

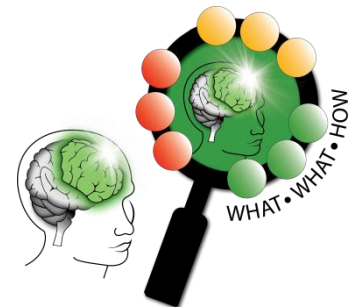
The IMPACT Program has been developed from best-practice trauma-informed science. A key feature of the program is that it can be implemented across multiple sites or at ‘scale’ to support the embedding of intentional therapeutic or trauma-informed practice across systems. This application is informed and supported by the implementation science literature.

The IMPACT – Respond Rather Than React (Introduction to Intentional Trauma-Informed Practice) package covers the following trauma-informed practice competencies.

IMPACT - Respond Rather Than React (Introduction to Intentional Trauma-Informed Practice)

Core Competencies

- Understanding trauma and its impact on brain, cognitive, emotional, educational and behavioural functioning.
- Understanding core brain anatomy and neuro-sequential development, and triggers and patterns of brain functioning.
- Understanding of child and adolescent development.
- Key principles of trauma-informed practice.
- Introduction to attachment development across the life span, including circle of security.
- The role and function of side-by-side and safe relationships as the catalyst of change.
- Mirror neurons and empathic relationships.
- The growth mindset in action.
- Growing mindfulness in adults and clients.
- How to respond to client need, and not react to behaviour.
- Understanding a client’s core under the surface needs (learning, developmental, healing, trauma), and how they influence behaviour.
- Iceberg thinking in action.
- Matching strategies and scripts to client’s needs and experiences.
- Use of validation, curiosity and coaching to evoke change.
- Critical use of consequences (time-in versus time-out).
- Healing and growing children and young people through safe, stable and responsive environments and relationships.



To provide evidence for the trauma-informed underpinnings of the IMPACT - Respond Rather Than React training, the content of this package has been mapped against the Australian Childhood Foundation - SMART Training Package. This is presented below.

POSITIONING STATEMENT

SMART Training and RRTR IMPACT Training

Summary of SMART Training Package

The SMART (Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma) Training Package is a widely known trauma-informed training program developed by the Australian Childhood Foundation. The program seeks to enhance the capacity of school and early childhood personnel to effectively respond to the needs of children and young people who have experienced abuse and trauma. The program’s content is grounded upon an eight point framework (denoted by the acronym PRACTICE) of intervention which can be tailored to the local context. Each component of the PRATICE acronym is summarised below, with its conceptual relationship to the IMPACT – Respond Rather Than React (Introduction to Intentional Trauma-Informed Practice) Course.

