



Student Wellbeing Hub

Welcome to the Student Wellbeing Hub webinar
Trauma-informed Practice for Challenging Behaviours

Our guest presenter is Rebecca Harris
from Carlton Primary School in Melbourne.



Student Wellbeing Hub

Please feel free to ask questions during the presentation.
We'll try to answer as many as possible but if we don't get to yours
we'll follow up after the webinar.



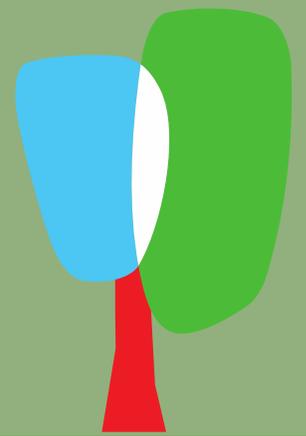
Student Wellbeing Hub

If the content in this webinar raises issues of personal concern for you

please contact

Lifeline 13 11 14

Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636



Trauma informed practice For challenging behaviours

Rebecca Harris

www.traumainformedpractice.com.au

Harris.Rebecca.H@edumail.vic.gov.au

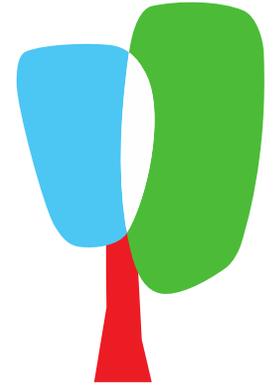
Acknowledgement of Country

I want to acknowledge that we all live, work and learn on the lands of First Nations peoples.

For me, this is the lands of the Wurundjeri people, of the Kulin Nation.



Trauma informed education

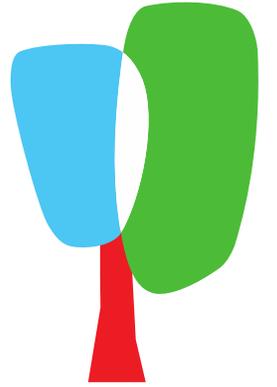


What we will be talking about:

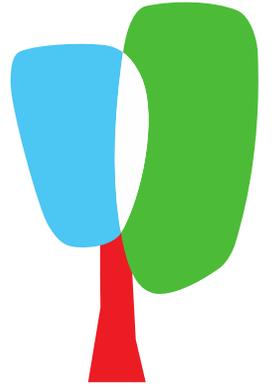
- Why is understanding trauma relevant for educators?
- What is trauma?
- How does trauma impact children?
- What does this look like at school?
- What can we do to support students' behaviour?



"Traditional explanations of children's disruptive behaviours often emphasises their volitional aspects, suggesting that they occur as a result of bad choices, or intentional defiance ... Recent studies of trauma and self and self-regulation provide an explanation." (Craig, 2016)



How trauma presents at school

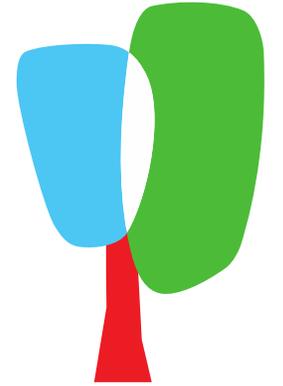


Struggles with:

- Relationships and attachment
- Self-regulation and physiological responses
- Cognitive function
- Sense of self
- Focus and concentration
- Outbursts of emotion or violence
- Oppositional behaviour



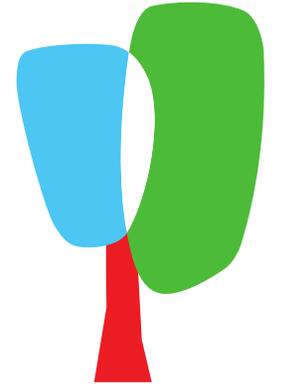
Trauma



- **Definition:** *an experience that we perceive as so threatening that it overwhelms us and we feel we are unable to cope.*



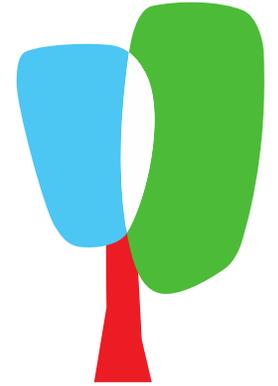
Australian Stats



- The prevalence of traumatic experiences in childhood show that no classroom is likely without trauma. All systems surrounding children, but particularly education, have a profound opportunity to impact them in powerfully positive ways.

