f4a460; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">MOBILISATION</div>	<p style="text-align: center;">In this state we feel unsafe</p>	<p><b>We are active and mobilised without a sense of safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We fight, or flee, or our bodies actively freeze with tensed muscles.</li> </ul>	
<div style="background-color: #76c73a; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT</div>	<p style="text-align: center;">We feel Safe in these states</p>	<p><b>We are active and mobilised with a sense of safety</b></p> <p><b>We are socially engaged</b></p> <p><b>We come to be still with a sense of safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes known as the 'Play Zone' in this state our bodies are active as we socially engage with others.</li> <li>Our bodies feel calm and relaxed.</li> <li>We feel in synch and connected with others.</li> <li>We are orientated towards each other with welcoming voices &amp; open faces.</li> <li>We find pleasure in stillness.</li> </ul>	
<div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">IMMOBILISATION</div>	<p style="text-align: center;">In this state we feel unsafe</p>	<p><b>Our body slows into an immobilised state without a sense of safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are withdrawn, submissive, collapsed, numb.</li> </ul>	



32

Social Engagement

**Tell Tale Signs**

We feel **safe** in this state.

- Our bodies are calm and relaxed.
- We engage in mirroring and reciprocation with each other.
- We are orientated towards one another with engaged, open faces.



Mobilisation

**Tell Tale Signs** \* Our bodies are filled with energy, and we need to move.



**Play & Exploration**

We experience a blend of mobilisation and social engagement in a **safely mobilised state**.

**Fight or Flight or Active Freeze**

We are mobilised **without a sense of safety** in this state.



Mobilisation without feeling safe

**Tell Tale Signs in the Classroom** \* Our bodies are filled with energy, and we need to move.

- Hypervigilant
- Edgy/jumpy
- Irritable – easily annoyed
- Poor recovery from distraction
- ‘silly’, loud, over-excitement
- Unsettled, sleep difficulties
- Outbursts, aggression
- Defensive, taking things personally
- Increased expectations of self and others
- Inflexible, ‘controlling’
- Sensitive to sensory input



Immobilisation

**Tell Tale Signs** \* Our bodies are slowed right down



**Being still with others for pro-social reasons, like sharing a hug. We find pleasure in stillness. This is an intimate state.**

We experience a blend of immobilisation and social engagement in a **safely immobilised state.**



**Withdrawn, submissive, collapsed, numb**

We experience immobilisation **without a sense of safety** in this state.





## Immobilisation without feeling safe

### Tell Tale Signs in the Classroom \* Our bodies are slowed right down

- Flat, numb affect
- Disengaged, disinterested
- Withdrawn
- “boredom”
- Lethargic, unmotivated
- Disconnected from peers
- Developmental regression –  
e.g. with abilities to self-soothe, self-care/hygiene, toileting
- Changes to appetite



