

**Understanding and responding to trauma**

**Day 1**  
Port Noarlunga Primary School



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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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**MORNING** → **Part 1: 9.00am - 10.40am**  
Introducing the SMART PRACTICE Framework & ACF Model of PRACTICE  
*Morning Tea: 10.40am - 11.10am*

**MIDDLE** → **Part 2: 11.10am - 12.45pm**  
The Brain, growing up and the impact of trauma  
*Lunch Break: 1pm - 1.30pm*

**AFTERNOON** → **Part 3: 1.30pm - 2.45pm**  
Healing ways to respond: SMART Circle of PRACTICE  
*Wrap Up & Evaluations*  
**Finish: 3pm**



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### Introductions



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?

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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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### Learning together



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

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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.

SMART PRACTICE



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# SMART PRACTICE

## PART 1:

Introducing the SMART Framework and ACF Model of practice



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### Resources to assist you...

# SMART 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 **understanding** and **responding**, outlining the key points in terms of effective and healing work with traumatised children.

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

**S M A R T PRACTICE**



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### SMART PRACTICE



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

#### SMART PRACTICE – Site Audit Tool

This tool is intended to reflect on the current application of the SMART PRACTICE framework across your site. This tool can also be used to plan further implementation strategies as a site plan. It is acknowledged that not all sites will be successful in all areas reviewed within this tool. The goal is to learn and build application of the skills and knowledge underpinning SMART PRACTICE. In the following table, list strategies, policies or other processes that are currently undertaken that support each of the listed groups in each of the elements of the SMART PRACTICE framework.

SMART PRACTICE	Whole site	Staff teams	Group / Team	Small groups	Individual child
<b>P</b> PREDICTABLE					
<b>R</b> RESPONSIVE					
<b>A</b> ATTUNED					
<b>C</b> CONNECTING					
<b>T</b> TRANSLATING					
<b>I</b> INVOLVING					
<b>C</b> CALMING					
<b>E</b> ENGAGING					

- **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

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### Introducing the ACF Model of practice



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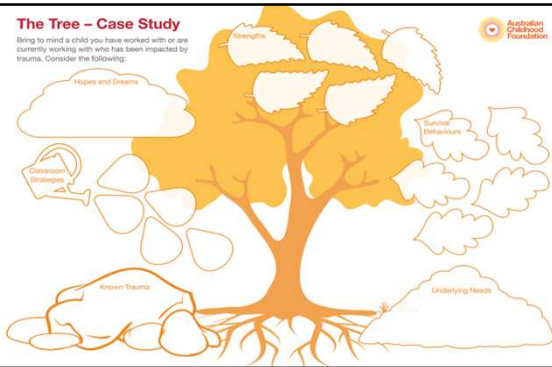
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### The Tree – Case Study

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



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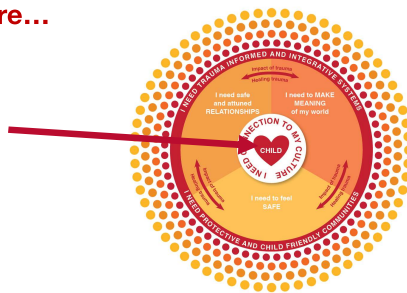
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### Holding the student at the centre...



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**I need connection to my CULTURE**

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**How did you become who you are?**

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**The importance of culture – a protective factor**

