

Understanding and responding to trauma

Adolescents

Day 2



Australian Childhood Foundation **SMART** Practice Adolescents

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


- **apply** the SMART PRACTICE Framework 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, using the Framework & the SMART Circle of PRACTICE

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MORNING → Part 1: 9:00am – 11:00am
 Review of the ACF Model of Practice & SMART PRACTICE Framework & PRACTICE element P
 PRACTICE elements – R & A
 Morning Tea: 11:00am – 11:15am


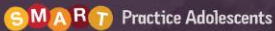
MIDDLE → Part 2: 11:15am – 12:45pm
 PRACTICE elements – C, T & I
 Lunch Break: 12:45pm – 1:15pm

AFTERNOON → Part 3: 1:15pm – 3:15pm
 PRACTICE elements – C & E
 Wrap Up & Evaluations 3:15pm
 Finish: 3:30pm

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Introductions

What is an interesting fact or 'tidbit' about your name?
&
What did you find yourself thinking about from Day 1?





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PART 1:

Review
ACF Model of Practice
SMART PRACTICE Framework
SMART Circle of Practice
PRACTICE element – P


PRACTICE elements – R & A




Reviewing the ACF Model



SMART PRACTICE




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Site Audit Tool – celebration and reflection....

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


SMART PRACTICE	Whole site	Staff team	Class/Room	Small group	Individual child
P PREDICTABLE					
R RESPONSIVE					
A ATTUNED					
C CONNECTING					
T TRANSLATING					
I INVOLVING					
C CALMING					
E ENGAGING					

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Understanding SMART PRACTICE

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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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 Educators – Classroom/Group and Individual Student/Child
- Specialist Educators/SSOs/sBSSOs – small groups and Individual Student/Child



Regulation Response & Strategy Principles

- Co-regulate before expecting self-regulation
- Determine whether a student is hyper or hypo aroused before using certain strategies
- Focus on the principles of "bottom up" to regulate the higher parts of the brain and the body, and "top down" to regulate the lower parts of the brain and the body

What are 5 ways you provide predictability in your class or at your school?



Group Activity

Think about the demands of the school/ classroom environment and the capacities of the students to cope.

Where may there be differences?

Worksheet activity

Demands and Capacities Tool
 Increasing safety and engagement in the classroom;
 decreasing dysregulation and disconnection

A tool for matching lessons with students' capacities and making modifications to ensure they learn best.





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SMART PRACTICE – RESPONSIVE

Principle:

- Students who have experienced trauma, will often display behaviour which is experienced as difficult or challenging by others but often makes sense in the context of their trauma. They find it hard to internalise external rules and consequences.
- Secondary reactions are experienced as threats and responded to as such by students

Outcomes:

- Students who have experienced trauma, will be less likely to over-react to limit setting.
- They will experience the present as different from the past and will feel personal exchanges are reaffirming to themselves.

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Understanding the needs – RESPONSIVE

- I need those closest to me to respond to me in a way that I need
- I need environments that support and respond to what I need

PRACTICE Goal:

- Respond to students with the understanding that their past trauma will guide present behaviours, cognitions, and emotions.



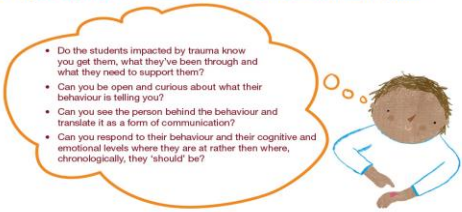


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I've got one lesson!
 Being **RESPONSIVE** to trauma related behaviours and other impacts...

- 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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RESPONSIVE responding – whole site and staff

- Policies, procedures – especially Behaviour Management and Wellbeing Plans
- Routines
- Classrooms
- Yard
- Suspensions and Expulsions
- Returning to school



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SMART PRACTICE - ATTUNED

Principle:

- Students who have experienced trauma, do not easily know how they feel and have had limited experience of having their feelings recognised by others.
- Feelings are experienced as separate to their knowledge of themselves.

Outcomes:

- Students will be better at tracking their own feelings/concerns/worries.
- They will practice enjoying and marking experiences of positive feelings.
- The student will develop experiences of having their feelings validated.



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Understanding the needs – ATTUNED

- I need those around me to attune into me and my needs
- I need to make positive meaning about my world.

PRACTICE Goal:

- Recognize and act upon trauma related cues displayed by the student



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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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ATTUNED responding – whole site and staff

- Policies, procedures
- Behaviour and Wellbeing Plans – One Plans
- Suspensions and exclusions
- Re-entry meetings
- In the classroom



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SMART PRACTICE - CONNECTING

Principle:

- Students who have experienced trauma will often feel disconnected from their feelings, memories of experiences and their sense of identity.
- They need support to get in touch with how they're feeling, what they are feeling and linking their perceptions and experiences to their feelings.