## The Social Engagement System



# Line of my day activity

## Mobilised

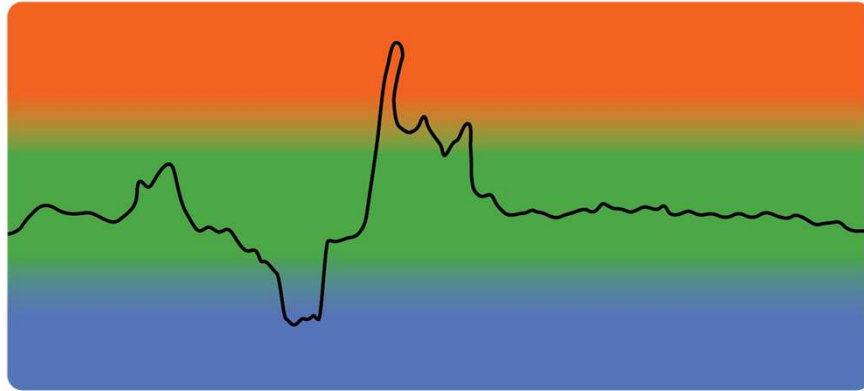
I don't feel safe zone

## Socially Engaged

I feel safe zone

## Immobilised

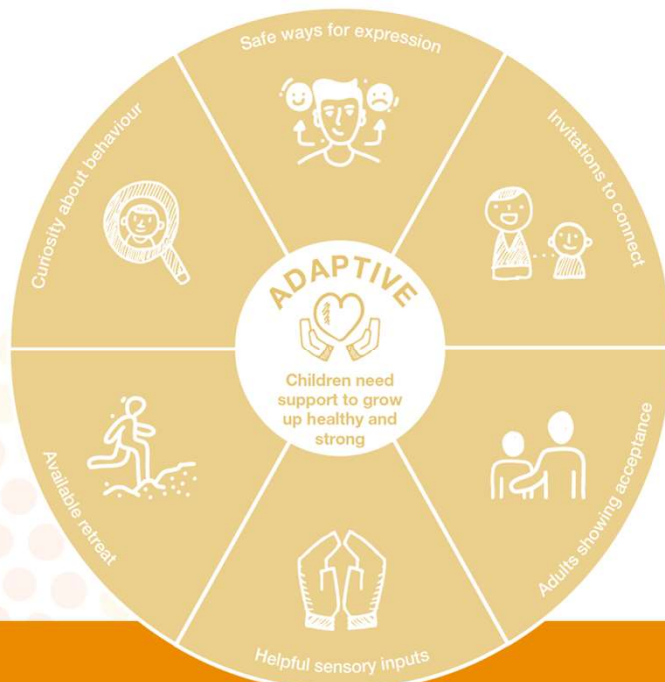
I don't feel safe zone



My Day



# Adaptive



## Connected

- Children's relational templates for forming and being in relationships take shape as they grow. They learn what to expect and how to navigate relationships through their experiences of connection with those around them.
- We tend to expect things from relationships based on what we have known from past connections.
- Strategies to support children as their relational templates continue to develop emphasise relationships with safe and consistent adults and peers as the foundation for healthy, strong social and emotional functioning.

**I need to feel like I am connected.**

**I need to feel safe.**

**I need safe connections in my life.**



41

## Connected

### Relational Safety

- Safety occurs in relationships that support physiological growth and renewal
- It is integrated into stories of meaning that offer predictability, security and stability
- It is connected with memories of family and home and experiences of strength love and nurture.
- It ritualises care and empathy

*“ Safety and healing gives us back to ourselves. Not to hide or fight any more. But to sit still calm our minds, listen to the universe and allow our spirits to dance on the wind. It lets us enjoy the sunshine and be bathed by the golden glow of the moon as we drift into our dreamtime... Safety in relationships gives us back to our country. To stand once again in our rightful place, eternal and generational. It keeps us strong and gentle at the same time.”*

Helen Milroy (2018)



42

## Connected

Safety is a central whilst complex concept in this training. It holds a range of meanings for us and for the children, families and communities that we work with

What does a safe space feel like for you?

How do you inhabit it?

What do you bring to it to make it feel safe?

What/ who else is inside the space that contributes to the safe nature of it?



43

## Connected

### What is Relational Safety in the classroom?

**Accompaniment** is an experience for a child that offers emotional reciprocity, validation, care and comfort. In this experience they feel heard, met, felt and understood.

*“ Children internalise the people who understand and comfort them, so that they often have the felt sense of accompaniment when they are alone.”*

Bonnie Badenoch



44



45

## Enabled

- Engaging students in the process of understanding themselves can build social and emotional learning.
- When students know about their qualities, their attributes and their talents they can feel good about themselves.
- Knowing about their own special story helps students to build a coherent self-narrative.

**I grow stronger as I learn more about what makes me, me.**

Australian Childhood Foundation

46



# Enabled



47

Jenny Taylor is 8 years old in Grade 2 at Sunrise Primary School.

Teachers have raised concern over Jenny's interactions with peers and her quiet and withdrawn demeanour.

Jenny appears to have difficulty making friends and she it has been observed that Jenny has been excluded by classmates at recess and lunch periods.

Jenny puts effort into her schoolwork, but she scores below her peers in literacy and numeracy.

Jenny asks to stay inside during recess and lunch and often clings to her teacher.



## Jenny

48

### The Tree – Case Study

Bring to mind a child you have worked with or are currently working with who has been impacted by trauma. Consider the following:

**The Tree – C**  
Bring to mind a child you currently working with who has been impacted by trauma. Consider the following:

- Hopes and Dreams
- Classroom Strategies
- Known Trauma
- Survival Behaviours
- Underlying Needs
- Strengths

Australian Childhood Foundation

49

### Making SPACE for Learning – Site Audit Tool

This audit tool can be used to evaluate the policies and initiatives of a school that resource and equip different levels of the school structure to undertake trauma informed practice. In the following table, list strategies, policies or other processes currently undertaken that support traumatised students at your school.

	Whole Site	Staff	Classroom / Group	Small Group	Individual Student / Child
<b>S</b> Staged					
<b>P</b> Predictable					
<b>A</b> Adaptive					
<b>C</b> Connected					
<b>E</b> Enabled					

Australian Childhood Foundation

50

Evaluation:



Australian Childhood Foundation

[professionals.childhood.org.au](https://professionals.childhood.org.au)

The slide features a solid orange background with a decorative pattern of semi-transparent orange circles of varying sizes on the left side. The word "Evaluation:" is centered in white. A QR code is positioned on the right side. The Australian Childhood Foundation logo is in the bottom left, and the website URL is in the bottom right.