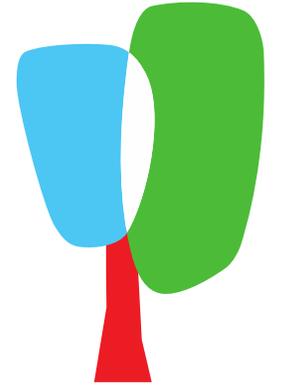


Australian Stats



- **1 in 3 girls, 1 in 6 boys** experience childhood sexual assault. (Ronken & Johnston, 2012)
- Of women who experience violence, **more than half** have children in their care (OurWatch)
- Violent households have a significantly higher proportion of **children aged five years and under** (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2011)
- **5 million adults** are affected by childhood trauma (Kezelman, Hossack, Stavropolous, Burley. 2015, p. 10)
- **Children under 1** are the most likely to be the subject of a substantiated child protection notification (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015)
- **1 in 5** students are starting school "developmentally vulnerable", doubling for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (Early Learning, Everyone benefits, 2016, p. 9)

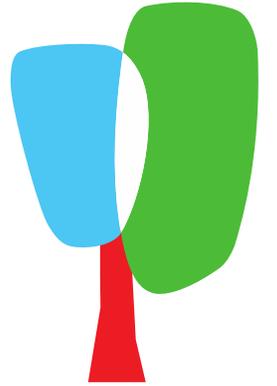
Trauma caused by Adversity



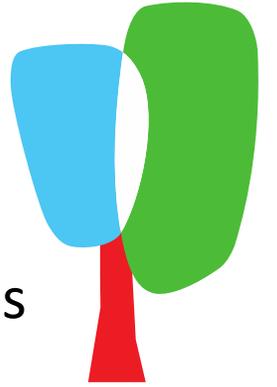
- Can be a single incident
- Can include experiences such as neglect, abuse, poverty, family violence, or lack of a healthy connection with a primary attachment figure
- Trauma can lead to **PTSD**
- **Poverty** has been shown to have similar effects to trauma on the brain. (Gur, 2019)

Trauma and Adversity

- Trauma impacts brain development
- The more experiences the greater the impact
- The impact is **global** – cognitive, emotional, social, motor skills
- Positive connections with carers are protective, **trauma from a carer** is causes particularly significant impacts on development



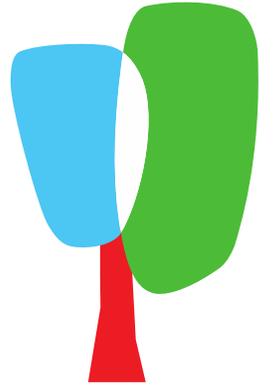
Trauma-Based Behaviours we see at school:



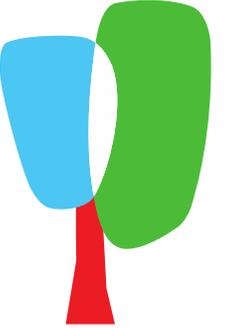
- Students always on high alert
- Overly tired students
- Students who startle easily
- Violent students
- Dysregulated students
- Students who think teachers are always angry
- Students who struggle to 'get it' easily
- Students who don't cope well with transitions, or CRTs
- Students who struggle with friendships and teacher relationships
- Students who move their bodies constantly
- Students who struggle to focus
- Students easily distracted
- Speech and language disorders
- Students flipping out for 'no reason'
- Students who give up easily
- Students who believe they are 'bad' or 'dumb'
- Students who overreact
- Students who hate touch/noise/smell

