



## Why be a trauma sensitive school?

TRUST in Schools: Trauma, Understanding & Sensitive Teaching.

TRUST in Schools is the trauma sensitive schools program from the Australian Child & Adolescent Trauma, Loss & Grief Network (ACATLGN). Trauma sensitive schools programs were initiated in the United States of America. TRUST in Schools is an Australian adaptation that incorporates elements of these initial programs.

### A trauma sensitive school

We know that experiences of adversity and trauma are prevalent in the lives of children. Many children have experienced at least some life adversity, such as parental separation or divorce, parental substance abuse or mental health difficulties, or bullying. Many other children have had traumatic experiences such as abuse, neglect and witnessing domestic violence.

These experiences of adversity and trauma can have profound impacts on the way children think, feel and behave, and for some children play a major role in the learning, behaviour and relationship difficulties they may have. In schools, these difficulties may come across as withdrawal, aggression, inattention, perfectionism, as well as a lack of emotional regulation, self awareness and empathy. Children who have experienced adversity and trauma can also present with difficulties with spoken and written language and executive function.

For some students, school can potentially become another place that they feel overwhelmed or threatened. These children may be especially vulnerable to misreading the verbal and nonverbal cues of others; may be overly aroused and alert to possible threats; and may have particular difficulties with change. Schools can protect against the impact of experiences of adversity and trauma - by being safe havens for learning. Providing safe and secure environments where all students,

including those with more vulnerabilities, can calm their fears, make positive connections with adults and peers, behave appropriately and learn at their highest levels.

### What does a trauma sensitive school look like?

In a trauma sensitive school, all school staff:

- Share an understanding of how trauma impacts learning and why a school wide approach is needed for creating a trauma sensitive school.
- Supports all students to feel safe - physically, socially, emotionally and academically.
- Addresses students needs in holistic ways, taking into account their relationships, self regulation, academic competence and physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Explicitly connects students to the school community by providing them with multiple opportunities to practice newly developing skills.
- Embrace teamwork with a sense of shared responsibility for every student.
- Anticipate and adapt to the ever changing needs of students and the surrounding community.

### For more information:

» [earlytraumagrieff.anu.edu.au](http://earlytraumagrieff.anu.edu.au)

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