Outcomes:

- Students will build capacity to express themselves in language.
- They will come to know how their feelings are affected by past experiences and can be better supported to be in control of their feelings and reactions.

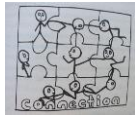


Image source: ©2014 Robinson Dea Siegel

Understanding the needs – CONNECTING

- I need support to connect with how I'm feeling in my brain and body
- I need help to express how I am feeling in my emotions and in my body.

PRACTICE Goal:

Help students to be more in touch with their feelings as they relate to language, bodily sensations, and behaviours

▶ **Bodily Sensations**

What do my sensations mean for me?

Bodily Sensations	Emotions
Achy, Dull, Knotted,	Happy
Sharp, Blotchy, Electric,	Sad
Numbness, Light, Heavy,	Scared
Smooth, Scratchy, Disoriented,	Worried
Spiky, Hot, Buzzy,	Disgusted
Stained, Burning, Sticky,	Surprised
Open, Bouncing, Spinning,	Angry
Hot, Hot, Cold,	Calm
Cranked, Pulsing, Tickling,	
Tight, Tingling, Tickle,	
Itchy, Dry, Limp,	
Shaky, Dizzy, Full,	
Alone, Hollow, Tired,	
Prickly, Wobbly, Flushed,	
Numb, Tense, Loose	

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."



CONNECTING responding – whole site and staff

- Beginning of the year activities
- Start of day and end of day routines
- Connecting in the classrooms
- Building and maintaining in the yard
- Staying connected when excluded or suspended
- Children/young people in care



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Part 2:

PRACTICE elements –
C, T & I



Children that have been abused do not have **'behaviour problems'** that need to be addressed. They have extreme survival skills that need to be **understood**.

- Paula Goodwin

Image source: 2022 Sabine A France

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SMART PRACTICE - TRANSLATING

Principle:

- Students who have experience trauma will find it difficult to make stories about their day-to-day experiences, because their memory and interpretive functions have been impaired.
- They struggle to make sense of their past, feel separate from their present and have no starting point for making their path into the future.

Outcomes:

- Students will build better memory for events and experiences, including their capacity to learn and retain information.
- They will build a base for being able to explore their history and begin to make conscious sense of their experiences.





Image source: 0022 iStock

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Understanding the needs - TRANSLATING

- I need you to help me understand why I respond or behave in the way I do... especially in my body
- I need you to help me remember what I need to do (both in my learning and in my emotional and body regulation)

PRACTICE Goal:

- Aid students to interpret and organize their experiences


Image source: 02022 iStock


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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!
 Helping students to **TRANSLATE** their responses and interactions to bring about understanding and growth.

- How can we bring genuine curiosity to how we translate this with them? Having experienced adults letting them down, breaking their trust, violating their safety, how can we translate and acknowledge why they may interact, respond, feel / don't feel the way they do? How do we work with them to help them continue to grow?



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TRANSLATING responding – whole site and staff

- Understanding a student's behaviour
- Helping a student to understand their behaviour
- Behaviour Management Plans
- One Plans
- IESP Applications
- Escalation Profiles
- Understanding arousal – Zones of Regulation/Window of Tolerance
- Sharing of information
- Parent/Teacher days

What do I notice about her/his body?
 What do I think she/he might need at this time?
 What would I like her/him to know at this time?

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SMART PRACTICE - INVOLVING

Principle:

- Students who have experienced trauma, will find it difficult to make friends, having poorly developed maps to guide them.
- They often fail to constructively interpret social cues and will often feel isolated and different from their peers. They may use socially inappropriate behaviour to try to engage with peers and this often leads to ostracization.

Outcomes:

- Students will feel they belong and will be able to engage in appropriate behaviours as attempts to become part of a friendship group.
- They will be better able to understand social cues and will be less likely to feel peer interactions are threatening.




Image source: 02022 stock

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Understanding the needs - INVOLVING



Image: hobbyart.com

- I need you to help me feel and be involved in activities in my class or at school
- I need you to help my friends understand what's happening for me.

PRACTICE Goal:

Promote students' participation in relational activities

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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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INVOLVING responding – whole site and staff

- Policies, procedures
- Routines
- Classrooms
- Yard
- Excursions and incursions
- Extra curricular activities.




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Part 3:
PRACTICE Elements – C & E



SMART PRACTICE - CALMING

Principle:

- Students who have experienced trauma, find it difficult to shape or change their own feelings of stress/distress.
- Trauma has impaired their cortical capacity to regulate sub-cortical functioning.

