


Self Care & Understanding and responding to trauma

FLO 2023



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The Australian Childhood Foundation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians and owners of the land and waters across Australia.

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.



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We acknowledge you....and what you bring....

- Knowledge
- Practice skills
- Experience
- Passion
- Compassion
- A desire to bring about change



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Your emotional safety is paramount
 Our learning is about shared wisdom
 Curiosity and learning build our brains

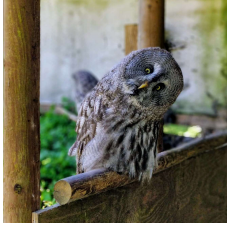




Image source: © Josh Mills 2022

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Success criteria

- **develop** an enhanced understanding of complex abuse related trauma, with a particular focus on its effects on the brain and body.
- **apply** frameworks for assessing and responding to the impact of trauma on students.
- **build** a toolkit of practice skills to respond, which promote recovery and healing for students.


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MORNING → **Part 1: 9.00am - 11.00am**
 Introducing Self Care
Morning Tea: 11.00am – 11.15am

MIDDLE → **Part 2: 11.15am – 12.45pm**
 the SMART PRACTICE Framework and ACF Model of PRACTICE
 The Brain, growing up and the impact of trauma
Lunch Break: 12.45pm – 1.15pm

AFTERNOON → **Part 3: 1.15pm – 3.15pm**
 Healing ways to respond: SMART Circle of PRACTICE
Finish: 3.30pm


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Introductions

- Consider your professional journey, what has led you to your role now?
- What have been your twists and turns?
- What have you learnt along the way?

Draw this journey as you reflect..



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PART 1:
Self Care





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Part 1: Self Care

Session Outline

Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the impact of working with vulnerable children
Defining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining terms of vicarious trauma
Exploring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring empathy a skill and a vulnerability
Self Care Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Compassion • Cortical reflection • Mindfulness





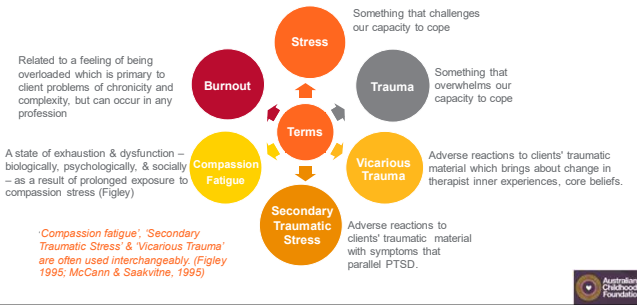
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Working with vulnerable young people?

- What does working with vulnerable young people mean for you?
- What are the impacts?
- What are the challenges of your role?
- What keeps you in your role?

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Defining the terminology



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Empathy – a strength and a vulnerability

If empathy is to 'walk a mile in someone's shoes' we need to ensure we step out of those shoes at the end of the mile or we will wear those shoes all the time....and that is vicarious trauma.


- Somatic empathy (Rothschild 2004)
- Limbic resonance
- Cortical empathy




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Somatic Empathy – mirroring body states

- An angry parent
- An exhausted staff
- A depressed teenager
- A calm, relaxed worker



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Limbic Resonance & Cortical Empathy

Limbic Resonance
(SUB-CORTICAL)

Our emotional state adjusts to match the emotional state of the person or people we are with

Cortical Empathy
(PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX)

Our attempts to step outside our own experiences and imagine the experience and perspective of others


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Risk and Protective Factors

Risk Factors

Protective Factors

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ACF resource: Secondary Traumatic Stress Centre for excellence in Therapeutic Care and Staff Well-being: Understanding compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma and burnout in therapeutic care

Organisational Risk & Protective factors




RISK	PROTECTIVE
Lack of role clarity for staff	Good staff support and supervision including the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the work with supervisors
High client demands	Staff training, induction and orientation processes for staff
Insufficient supervision	Support from co-workers/team
Little feedback on performance	Support from family and friends
Few opportunities to participate in decision making	Meaningful processes that are consistently applied for staff to feel a sense of ownership of decisions that impact themselves and/or the young people
High/excessive workloads (hours, complexity, number of demands)	Well-balanced and manageable workload with commitment to work-life balance
Lack of autonomy	Support to develop and grow in the role
Insufficient control over resources needed to accomplish role	Clear processes for decision making and strong channels for communication about the rationale for decisions
Lack of staff recognition	Reward and recognition for work contributions (i.e. financial, social, intrinsic)
Disconnected staff, lacking in team environment	Strong team culture
Perceived lack of fairness (inequity of workload or salary; lack of openness and respect regarding decision making)	Inclusive workplace with strong communication processes and staff engagement in the culture of the organisation
Poorly aligned values, priorities and ethics between organisation and staff	High levels of organisational congruence and openness to regularly review systems and processes
Lack of access to external supports for staff where required	Provision of external supports such as Employee Assistance Programs, external supervision for staff
Low levels of interagency collaboration re clients	Strong culture of collaboration and joint working

