

Understanding and responding to trauma

General


Day 1



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.



MORNING → **Part 1: 9.00am - 11.00am**
Introducing the SMART PRACTICE Framework & ACF Model of PRACTICE
Morning Tea: 11.00am – 11.15am

MIDDLE → **Part 2: 11.15am – 12.45pm**
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
Wrap Up & Evaluations 3.15pm
Finish: 3.30pm



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?

SMART PRACTICE



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



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



SMART PRACTICE

PART 1:

Introducing the SMART Framework and ACF Model of practice



Resources to assist you...

SMART PRACTICE - Site Audit Tool

Question	Yes	No	Not sure	Not applicable
1. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across the school.				
2. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all year levels.				
3. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all subjects.				
4. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all staff.				
5. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all students.				
6. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all parents.				
7. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all community members.				
8. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all external agencies.				
9. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all external stakeholders.				
10. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all external partners.				

SMART PRACTICE



SMART PRACTICE - Site Audit Tool

Checklist Report 1

1. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across the school.
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9. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all external stakeholders.
10. SMART PRACTICE is implemented across all external partners.

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

SMART PRACTICE



SMART PRACTICE



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

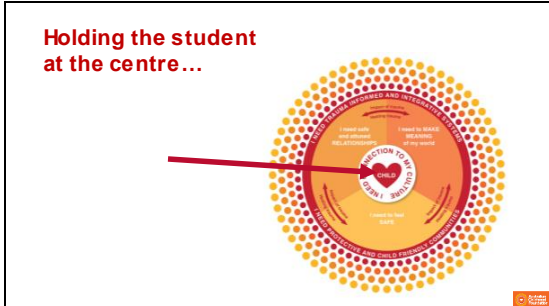
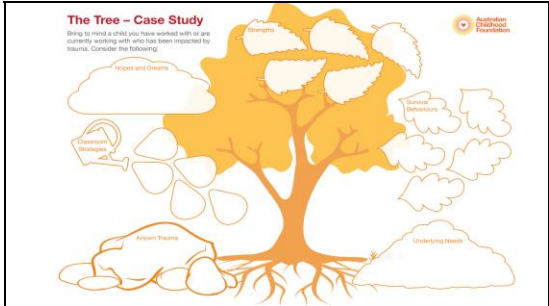
SMART PRACTICE – Site Audit Tool

This is a simplified version of the smart practice site audit tool. The full version can be downloaded from the Australian Childhood Foundation website. It is intended to be used as a guide to help schools and other organisations to understand the key points of the SMART PRACTICE framework. It is not intended to be used as a checklist or to be used to measure the quality of practice.

SMART PRACTICE	Whole site	Staff team	Class Rooms	Small groups	Individual child
P PREDICTABLE					
R RESPONSIVE					
A ATTUNED					
P CONNECTING					
R TRANSLATING					
T INVOLVING					
I ENGAGING					
C CALMING					
S ENABLING					

- **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

Introducing the ACF Model of practice











I need safe and attuned RELATIONSHIPS

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

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 weaving 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?

I need to MAKE MEANING of my world

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

How do I make meaning of the world?

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ACTIVITY:
Meaning making – Heartfelt

hope with a heart
 LARA, 15 years old
 When she is sad and lonely, she pictures perhaps her soul is beginning to grow again inside her dead body.

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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Brain development – horizontally

A diagram showing a cross-section of a brain. On the left, a yellow arrow points to the brain with the text "6 Years". On the right, a red arrow points to the brain with the text "Birth". The brain is filled with a network of red and orange lines representing neural connections.

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Life span /child development

A diagram showing three vertical panels representing brain development at different stages: "Newborn", "2 Years", and "Adult". Each panel shows a cross-section of the brain with increasing complexity of neural connections. To the right, a yellow arrow points to a brain diagram with the text "6 Years". Below this diagram, a red arrow points to the brain with the text "Birth".

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Brain development - vertically

A diagram of a human head in profile, showing the brain. The brain is divided into four horizontal layers, each with a different color and label:

- Cortex** (top, yellow): Reasoning and Judging Centre
- Limbic System** (second from top, orange): Emotional Centre
- Cerebellum** (third from top, red): Motor Centre
- Brain Stem** (bottom, dark red): Basic Survival Functions

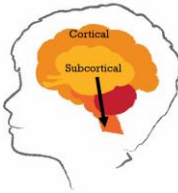
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Cortical

- Cortex
- Prefrontal Cortex
- Medial Prefrontal Cortex

Subcortical

- Brainstem
- Cerebellum
- Limbic System – Amygdala & Hippocampus



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Cortical

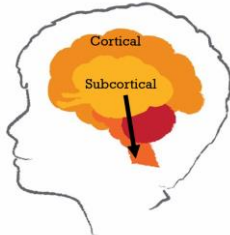
- Consciously activated for reflection

Responsive

Subcortical

- Unconsciously activated for constant survival


Reactive



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ACTIVITY:

Predictability & Repetition the foundation of neuronal pathways...