The trauma link

- We have **adaptive responses** in the face of danger or threat
 - With repetition, these responses becomes our physiology
 - Leading to hyper-vigilance - always looking for the threat
 - The cortex disengages, losing problem-solving, broad thinking and connection between thoughts and feelings
 - **All change becomes a potential threat**
- Adaptive practices like dissociation, division of focus, repression of memory, detachment from emotion, are unhelpful when it comes to learning
 - Implicit memory takes over (unconscious), explicit memories (conscious) struggle to form
 - Vulnerable to triggers



A trauma informed school

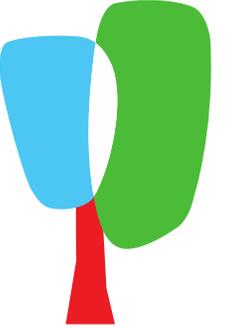


- We question what is *behind* behaviour
- We ask what a child might need, in order to cease the behaviour

We focus on :
Sense of safety
Capacity for Self -Regulation
Positive Self-image

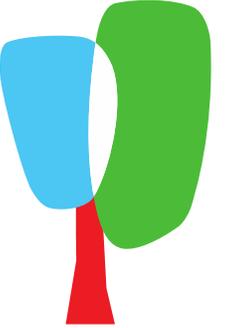


So what can we do?



- Educators can use:
 - Relationships
 - Embedding socio-emotional education
 - Supporting students' positive sense of self
 - Individualised skill-building and behaviour support strategies

Relationships are vital

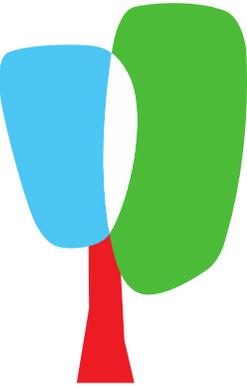


“Forming relationships with teachers is a dilemma for children whose histories include traumatising experiences with adults” (Craig, 2008)

It can take a long time ...

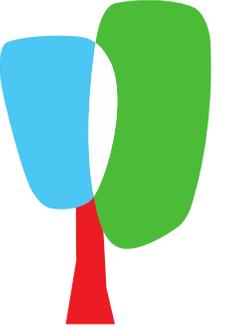


The 3 Rs – Relationships, Relationships, Relationships



- Through the building of positive relationships, school becomes a therapeutic environment for students, and families
- Through relationships students have with the adults at school, they are able to see reflected, a self-image that recognises them as capable learners
- Students have an opportunity to be exposed to different working models of adult/child relationships

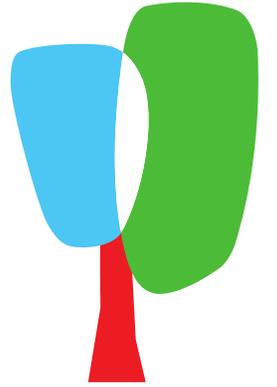
A relationships focused school



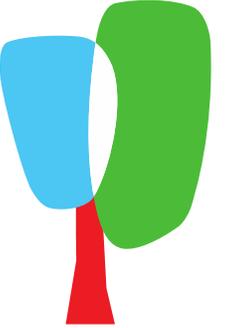
- The students are all “all of our kids”
- We notice and name the positive
- We support whole families
- We speak with respect
- Students get time to talk, to be heard

Families

- Adults who are themselves supported, can better support their children
- Schools are well placed to support families
- Wrap around approach includes everyone
- We can model positive adult/child relationships to families