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ACF resource: Secondary Traumatic Stress Centre for excellence in Therapeutic Care and Staff Well-being: Understanding compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma and burnout in therapeutic care

Personal Risk & Protective factors



RISK	PROTECTIVE
Low levels of education/socioeconomic status	Relevant qualifications and ongoing professional development
Inexperience in the workplace	More experienced in the workplace, access to mentoring/buddy systems
History of trauma in own life	Has been able to process own trauma history
Over identification with the clients due to own history	Able to maintain appropriate boundaries
Reluctance to ask for support	Seeks support appropriately
Perfectionism, high need for approval	Sets reasonable expectations for self
Low self esteem	Strong sense of self
Low level of self-reflection	Good reflective capacity
Passive or negative coping styles	Resilient
Few self-care strategies	Range or regularly used self-care strategies
Poor diet	Good nutrition
Poor limit setting on work-life balance, few planned breaks/holidays	Good work- life balance, regular breaks/holidays
Few social/family supports	Supportive network of family and friends
Few interests outside of work	Actively engaged in a range of interests

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Organisational approaches to supporting staff

<p>1</p> <p>Step 1: Acknowledge and make a commitment to address burnout, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma in the workplace</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Step 2: Taking stock: Measure levels of compassion fatigue in the workplace</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Step 3: Reduce demands</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Step 4: Increase resources</p>
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Mitigating the risks: Self care

- Awareness of your personal wellbeing
- Plan and enact a self care of wellbeing plan
- Manage and respond to our self care needs.

Skills:

- Reflective practice
- Compassion
- Mindfulness

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The role of Mindfulness in Self Care

Medial Pre-Frontal Cortex
the centre of Mindfulness/Self-awareness.

Mindfulness deactivates the Amygdala (the 'smoke-detector' of the brain) helping us to calm.

Mindfulness also develops the Medial Pre-Frontal Cortex, helping us to develop reflection and empathy for others.

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PART 2:

The SMART Framework and the neurobiology of trauma

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SMART PRACTICE

Predictable (Responsive)
Responsive (Attuned)
Attuned (Connecting)
Connecting (Translating)
Translating (Involving)
Involve (Calming)
Calming (Engaging)
PRACTICE (Engaging)

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What is trauma?



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Introducing the ACF Model of practice



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The importance of safety



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School refusal

• How does safety link to school refusal?

Factors that can contribute to school refusal include:

- stressful life events
- major transitions such as starting primary or secondary school
- moving or other big change
- fear of harm coming to a parent
- illness in the family
- separation and divorce
- academic problems
- overprotective parenting
- friendship difficulties
- separation anxiety.

Research Paper 'School Refusal' 2023 Dr. S Clark, Department of Parliamentary Services

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Relationships shape our sense of self and safety

- Relationships are the most important factor in our development and in healing from experiences of trauma
- Secure relationships is central to how adolescents experiences themselves and others.

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How do I make meaning of the world?

Relational Templates:

- Our brains grow through connection with another brain.
- Our early attachments provide us with right hemispheric cues on how we interpret and respond to the world around us.
- Mirror neurons help us to mimic social cues and learn new skills from others.
- Effective communication is reliant on access to relationships who are available, consistent and safe.

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BBS
KR3

Harnessing the power of the teenage brain

- Testing boundaries and a passion to explore what is unknown and exciting, helps move from dependence to independence
- Essential time of emotional intensity, social engagement, and creativity.

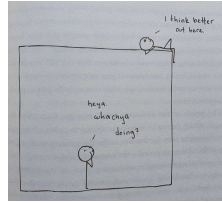


Image source: ©2014 Brainstorm Dan Siegel

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Brain development



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Cortical

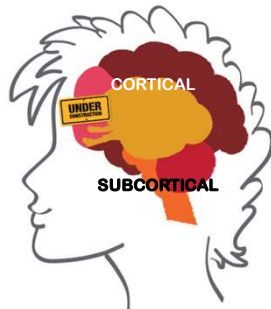
- Consciously activated for reflection

Responsive

Subcortical

- Unconsciously activated for constant survival

Reactive



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Slide 31

BB5 i like this pic, but it will need some explanation

Brendan Bailey, 27/09/2022

KR3 Haha! I was just saying to Carolyn I was trying to throw some suggested ideas down here after a convo we had last week but needed to get this uploaded so only had time to take this pic from his Brainstorm book!