Core SMART Concept ¹	IMPACT (Introduction to Intentional Trauma-Informed Practice)
<p>Predictable – Young people with histories of trauma experience <i>change</i> to routines and their environment as a potential threat. The familiar is safer for traumatised children than the unfamiliar. Key strategies to enhance <i>predictability</i> focus on the environment, routine, preparing for future actions, supporting and being sensitive to transition, and adult explanation of future events.</p>	<p>The RRTR Training is designed to increase the knowledge and skills of supporting adults to conduct “under the surface thinking”, thereby increasing the adult’s capacity to hold moment-to-moment awareness of the young person’s internal state or experiences (e.g., threat). By holding onto this awareness, the supporting adult is in a better position to bring changes to self or environment and foster predictability and routine. The construct of predictability is embedded within the <i>safe base</i> concept of the RRTR <i>Activation Cycle</i>. That is, safe and connected relationships are supported through routine, predictability and trust.</p>
<p>Responsive – Young people with histories of trauma often find it difficult to remember and apply rules and consequences. The challenging behaviour demonstrated by some children can evoke reactions in others which further escalate their stress and disconnection. Being responsive relies on understanding the meaning and purpose of the behaviour. Key <i>responsive</i> strategies adults seeking to understand the purpose of behaviour, managing behaviour in a calm and grounded manner, positively reinforce rules and boundaries, seeking to maintain a connection within the child through difficult times.</p>	<p>The RRTR Training brings a content focus to supporting adults developing the skills and knowledge to “respond” to the needs of young people, as opposed to react to their behaviours. Responding to needs is operationalised as the supporting adult understanding the young person’s experiences within the moment, and then bringing an intent to grow the child through intentional communication and strategies. A core focus of the training material is the communication or activating process of “validation”, which is a process of unconditionally acknowledging a young person’s experiences and needs. The training also teaches supporting adults how to “ground” themselves when under stress, and maintain a connection with a young person even when boundaries are implemented (linked to <i>safe base</i> concept).</p>
<p>Attunement – Young people with histories of trauma are not attuned to the way they feel because of lower levels of body awareness (disconnected from body), restricted vocabulary of feeling words, they actions driven by emotions as opposed to higher thinking, and they displace historical trauma responses onto current actions. Traumatised children need help to tune into the way they are feeling, linking perceptions and experiences to their feelings. Key <i>attuned</i> strategies include increasing body and emotional awareness, and supporting connection of triggers, feelings, actions and impact.</p>	<p>The training teaches participants the core skills of mindfulness and the skills of critical thinking (‘What-What-How’). These are foundational skills for young people to link and integrate their body, emotions and cognitive processes, and develop new ways of responding to the world. The RRTR Training systematically trains and supports adults to consider the needs/resources (e.g., mindsets) that drive behaviour, and the individual building blocks of self-regulation. This includes a content focus to young people’s level of awareness (e.g., body and emotional awareness), social and emotional developmental skill capacity, and awareness of triggers and responses. The “what’s happening” question of the <i>What-What-How</i> framework, supported by the skill of mindfulness, is designed to support young people connect body, feelings, responses and impact.</p>
<p>Connecting – Young people with histories of trauma often feel disconnected from their feelings, their memories and their own sense of identity. For change to occur, children need repeated exposure to people who will understand and acknowledge the legitimacy of their feelings and experiences. Key <i>connecting</i> strategies include validation, reflective dialogue, consistent relationships and supporting young people to verbalise their internal world.</p>	<p>The RRTR Training systematically trains adults to consider and hold onto the experiences of young people. It teaches the communication and activating processes of validation and curiosity. When this communication is framed to the <i>What-What-How</i> framework, supported by the skill of mindfulness, young people are supported to develop increased awareness and skill capacity to connect with feelings, verbalise their internal world and formulate a coherent identity. The “what’s important” question embedded within the content brings a content focus to values, cognitive processes and identity development.</p>

¹ Australian Childhood Foundation (2006). Discussion Paper 1: Responding to children who have experienced abuse related trauma – Ideas for school based treatment. Available at: <http://www.childhood.org.au/for-professionals/~media/A2D4D1F163B64292AA87F4ADC027BCB5>