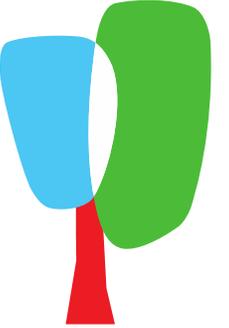
Socio-emotional education



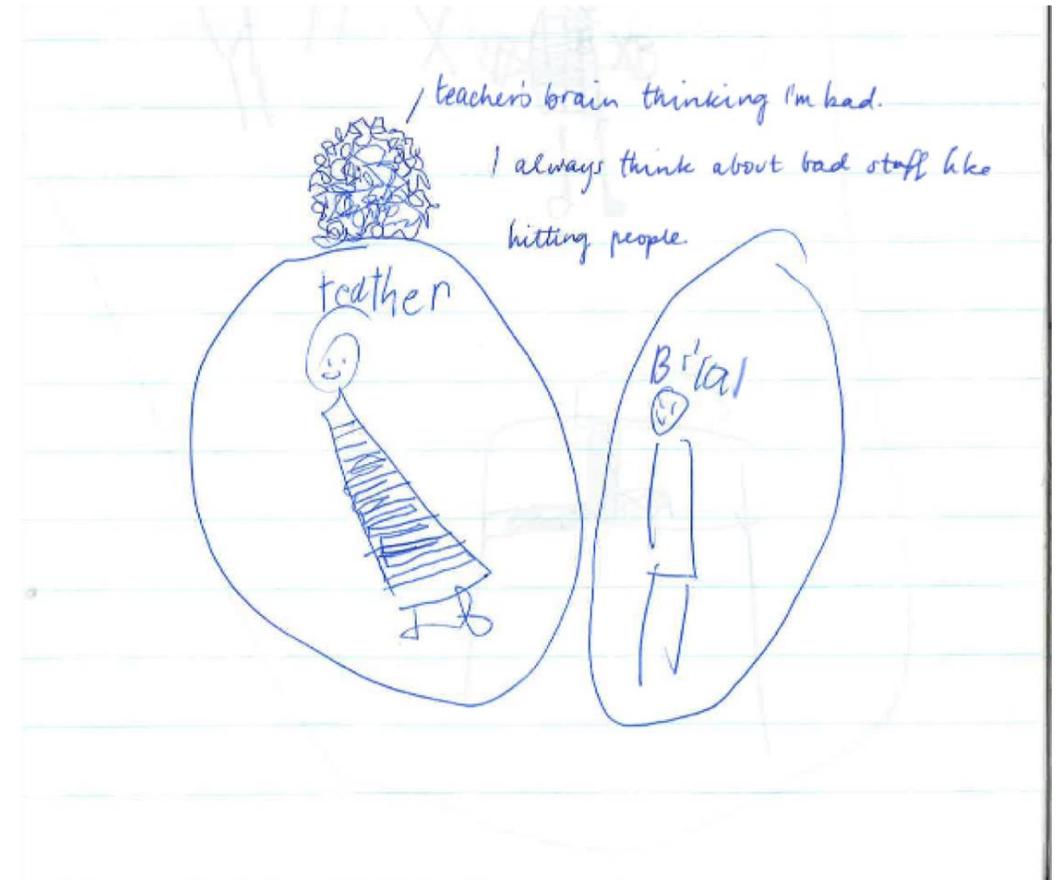
- Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships
- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support
- Whole school language
- Adults teaching and modelling naming emotion



Sense of Self

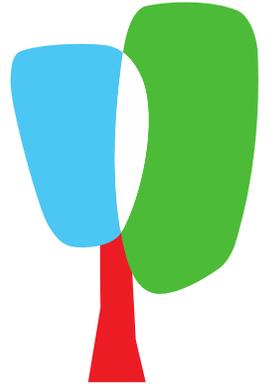


- Routine encourages success
- Socio-emotional focus
- Use names
- Focus on self-narrative
- Positive, celebratory language
- Reflect what we see
- Use of school-wide language

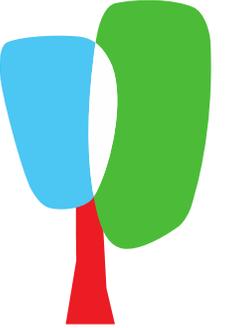


Differentiation means behaviour too

*“After all, what good does it do to punish a child who literally hasn't yet acquired the brain functions required to control his behavior?”
Lewis, 2015*