Karyn Robinson, 27/09/2022

Detecting Safety with our Social Engagement System

- We feel safe together in this state.
- This is a calm behavioural state
- Often characterized by mirroring and reciprocation.
- Tell tale signs- people are orientated towards one another with engaged faces



Neuroception of Safety
Neuroception = the way our neural circuits quickly and implicitly work out if situations or people are safe or dangerous

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Mobilisation Fight, Flight, Active Freeze	I don't feel safe	I am filled with energy I need to move I need to act now	Red Faced, hot and sweaty Fast beating heart Muscles tensed Moving body, hard to find stillness
Social Engagement	I feel safe	I am all set to play and explore I am ready to connect I am open to your ideas	Making Eye contact Orienting towards those around Listening Relaxed, loose, flowing body
Immobilisation Flop	I don't feel safe	I am numbed out I am retreating inside I am collapsed, small, and distant	I have cold extremities Glazed eyes, distant stare Slow movement Lethargic & passive body


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Mobilisation

SAFETY **DANGER**

Play **Fight or Flight or Active Freeze**



Neuroception of Safety ↔ Neuroception of Danger

Access to Social Engagement System No access to Social Engagement System

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Immobilisation

SAFETY

Being still with others for pro-social reasons like sharing a hug. Finding pleasure in stillness.



Neuroception of Safety
Access to Social Engagement System

DANGER

Submission or collapse



Neuroception of Danger
No access to Social Engagement System

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When I am terrified

- Containment- help me feel back in my body
- Grounded- Help me feel present in the Here and Now.
- Present- Stay with me, help me know I am not alone in my distress

Notice and name

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





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My Day feeling safe and unsafe

Mobilised
I don't feel safe zone

Socially Engaged
I feel safe zone

Immobilised
I don't feel safe zone

My Day 



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Co-regulation: Relational Regulation

Co-regulation is a relational regulation with an offer of safety. It involves:
 A collaborative process that involves attunement, empathy, and active listening. By working together to regulate emotions and behaviours, individuals can build stronger connections and promote overall well-being.
 Growth and development: children can gradually take on more responsibility for their own regulation, with the support of caregivers and other adults.
 Involves a physiological connection that involves the sharing of oxytocin and the soothing of the stress hormone cortisol.



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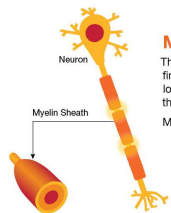
Adolescence



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CG9

Pruning & myelination in the adolescent brain



Myelination
 The second change is in myelination: in adolescence, it is not finished. The last part of the brain to myelinate is the frontal lobes. And myelination is not complete in the frontal lobes of the brain until around 18 to 20 or later.
 Myelination on a neuron allows it to operate more efficiently.



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CG9 A big thanks to Kim for updating this image for us :)


Carolyn Grace, 28/09/2022

The Prefrontal Cortex

Final part of the brain to reach maturity in one's mid to late twenties

- self awareness
- reasoning and judgement
- foresight and anticipation
- focusing and sustaining attention
- planning organising and prioritising
- decision making
- reflecting
- enthusiasm, motivation and persistence
- impulse control
- working memory




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Vulnerabilities – the impact of trauma on the PFC

Behaviours associated with an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex

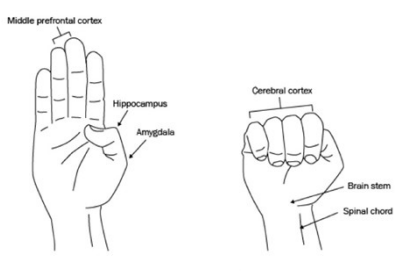
- Short attention span
- Impulsivity and increased risk taking
- Procrastination (lack of motivation or internal reward systems)
- Disorganisation (trouble working through long term goals)
- Poor judgement and problem solving
- Reduction in ability to see things from other's perspective




SMART Practice 2023 Adolescents Image source: © iStock 2022 

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Flipping a Lid



Hand model courtesy of Dan Siegel

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What does this mean for our students - the importance of rest and sleep...