Core SMART Concept	IMPACT (Introduction to Intentional Trauma-Informed Practice)
<p>Translating – Memory capacity is disrupted by trauma. Young people with histories of trauma may find it difficult to generate stories about their day to day experiences or make sense of their past. They feel separate from their past and present and have no “starting point” for the future. Key <i>translating</i> strategies include using opportunities for children to review and reflect upon what they have done, supporting young people to tell their stories, helping young people develop stories for future, creatively recording children’s memories.</p>	<p>The What-What-How skill represents a foundational meta-cognitive process by which young people with backgrounds of trauma can self-regulate, bring mindful awareness to their experiences and evoke cognitive control over their responses. The RRTR Training (as grounded upon the IMPACT Program <i>Activation Cycle</i>) teaches supporting adults how to cue and consolidate these skills through both explicit training and moment-to-moment learning opportunities. The training material supports and encourages adults to help young people to reflect upon what is happening, what is important in their life, and to consider future “how can” actions. This supports young people to develop a coherency of past, present and future, and linking body-, emotion- and self-awareness.</p>
<p>Involve – Young people with histories of trauma have poor internal working models for forming, maintaining, understanding and being in relationships with friends and adults. They may stay on the periphery of social networks and are unable to access their support or opportunities for fun and positive experiences. Key <i>involving</i> strategies include role modelling, practice, rehearsal, practicing social play, supervising and facilitating group play.</p>	<p>The RRTR <i>Activation Cycle</i> is a relationship-based and growth focused model of intentional practice, where trainees are taught that each and every interaction between a young person and another person represents a potential learning opportunity. The <i>safe base</i> concept suggests that social growth is facilitated through adult support and coaching. The <i>What-What-How</i> is applied by the supporting adult as a communication/coaching framework to support social reflection, rehearsal and goal setting. When adults apply this framework with a content focus to the key social and emotional skills taught as part of the IMPACT Program, social development is enhanced.</p>
<p>Calming - Young people with histories of trauma may live in a constant state of elevated stress. They experience the unfamiliar as threatening. For many, they rarely feel calm and peaceful. They have little understanding and experience of what calm is. Key <i>calming</i> strategies include relaxation, practicing different rhythms, physical activities that relaxes body and keeping self grounded.</p>	<p>The RRTR Training builds knowledge and skills in adults to consider the young person’s “under the surface” stress/arousal levels (within the moment of communication). There is a content focus to stress levels and brain functioning, and the concept of “grounded” brings a focus to the adult being calm and responding, as opposed to reacting, within communication (and bringing consideration to both co-regulation and mirror neurons). The training brings focus to the skill of mindfulness as a tool of self-regulation and grounding (or calming). Trainees learn how this can be taught explicitly to young people or embedded in communication (<i>What-What-How</i> framework) to support implicit learning.</p>
<p>Engagement – Young people with histories of trauma may poor internal working models for relating to adults because they have not had experiences of adult not knowing or meeting their needs, which impacts on trust, and adults may represent a trauma trigger. Young people need repeated opportunities of positive exchanges with adults to change the lens they carry about how relationships are experiences. Key <i>engaging</i> strategies include unconditional connection, explaining relational concepts (e.g., trust, care), building a consistent reference support, and supporting the interpretation of experiences.</p>	<p>The RRTR <i>Activation Cycle</i> is a relationship-based model of intentional therapeutic or trauma-informed practice, where trainees are taught that every interaction between a supporting adult and a young person has the potential to activate social and emotional growth. This includes helping children develop healthy templates of relationships (as informed by the <i>safe base</i> concept). The <i>safe base</i> construct is grounded within the attachment literature (circle of security) and brings a focus to (1) enhancing emotional, psychological and physical safety, (2) having unconditional connection points, (3) fostering positive risk taking and exploration and (4) using repair and reconnection. The <i>What-What-How</i> framework when applied side-by-side in the supporting relationship has a key role to support the interpretation of experiences, and linking “what is happening” with cognitive or thinking processes (e.g., what is important, and how to act).</p>

Summary

Both the SMART and the IMPACT Respond Rather Than React (Introduction to Intentional Trauma-Informed Practice) uphold the importance of safe and responsive adult relationships as being the catalysts for growth, change, healing and optimal development in children and young people. The *Activation Cycle* within the Specialist Layer of the IMPACT Program is a trauma-informed intentional practice framework that is designed to grow supporting adult resources (awareness and skills) to “respond” to the needs of children and young people, as opposed react to behaviours. The *Activation Cycle* embeds key trauma-informed practice concepts (safety, responsiveness, co-regulation, growth-focus, validation, curiosity, attachment, internal state, skill building, mindfulness, mindsets or internal working models) within a framework of intentionality. It provides a scaffold by which detailed trauma and therapeutic concepts and strategies can be further embedded. The training also brings a key content focus to trauma, brain development and attachment.

In short, the RRTR IMPACT training is a trauma-informed training package that provides supporting adults the knowledge and skills to respond to a client’s healing, developmental and learning needs through intentional and trauma-informed communication.