



1



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.



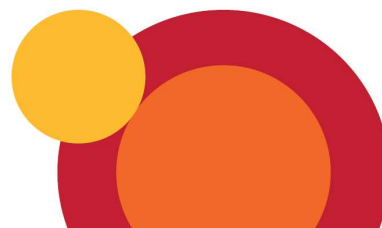
3



Consider a teacher who taught you, and had a positive influence on you...

What do you remember about them?

How did they make you feel?



4

## What is Trauma?

Trauma is the emotional, psychological and physiological reactions caused by the prolonged and overwhelming stress that accompanies experiences of abuse, neglect and family violence.

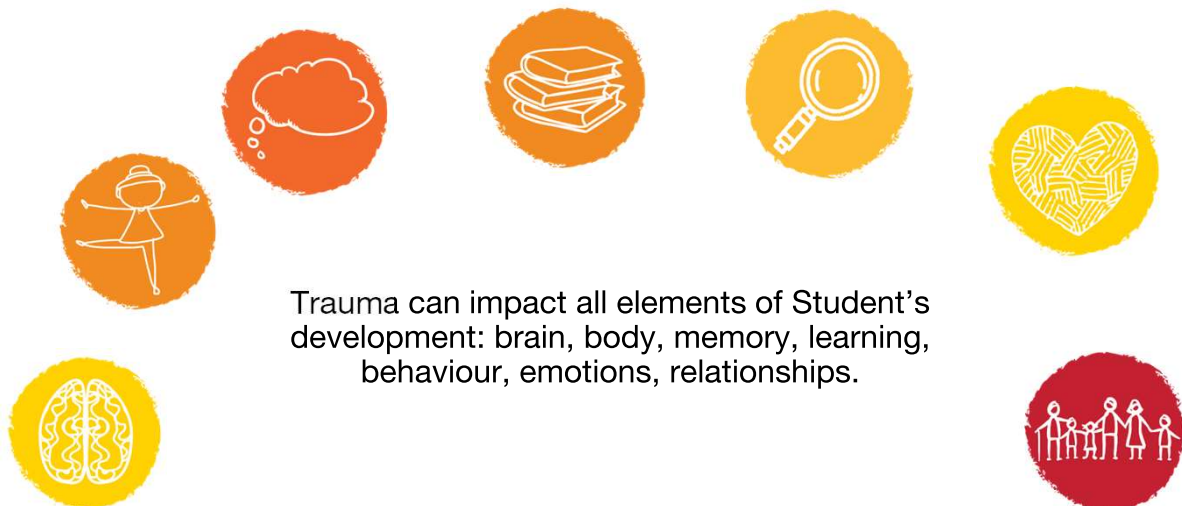
The trauma that results from experiences of abuse, neglect or family violence is often called **complex trauma** or **developmental trauma**.

This type of trauma occurs in the context of relationships and is different to the trauma that may be caused by a one-off event such as a car accident or bush fire.

Children and young people are very vulnerable to the effects of trauma because of their brains' developmental immaturity.



5



6

## Trauma and needs

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

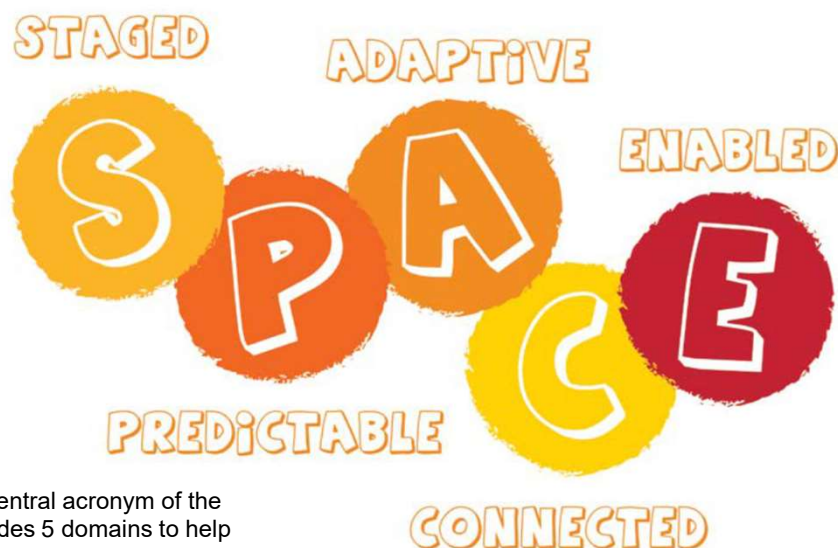
Children are left with needs that in the moment of hurt, pain and fear are unfulfilled. These needs stay activated ready for available relationships to respond to them, see them and gradually help them to be met.

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***



7



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.



8

# 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 Judging Centre  
3-6 Years

**Limbic System**  
Emotional Centre  
1-4 Years

**Cerebellum**  
Motor Centre  
Birth-2 Years

**Brain Stem**  
Basic Survival Functions  
Pre-birth - 8 Months

9

# Safety

If I don't feel SAFE then I will struggle to learn because...

- Arousal**
  - Staying alert
  - Shutdown or hide
- Attention**
  - Trying to take in too much
  - Trying to avoid stimulation
- Memory**
  - Indiscriminative on what to store and what to let go
- Exploration**
  - It's not safe to explore
  - I need to prioritise finding a safe base, so I can't focus on new learning

10

## Staged in the Classroom

### From a Teacher:

*“Always meet the student where they are at (not where they 'should be' and work up from there)”*

### Action:

Breathing Exercises- Use breathing exercise such as 5 Finger Breathing (2 mins) at beginning and end of each lesson.  
Finding ourselves in the space, connecting to self.



11

## 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



12

## Predictable in the Classroom

### From a Teacher:

*“Think about routines and patterns on macro and micro levels”*

### Action:

Planned transitions- Use images representing structure of current lesson or when moving from one activity to another. Have images for Individual Work, Pair Work, Small Group Work, Reflective Activity, Using Materials, Putting Materials Away etc.



13



## 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.



14



## Adaptive in the Classroom

### From a Teacher:

*“ground yourself ALWAYS in order to be adaptive and build adaptability in the students”*

### Action:

Prioritising Behaviour as Communication in being curious about what is happening for the student



15

## 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.



16



## Connected in the Classroom

### From a Teacher:

*“connect connect connect”*

### Action:

Getting to know one another rituals, saying goodbye, celebrations



17

## 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.



18

## Enabled in the Classroom

### From a Teacher:

*“See the strengths and potential in every student and reflect that back to them in bucket loads so that they come to know themselves as possessing those strengths and sense of worthiness”*

### Action:

As above




19

Domains	Translated into needs statements
<b>Staged</b>	Children's brains need support to grow and learn <b>My brain grows upwards step by step</b>
<b>Predictable</b>	Children need to know what they can count on <b>I feel better when I know what is coming next.</b>
<b>Adaptive</b>	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 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>	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>









20



### 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
 Staged					
 Predictable					
 Adaptive					
 Connected					
 Enabled					



21



22