- Pruning and myelination occur during sleep
- Sleep strengthens learning and memories

What impacts our adolescents' sleep?

- Later release of melatonin during adolescence
- Lack of safety to sleep well, if at all
- Poor sleep hygiene
- Use of devices

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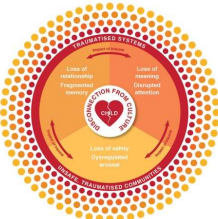
What can we do? – The four C's

- **Compassion and empathy** is so important. There may be many reasons why your student is turning up to school or your class tired. Be gently curious as to why they may be tired.
- **Check in** during homegroup/home room time with students – how did they sleep? Have they had breakfast? Can breakfast or food be provided at school? What else do they need? Check in also at the beginning of each lesson.
- **Consider** adjusting morning lesson structures /content that leans towards movement and invigoration, before heavy cortical work.
After lunch more allow more creativity rather than problem solving, or analytical work as their concentration may dip in the afternoon.
- **Create** spaces for students to have power naps or short rest breaks, if possible, or to complete homework tasks at school.

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Effects of trauma on behaviour



- To cope with trauma children use initial adaptive responses to survive
- This is reasonable as a once off occurrence, but, if they continue they can become maladaptive patterns of behaviour
- These responses will be different for an individual child at different developmental stages
- Often a combination of appropriate developmental behaviours and maladaptive patterns of behaviour emerge

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Slide 46

BB8 this needs to be more directed - something like, "how can we help our teenagers get more sleep?"

and then an instruction to turn n talk

Brendan Bailey, 27/09/2022

KR6 In my initial comments that got lost in the shift over to the new PP templates, I actually asked whether we say much about this other than flagging it up to teachers that sleep deprivation has an impact on students, just for their awareness as there's not much a subject teacher can actually do about improving sleep hygiene....

Karyn Robinson, 27/09/2022

BB9 TBH, i think it's one of those things that we either go into depth on, or omit. i'm thinking the latter.

Brendan Bailey, 27/09/2022


CG5 This has always been a slide that has generated wonderful discussion in the SMART Sessions. Most of the teachers were not aware of how sleep impacts memory consolidation, myelination etc,


Carolyn Grace, 28/09/2022

Impacts on behaviour

When a student is feeling 'unsafe' and feeling a sense of powerlessness, we may see:

- Aggression
- Overactive stress responses
- Withdrawal
- Agitation
- Tiredness due to lack of sleep
- Loss of fine motor skills





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What is the behaviour communicating?

The Tree - Case Study
 Bring to mind a child you have worked with or are currently working with who has been impacted by trauma. Complete the following:



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The Shield of Shame



Blame
"It was his fault!"

Deny
"I never did anything!"

Minimise
"He wasn't really hurt"

Rage
"You always blame me for everything!!!"

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PART 3:

**Healing ways to respond:
Circle of PRACTICE**

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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 adolescents
- The framework should inform **best practice** when supporting children and young people who have experienced trauma

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SMART Circle of PRACTICE

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What is the SMART Circle of PRACTICE?

The **SMART Circle of PRACTICE** is a tool designed by the Australian Childhood Foundation to conceptualise ways to support and co-regulate students using what is called “Bottom Up and Top Down” responding and strategies.

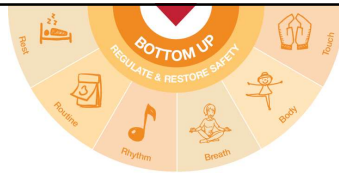
When under stress or having been impacted from trauma, a student’s ability to stay engaged in their learning and social interactions is significantly impacted...



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Bottom Up

“Bottom Up” responding refers to engaging the subcortical (lower) parts of the brain to regulate the higher parts of the brain.



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Top Down

“Top Down” responding refers to engaging the cortical (higher) parts of the brain to regulate the lower parts of the brain. regulation



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Intention

Bottom up

to regulate and restore safety

Top Down

to respond and strengthen relationships

The diagram consists of two semi-circular arcs. The top arc, labeled 'BOTTOM UP' and 'REGULATE & RESTORE SAFETY', contains icons for 'Mind' (bed), 'Respiration' (breath), 'Rhythm' (musical note), 'Beats' (dancer), and 'Body' (person). The bottom arc, labeled 'TOP DOWN' and 'RESPOND & STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS', contains icons for 'Proximity' (two people), 'Attachment' (heart), 'Synchronise' (two people), 'Skills' (flowers), and 'Neurology' (brain). The SMART logo and Australian Childhood Foundation logo are at the bottom.