**Safety:** Belonging  
**Relationships:** Connection  
**Meaning making:** Identity

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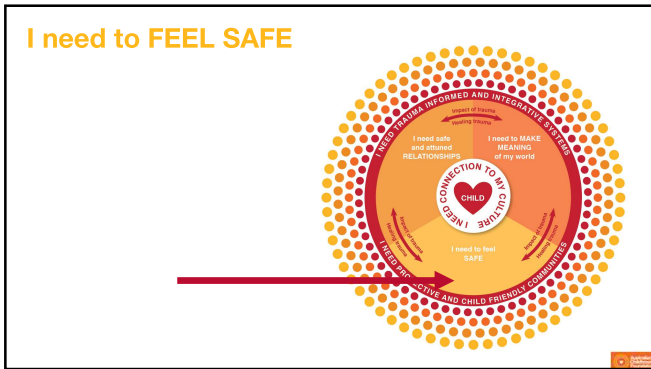
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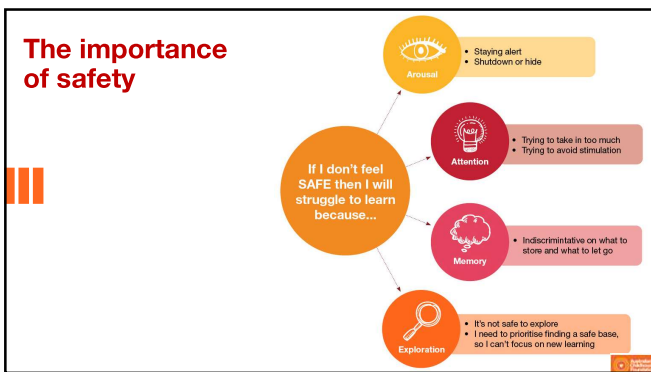
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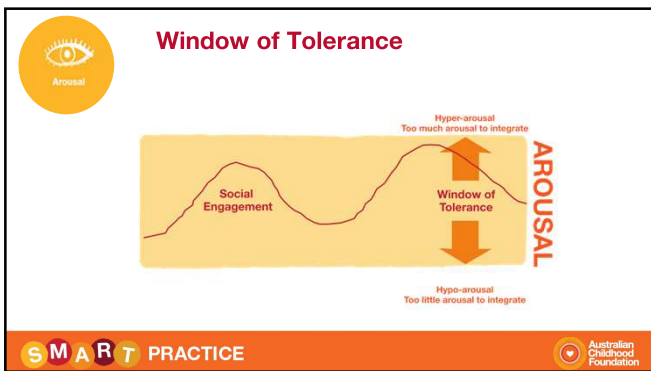
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**Window of Tolerance**

**AROUSAL**

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

**Window of Tolerance**

**Hypo-arousal**  
Submit Collapsed, weak, defeated, flat affect, numb, empty, helpless, hopeless

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**I need safe and attuned RELATIONSHIPS**

**I NEED SAFE AND ATTUNED RELATIONSHIPS**

**I need to feel SAFE**

**I need to MAKE CONNECTION TO MY WORLD**

**I need to feel SAFE**

**I NEED PROTECTIVE AND CHILD FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES**

**I NEED TRUST, INFORMED AND INTEGRATIVE SYSTEMS**

**I NEED CONNECTION TO MY CHILD**

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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 are central to how a student experiences themselves and others

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## Hand to Hand Attunement

Let's work together to hold an object up between our hands or fingers and *not let it fall*



We will need to synchronise our movements and attune to one another. What object feels right to hold between us? A big gym ball? A sports ball? A cushion? A balloon? A pencil? Let's try moving the object around. What is that like for you? As you move together, notice if one person is leading or if the movement initiation is swapping between you. Play around with this. When you become accomplished, add another object so you are using both of your hands to hold up two objects between you. What does it feel like to be in synch with another person?

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## I need to MAKE MEANING of my world



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## How do I make meaning of the world?



We are deeply impacted by both our surrounding relationships and the environment on how we perceive and make sense of:

- The world – safe vs unsafe
- Relationships – trustworthy vs unreliable
- Self- lovable vs unlovable
- Protected vs unprotected

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**How do I make meaning of the world?**

Facial Expression  
Tone of Voice  
Body Language  
Gestures

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**ACTIVITY:  
Meaning  
making –  
Heartfelt**

hope with a Leaf  
SASIA - 15 years old  
When I was in care this picture portrays her spirit beginning to grow again inside her dead body

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**Reflection**

Thinking about your school, what activities do you do that relate back to the **needs\*** of the students?

**What will you add to your classroom tomorrow?**

\*needs as a *child* not as a learner. This is a small but important distinction.