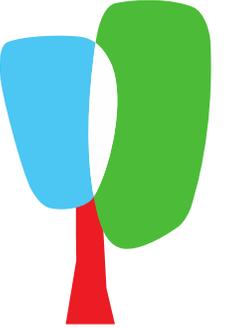
Behaviour support: don'ts



- Use Shame
- Punish
- Expect all children have the same capacity to self-regulate
- Conflate behaviour with the person

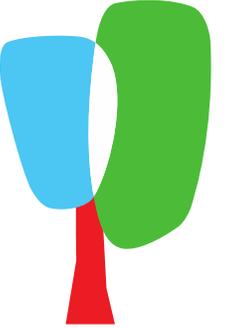
Further reading: Article *What if everything you knew about disciplining kids was wrong*

Behaviour support: our focus



- Relationships
- All behaviour is learned
- Skills like focus, self-regulation, and empathy need to be taught
- Wellbeing staff and teachers work together with families (where possible)
- External referrals
- Time and patience and compassion

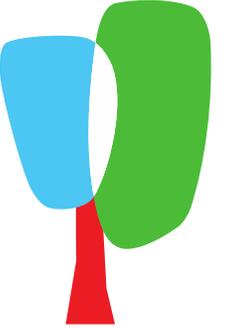
Behaviour support: Tools



- Individualised behaviour plans (trauma informed)
- Distraction
- Building focus
- Teaching feelings
- Role Play
- Sensory interventions
- Restorative practices
- Unconditional Positive Regard



Strategies for Educators



- Remember, it isn't about you
- Read up on children's brain development
- Notice your own triggers
- Get help from colleagues
- Have a self care plan
- Each child has their own story, and is on their journey, our job is to guide and support



Differentiation means behaviour too

“If a child doesn’t know how to read, we teach.

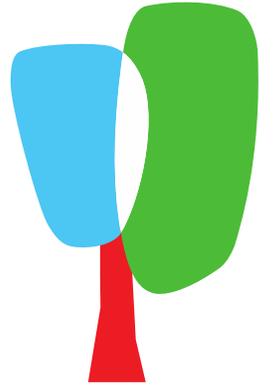
If a child doesn’t know how to swim, we teach.

If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, we teach.

If a child doesn’t know how to drive, we teach.

*If a child doesn’t know how to behave, we ...teach? ...
punish?*

*Why can’t we finish the last sentence as
automatically as we do the others?” Tom Herner
(1998)*



Where to next ...

Rebecca Harris *Trauma Informed Practice in Education. Resource and Toolkit.* www.traumainformedpractice.com.au

Susan Craig *Trauma Sensitive Schools AND Reaching and Teaching Children who Hurt*

Judith Howard *Distressed or Deliberately Defiant*

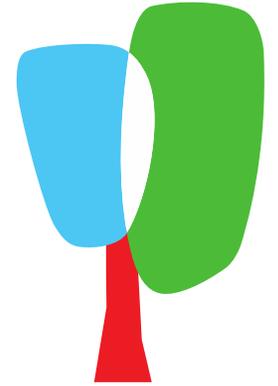
Louis Cozolino *Attachment-Based Teaching*

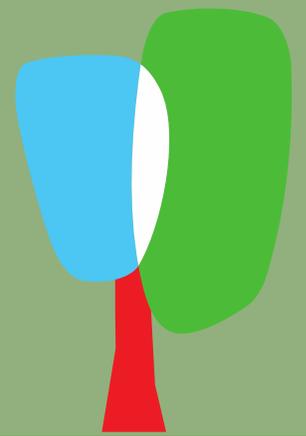
Katherine Reynolds Lewis *What if everything you knew about disciplining kids was wrong? (Article in Mother Jones)*

Ross Greene *Lost at School*

Judy Atkinson *Trauma Trails*

Australian Childhood Foundation *Making Space for Learning AND online SMART training*





Thank you

Rebecca Harris

Harris.Rebecca.H@edumail.vic.gov.au



Student Wellbeing Hub

Thank you for joining us.

You can access a recording of this webinar

on the Student Wellbeing Hub

www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/evidence-and-research

If you would like to know more about Rebecca's work or have any questions please visit her website

<https://www.traumainformedpractice.com.au/>