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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:

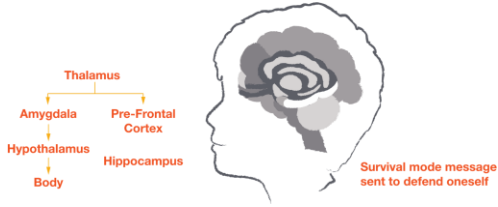
- Seek relationship (Social Engagement)
- Fight, flight, actively freeze (Mobilise)
 - Flop (Immobilise)

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.





Sensory information response sequence



Survival mode message sent to defend oneself

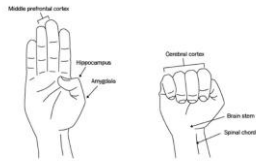
Experiences of trauma and the impacts at school



Different types of trauma

- Simple
- Complex
- Developmental
- Intergenerational
- Transgenerational
- Refugee

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: Needs to have everyone follow the rules, my world needs to be predictable and consistent



Image: iStock

Embodied Trauma

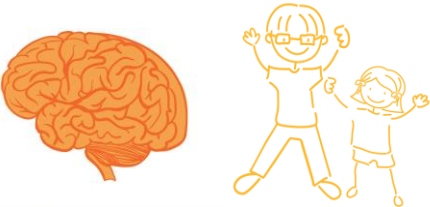
- It is important that we understand the deep connection between the body, the brain and trauma.
- Our implicit memory can make us feel the sensations of trauma long after the trauma has occurred.
- Students may struggle to remain in the present 'here and now'
- Ensure there is a de-escalation plan for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




- To cope with trauma children use initial adaptive responses to survive
- This is reasonable in a sense of 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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Activity

Think about the students you have interacted with this week.
In the classroom, on yard duty, before school, students leaving early, or within a formal meeting.

What behaviour have you seen that could be the impact of trauma?

What did it

- Look like
- Sound like
- Feel like




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PART 3:

Healing ways to respond: SMART Circle of PRACTICE



Reframing our view

“what’s wrong with you”

versus

“what has happened to you?”

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SMART Circle of PRACTICE – responsive ways to co-regulate

The diagram features a central heart with 'TOP DOWN' above it and 'BOTTOM UP' below it. The top half is labeled 'RESPOND BY STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS' and includes icons for 'Experiences', 'Skills', 'Thoughts', 'Feelings', and 'Behaviours'. The bottom half is labeled 'REGULATE & RESTORE SAFETY' and includes icons for 'Thoughts', 'Feelings', 'Behaviours', 'Skills', and 'Experiences'. To the right is a brain diagram with 'Subcortical' and 'Cortical' regions labeled.

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...

The diagram is identical to the one in the first slide, showing the 'TOP DOWN' and 'BOTTOM UP' strategies for co-regulation.

Bottom Up

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

The diagram is identical to the one in the first slide, showing the 'TOP DOWN' and 'BOTTOM UP' strategies for co-regulation.

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

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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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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.

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SMART PRACTICE Responses and Strategies

Activities and Discussions

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Building our toolkit:

Responsive Activities and Strategies

BOTTOM UP	TOP DOWN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breath ▪ Body ▪ Touch ▪ Rhythm ▪ Routine ▪ Rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proximity ▪ Attunement ▪ Synchronizing ▪ Skills ▪ Novelty ▪ Play

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Five steps to helping children manage big feelings

Introducing the first element of the SMART PRACTICE Framework – PREDICTABLE

SMART PRACTICE

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.



Understanding the needs - PREDICTABLE

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

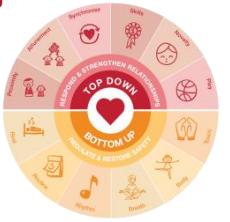
PRACTICE Goal:

Create environments that are routine and predictable and prepare students for change

PREDICTABLE responding – whole class and students

SMART PRACTICE – Site Audit Tool



SMART Practice	Whole class	Half year	Every Week	Half year	Individuals
1. Predictable					
2. Safe					
3. Attuned					
4. Supportive					
5. Resilient					
6. Connected					



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?


PREDICTABLE responding – whole site and staff

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

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 PRACTICE


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




Check out

What are you taking back to your classroom tomorrow?

- Strategy?
- Activity?
- New perspective?



Feedback



SCAN ME

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Keep in touch with ACF and DfE

Melissa Powney, Senior Consultant ACF
• mpowney@childhood.org.au
Karen Perry, Policy Officer, Child Protection and Trauma-informed practice, DfE
• Education.SMART@sa.gov.au



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 specialis packages ie Early Years, Refugees, Adolescents, Working with Aboriginal communities)*
- SMART PRACTICE – Day 2
- SMART Train the Trainer program – 2 days



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/>