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When to use each of the approaches

“Top Down” approach

when students are in, or able to still engage, a regulated state to help them stay there

“Bottom Up” approach

to help students access a regulated state when feeling distressed, unsafe or disconnected.

The illustration shows two children jumping joyfully in the air, and another two children sitting on the floor, holding hands in a circle. The SMART logo and Australian Childhood Foundation logo are at the bottom.

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The 12 elements of the CIRCLE of PRACTICE

The 12 elements in the circle are ways that have been identified through research to provide what human brains and bodies need for regulation.

The circle contains 12 icons: a person, a flower, a heart, a ribbon, a face, a basketball, hands, a dancer, a person meditating, a musical note, a book, and a bed. The SMART logo and Australian Childhood Foundation logo are at the bottom.

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Bottom up and top down responding

The diagram shows a profile of a human head with a brain. A red arrow on the left points upwards, labeled 'Increase cortical brain functioning' with sub-points: 'Strengthen relationship' and 'Respond'. An orange arrow on the right points downwards, labeled 'Manage lower brain responses' with sub-points: 'Create safety' and 'Self and co-regulation'. A yellow box labeled 'UNDER' is positioned over the brain's limbic system.

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Top down to support regulation

The diagram shows a profile of a human head with a brain. A yellow box labeled 'UNDER' is positioned over the brain's limbic system. Two black arrows point from the 'Medial Prefrontal Cortex' (described as 'The centre of self awareness and mindful, focused activity') towards the 'amygdala' (described as 'Mindful, focused activities de-activates the amygdala').

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SMART PRACTICE Responses and Strategies

Activities and Discussions

The poster features an illustration of four diverse children sitting in a circle. To the right are two large sheets of paper. The left sheet is titled 'Bottom-Up Responses' and lists: 'Breathe', 'Stretch', 'Walk', 'Body', 'Senses', 'Repeat', and 'Repeat'. The right sheet is titled 'Top-Down Responses' and lists: 'Identify', 'Name', 'Describe', 'Repeat', and 'Repeat'. Each list has a corresponding icon and a blank space for notes.

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Reframing our view

“what’s wrong with you?”

versus

“what has happened to you?”

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For each of the elements of PRACTICE we invite you to:

- consider the main **PRINCIPLE** and **OUTCOMES**
- reflect on what the **NEEDS** are of students (as children/young people)
- understand the **PRACTICE GOAL**
- Identify helpful and supportive **RESPONSES, ACTIVITIES** and **STRATEGIES**

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I've got one lesson!

Being **PREDICTABLE**... would your students be able to answer these questions?

- How you greet them each lesson?
- Do they know what's coming up in the lesson?
- Do they know the general routine of the lesson?
- Do they know where they will sit?
- Do they know how you will give them their instructions, tasks, work, feedback..?
- Do they know where to find what they need?
- Do they know what to do if they are struggling with a task? Do they know how you will react?

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Slide 66

BB15 I don't think this is your graphic... but it's worded really strangely.

Brendan Bailey, 27/09/2022

KR8 It is our graphic. Kim has been doing them for us. They are meant to help subject teachers reflect on aspects of each of the key words in the PRACTICE acronym . In this one it is getting them to reflect on how much predictability they create/ can create within their one hour lesson

Karyn Robinson, 27/09/2022

PREDICTABLE responding – whole class and students

- Focus on creating an environment that is predictable and familiar
- Always prepare the student for what is coming up next
- Establish a supportive pattern of one to one communication with the student that explains the immediate and short term future
- Be particularly sensitive to transition experiences

MORNING

MIDDAY

AFTERNOON

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I've got one lesson!

Being **RESPONSIVE** to trauma related behaviours and other impacts...

- Do the students impacted by trauma know you get them, what they've been through and what they need to support them?
- Can you be open and curious about what their behaviour is telling you?
- Can you see the person behind the behaviour and translate it as a form of communication?
- Can you respond to their behaviour and their cognitive and emotional levels where they are at rather than where, chronologically, they 'should' be?

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I've got one lesson!

Being **ATTUNED** to your students...


- Can you pick up on the students non verbal and body language cues to help you gauge where they are at, what their state of being is?
- Can you be flexible in your approach so that if they're getting agitated or start withdrawing in the lesson you can meet them where they're at and guide them back?
- Can you see when they need your understanding and connection?
- Can you pick the moments when they can be responsive to playfulness, or having their capacity for learning pushed, or when they need more sensitivity from you?