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# SMART PRACTICE

**PART 2:**  
The brain, growing up and the impact of trauma



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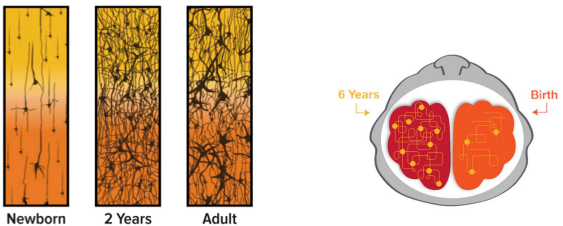
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### Life span /child development



Newborn    2 Years    Adult

6 Years    Birth



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### Brain development - vertically



- Cortex**  
Reasoning and Judging Centre
- Limbic System**  
Emotional Centre
- Cerebellum**  
Motor Centre
- Brain Stem**  
Basic Survival Functions

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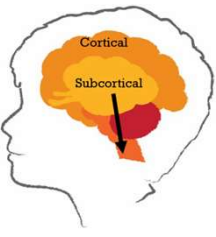
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**Cortical**

- Cortex
- Prefrontal Cortex
- Medial Prefrontal Cortex

**Subcortical**

- Brainstem
- Cerebellum
- Limbic System – Amygdala & Hippocampus



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**Cortical**

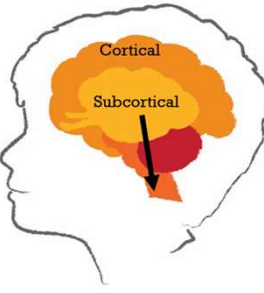
- Consciously activated for reflection

**Responsive**

**Subcortical**

- Unconsciously activated for constant survival

**Reactive**



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**Brain development – Hemispheric Integration**

**Left Hemisphere**

- Evaluates language content
- Optimistic hemisphere
- Understands beginning, middle and end
- Learns from the past and expects the future
- Looks for patterns



**Right Hemisphere**

- In the present moment
- Eye contact
- Facial expression
- Tone of voice
- Posture
- Gesture
- Intensity
- Is mute
- Grasps the whole

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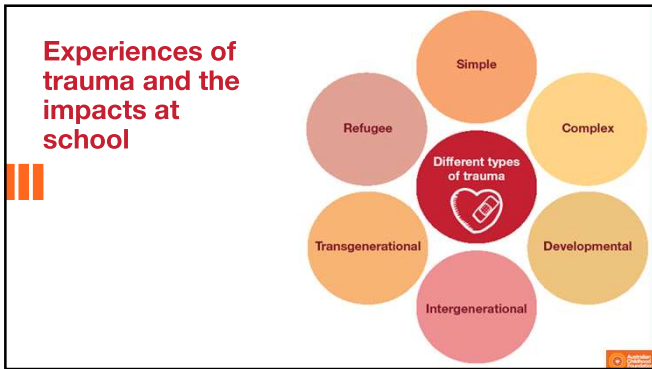
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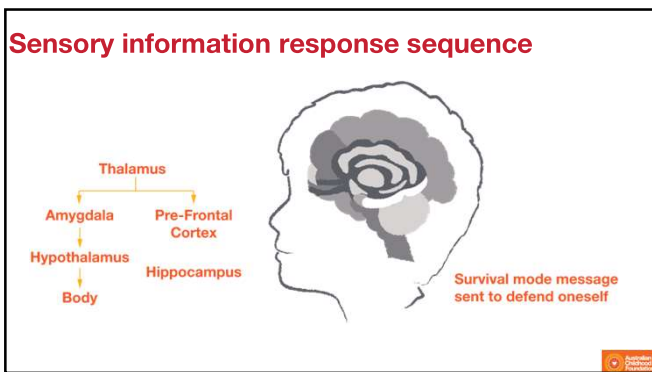
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### Survival

Our brain's first priority is to survive.  
 Responding to a perceived threat initiates an immediate whole-body experience where we either:

- **Seek relationship (Social Engagement)**
- **Fight, flight, actively freeze (Mobilise)**
  - **Flop (Immobilise)**

▪ During this time, the cortex and hippocampus are offline. We are not able to 'consciously think'; we are in the moment and reactive.

▪ During this time, we can become terrified, uncontained and disconnected from our body.

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### Flipping a Lid – the impacts of toxic stress on the higher brain parts

Hand model courtesy of Dan Siegel

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### Residual Messages of Trauma

We learn through our relationships with others and the environment around us. Developing beliefs about how we connect with others, influence the way we see our self, and how we interact with the world.