Outcomes:

- Students will feel more supported and connected to school community by feeling less blamed.
- They will not feel singled out because everyone is learning how to stay calm and will be able to come up with and use plans to stay calm or become calm that make sense to them.
- Education staff will be able to respond rather than react.





Image source: iStock

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Understanding the needs - CALMING


- I need you to respond to me in a way that makes me feel safe and ok
- I need my felt sense of safety restored through co-regulation

PRACTICE Goal:

- Assist students to attain a sense of calm and connection



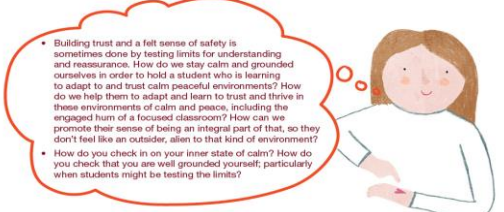
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I've got one lesson!

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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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 Flip	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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BRAIN BREAK


Aligning the Spine Activities

Our midline extends down our spine and when it is aligned there is no collapse or compression of the spine. Under stress it is hard to maintain spinal alignment. Think, too, about seating options for students. Movement breaks help.

Activities to try:

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



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Calming Self-Care Strategies for Staff

- Short meditation or focused activity first thing in the morning
- Focus on your breathing on your way to school
- Set intention for the day on the way to school
- Use breathing techniques to address tension
- Walking and standing focused activities during class
- Bring mindfulness to everyday tasks
- Listening to calming music
- Create space in your classrooms




Image: Alamy


SMART Circle of PRACTICE – responsive ways to co-regulate



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Principles for supporting for arousal

1. Mobilisation
 - Rhythm
 - Containing
 - Grounding
2. Immobilisation
 - Orientation to space
 - Orientation to senses
 - Engaging the spine
3. Social Engagement
 - Prosody
 - Breathing

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Strategies for MOBILISED responses - *Fight*


What it might look like

- angry, aggressive, irritable
- confrontational, controlling, shouting
- blaming others, pushing others away, argumentative

Supportive responses/strategies

- help me stabilise my hyper-aroused nervous system
- use rhythm, containing and grounding
- match my energy before helping me calm down

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Strategies for MOBILISED responses - *Flight*

What it might look like

- Anxious, silly, manic
- Running away, hiding, disruptive
- Difficulty with free play, silly voices, distracting

Supportive responses

- Be kind and patient when "finding" or collecting me
- Offer me an easy task/chore to do
- Help me settle my body – weighted blankets, heat packs
- Engage senses
- Encourage me to swing or carry something heavy

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Strategies for MOBILISED responses – Freeze


What it might look like

- Arousal is high, but movement is inhibited
- May look confused or distracted
- Scanning the room, dilated pupils, wide eyes

Supportive responses/strategies

- Be curious about the freeze state- places that are less frozen than others?
- Gently facilitate movement eg. Wiggling one finger
- Play with metaphors like thawing ice
- Encourage the student to breathe
- Engage their senses

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Strategies for IMMOBILISED responses - Submit/Collapse

What it might look like

- low, sad, flat mood
- quiet, compliant
- alone, withdrawn


Supportive responses


- Orienting to the space/grounding exercises
- Orienting the senses
- Alignment- engaging the spine

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Strategies for keeping students in their Window

- Routine and predictability
- Breath based activities
- Movement & Regulation activities
- Use of self – social engagement



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SMART PRACTICE - ENGAGING



Principle:

- Students who have experienced trauma, have insecure blueprints for maintaining, understanding and being in relationships.
- Changing relational representations comes with repetitive opportunities to practice and experience difference in exchanges with others.

Outcomes:

- Students will learn to tolerate adults at school with different levels of intimacy.
- They will experience opportunities to review their relationship representations.
- They will practice maintaining connection with important adults and they will be more likely to feel safe.

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Understanding the needs - ENGAGING



- I need you to help me understand who I am, so I can engage with others – help me build the narrative of who I am.
- I need practice to be in relationships with others, through play, building my self-efficacy and for you to model what this can look like.

PRACTICE Goals:

- Support students by building relationships with them that are respectful, compassionate and sustained

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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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ENGAGING responding – whole site and staff

- Policies, procedures
- Professional Development to increase understanding
- Programs to engage students at school – such as the Alert Program, Lunchtime clubs, Breakfast Clubs
- Music across the whole school
- Sensory alert brain breaks for staff?



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- Checkout
- Feedback
- Keep in touch
- SMART Learning Pathway
- ACF & SMART Resources
- References



Check out

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

- Strategy?
- Activity?
- New perspective?



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Feedback



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Keep in touch with ACF and 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 communities)*
- 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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