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I've got one lesson!
CONNECTING with your students...

- Can you help raise their awareness of their feelings, naming them, linking to signals from their movement, facial expression, behaviour or drawing attention to their internal signals?
- How does this sound in your own voice?
 - "You seem agitated, you're fidgeting heaps and your eyes are darting everywhere. Is your body making it hard to settle?"
 - "I'm thinking, judging from your expression and your slumped shoulders, you're feeling a bit low right now; have I got that right?"
 - "I'm guessing the task I just handed out has made your brain and body go NO WAY. I'm not ready for that! It looks like they are freaking out a bit but I've got you, we can work this out"





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I've got one lesson!
 Helping students to **TRANSLATE** their responses and interactions to bring about understanding and growth.

- It can be tricky helping to bring students awareness to their responses and ways of interacting with their environment in a safe respectful way in the classroom environment so that they may begin to make meaning of these responses and ways of being. Doing this though, can help students to heal, to challenge unhelpful internal working models and create space for personal growth and encourage experiences of success.
- What does this sound/ look like in our interactions with them? How do we bring their awareness to their ways of being such as their reactions, how they interpret events/ conversations, what they struggle with, what they seem most comfortable with....?





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I've got one lesson!
INVOLVING your students in healthy safe positive peer connections...

- Do you know how safe and positive each of your students feel in peer relationships? How connected they feel? How competent and respected they feel in those relationships?
- Consider the kinds of engagement and relational tasks that are common in your lessons/ interactions with students? Are your students working in pairs, groups, with equipment, moving around, in close proximity? How well do they know each other? How are their social and academic skills matched to enhance the experience? How do we take these factors into consideration to promote safety and positive experiences? How can you scaffold students to be able to engage safely with their peers in your classroom?





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I've got one lesson!
 Helping students feel safe in **CALM** peaceful environments and relationships

- Building trust and a felt sense of safety is sometimes done by testing limits for understanding and reassurance. How do we stay calm and grounded ourselves in order to hold a student who is learning to adapt to and trust calm peaceful environments? How do we help them to adapt and learn to trust and thrive in these environments of calm and peace, including the engaged hum of a focused classroom? How can we promote their sense of being an integral part of that, so they don't feel like an outsider, alien to that kind of environment?
- How do you check in on your inner state of calm? How do you check that you are well grounded yourself, particularly when students might be testing the limits?





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I've got one lesson!
 Supporting students to actively **ENGAGE** in relationships and their learning with hope and success...

Remember we largely come to understand ourselves through how others experience us and reflect that back to us. This is why, how we engage with students, has the potential to influence their life journey. How does your compassion, respect, enjoyment, playfulness, and investment in a student shine through in the way you engage with them? How do you reflect these genuine experiences of their strengths, their uniqueness, their potential back to them so that they might come to see and truly believe themselves to be, or capable of being, the amazing human beings you are experiencing them as?




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Key takeaway messages

- Develop connection and belonging – **RELATIONSHIPS** are key – acknowledge strengths
- Reintegrate experiences of shame (eye contact)
- Experience trust and respect
- Develop a sense of personal competence
- Be predictable
- Regulate to engage - be present, be connected, be authentic

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Checkout
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SMART Learning Pathway
ACF & SMART Resources
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Check out

What are you taking back to your school/site tomorrow?

- Strategy?
- Activity?
- New perspective?

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Feedback

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Keep in touch with ACF and DfE

Melissa Powney, Senior Consultant ACF

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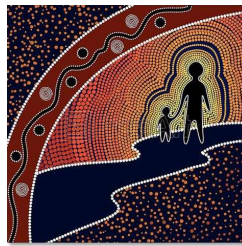
Karen Perry, Policy Officer, Child Protection and Trauma-informed practice, DfE

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SMART Learning Pathway

- SMART Online Training – register through Plink – self-paced
- SMART – 2-hour training – facilitated by a local SMART Trainer
- SMART PRACTICE – Day 1 – *(includes specialist packages ie Early Years, Refugees, Adolescents, Working with Aboriginal students)*
- SMART PRACTICE – Day 2
- SMART Train the Trainer program – 2 days



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ACF & SMART Resources

- SMART training – register through PLINK
- Discussion papers – available on TLC Teams page
- Prosody Blog
<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/professional-community-network/>
- Other ACF Training
<https://professionals.childhood.org.au/training-development/course-list/>

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