Below are some residual messages of trauma that may influence one's developing relational templates:

- Alpha: "You're either the attacker or the attacked"
- Submission: Follower, submit at all costs
- Perfectionist: Outside of perfect is unsafe
- Police officer: I need to have everyone follow the rules my world needs to be predictable and consistent

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### Embodied Trauma

- It is important that we understand the deep connection between the body, the brain and trauma.
- Our implicit memory can make us feel the sensations of trauma long after the trauma has occurred.
- Students may struggle to remain in the present 'here and now'
- Ensure there is a de-escalation plan for students to help them recover from their distress within relationship.

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### Brain and Body Break

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### Effects of trauma on behaviour

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- 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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### 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:

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**PART 3:**

Healing ways to respond: SMART Circle of PRACTICE



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**Reframing our view**

**“what’s wrong with you”**

**versus**

**“what has happened to you?”**

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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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### 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.

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**SMART PRACTICE**  
Responses and Strategies

### Activities and Discussions




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### Building our toolkit:

Responsive Activities and Strategies

<p><b>BOTTOM UP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Breath</li> <li>▪ Body</li> <li>▪ Touch</li> <li>▪ Rhythm</li> <li>▪ Routine</li> <li>▪ Rest</li> </ul>	<p><b>TOP DOWN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proximity</li> <li>▪ Attunement</li> <li>▪ Synchronizing</li> <li>▪ Skills</li> <li>▪ Novelty</li> <li>▪ Play</li> </ul>
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**Introducing  
the first element of  
the  
SMART PRACTICE  
Framework –**

**PREDICTABLE**



**S M A R T PRACTICE**

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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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**SMART PRACTICE - PREDICTABLE**


**Principle:**

- Students who have experienced trauma may experience any change as a potential threat. Even if the familiar is difficult and destructive, the familiar is safer for them than the unfamiliar.

**Outcomes:**

- Students will come to trust, and rely on their reference point(s) as an interpreter of their environment. They will respond in a less volatile way to changes in the classroom and build a platform for responding to change overall.
- Students will learn to use others as a resource to support them at school.

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## Understanding the needs - PREDICTABLE

- I need safe and attuned relationships
- I need a felt sense of safety

**PRACTICE Goal:**  
Create environments that are routine and predictable and prepare students for change

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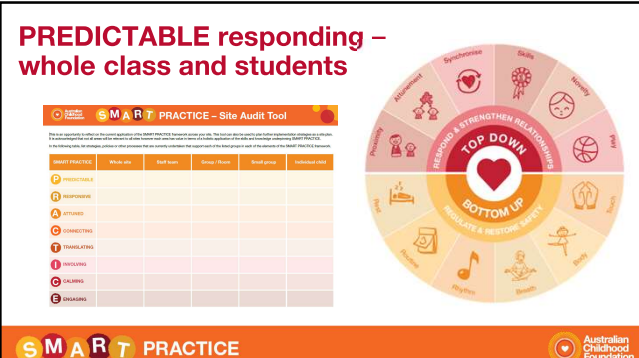
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## PREDICTABLE responding – whole class and students



**SMART PRACTICE - Site Audit Tool**

SMART PRACTICE	Whole class	Small group	Group/Pair	Small group	Individual child
P					
R					
A					
C					
T					
H					
C					
S					

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## PREDICTABLE responding – whole class and students

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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**PREDICTABLE responding – whole site and staff**

- Policies & procedures
- Routines
- Classrooms
- Yard
- Excursions and incursions
- Evacuations and invacuations
- Supporting Children in Care



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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



**SMART** Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma



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**SMART PRACTICE**

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



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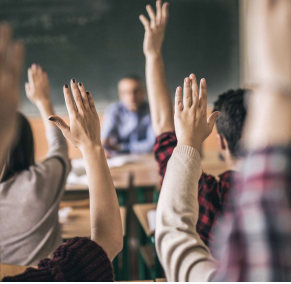
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**Check out**

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What are you taking back to your classroom 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

- [mpowney@childhood.org.au](mailto:mpowney@childhood.org.au)

Jane Harrison, Policy Officer, Child Protection and Trauma-informed practice, DfE

- [Education.SMART@sa.gov.au](mailto:Education.SMART@sa.gov.au)

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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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