

Be You In Focus
*Community
Trauma*

Be You In Focus webinar handout

Thank you for your participation in the Be You In Focus event: **“Supporting recovery after trauma. How a learning community can lead through protective practice”** on 15 October 2020.

This handout contains:

- A quick summary of key concepts.
- Links to resources.
- Attendee question and answer responses.
- In practice reflective questions.

Quick summary of key concepts

- Some events or experiences may be adverse or traumatic, which can be distressing or disturbing.
- The impact of trauma can be passed from one generation to the next and adversity may not cause lasting difficulties.
- Not everyone will respond to a traumatic experience in the same way.
- A response to trauma may not be immediate and may be felt many years later.
- Trauma and adversity in childhood has been closely linked with negative physical, social and mental health outcomes in childhood, adolescence and adulthood.
- Support for children following community trauma isn't only about programs or specialists.
- A lens which incorporates an understanding of regulation can help educators make sense of children's responses following a community trauma.
- The most important actions are those that become integrated into the everyday life of the learning community.
- Educators have an important role in monitoring children and activating support when required.

Understanding regulation

Window of Tolerance



The **Window of Tolerance** (Dr Dan Siegal) is a simple visual representation of a complex neurobiological process that occurs as a result of trauma and ongoing toxic stress. The concept uses three distinct zones to represent the autonomic nervous system's adaptive response to its internal and external environment.

The three distinct zones include:

- **Green zone:** a regulated and balanced state where we can think, reason, socialise and reflect.
- **Red zone:** a reactive and hyper aroused state, where the nervous system moves into mobilisation and is ready to fight (move towards) or flight (move away) from the stimulus.
- **Blue zone:** an under responsive and hypoaroused state, where the nervous system and body begins to immobilise or 'shut down'.

To understand this concept, it is helpful to think of the nervous system being built to cope with the daily demands of life. Built into our nervous system is a 'threshold' or window that can tolerate the thousands of interactions that an educator has throughout the day.

In prolonged periods of toxic stress our tolerance begins to shrink. With a 'narrow window', the stimulus that used to have no impact on our functioning, now can cause a heightened, reactive or shut down response.

This concept can help us understand the importance of looking at behaviour as a form of communication following a community trauma. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of finding tools, strategies and approaches which keep children and educators in a regulated state.

Links to resources

Please find below a selection of resources either shared during the webinar or used in preparation for the webinar.

Be You resources

- Be You Grief, Trauma and Critical Incidents fact sheets:
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents>
- Be You fact sheets
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets>
- Be You Evidence base
<https://beyou.edu.au/about-be-you/evidence-base>
- Be You Mentally Health Continuum and BETLS* tool:
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/mental-health-continuum>
- Be You Wellbeing Tools for You (educators):
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you>
- Wellbeing Tools for Students
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-students>
- About Be You – Evidence base
<https://beyou.edu.au/about-be-you/evidence-base>
- Professional Learning: Be You Early Support (Notice, Inquire, Provide modules)
<https://beyou.edu.au/learn/early-support>

*BETLS is an acronym for behaviour, emotions, thoughts, learning and social relationships.

Resources shared by Emerging Minds

- What is Trauma video:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/news/what-is-trauma/>
- Community Trauma Toolkit:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/toolkits/community-trauma-toolkit/>
- Community Leaders Matrix:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/resource-matrix-community-leaders/>
- Educators Matrix:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/resource-matrix-educators/>
- Health and Social Services Matrix:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/resource-matrix-health-and-social-service-practitioners/>
- Emerging Minds Learning:
<https://learning.emergingminds.com.au/>
- Parents, Carers and Families Toolkit:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/toolkits/parents-carers-and-families-toolkit/>
- 360 app:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/child360-app>
- While I'm Away app:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/while-im-away-app/>

Attendee question and answer responses

How do we contact our Be You Consultant?

If you are a participating Be You school or service and you would like to get in contact with your Be You Consultant, visit beyou.edu.au. Log in to your account, then click on 'My Learning Community'. Click on 'Supports' and you will find your Be You Consultant listed there.

If you are not a participating school, then please complete this [web form](#) and we will get back to you. The following subject line should be selected: *Find out more about Be You for Schools.*

Do you have any strategies that are particularly relevant for working in primary education settings in remote indigenous community?

Trauma informed practice within the classroom is a protective way of working with the entire cohort. Look at setting up whole school routines, as well as in individual classes. Think about using brain breaks and giving students the opportunity to move their bodies throughout the day. As a staff group, look at what is happening throughout the day. Are there certain periods during the day that are more disruptive? Think about how you might plan to make these periods or transitions smoother.

Can I apply this learning to experiences of trauma following the passing of a young person's parent whose passing was unexpected?

Some of the learnings from this webinar will also apply to children and young people who have a parent whose passing was unexpected. For additional resources on grief and loss, you can search through the Emerging Minds Library for Grief and Loss. Some simple information on the Emerging Minds website includes:

- <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/understanding-and-supporting-primary-school-age-children-who-have-experienced-grief-and-loss/>
- <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/understanding-and-supporting-preschool-age-children-who-have-experienced-grief-and-loss/>

How can educators take care of themselves whilst supporting others in the learning community?

Self-awareness and self-care are important tools that educators can draw on when supporting themselves and others in a learning community. The following questions may be helpful when exploring this topic further:

- How do I know when I'm outside my window of tolerance?
- What is happening for my body, emotions and thoughts?
- What self-care tools can I draw on throughout my day to support movement back into my window?
- What are ways in which I can seek support for my mental health?

One of my students has been through some traumatic experiences with her father. What signs should I be looking out for?

There is no one thing to look out for sadly. We will all experience trauma in different ways and may express this differently too. A good rule of thumb is to not assume anything. Check in with the student if you are noticing any changes in their behaviour or learning. Using the BETLS tool <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides>, can be a great way to capture your observations and be helpful to identify patterns over time. Ask the student if there are specific actions you can do as an educator to support them in the class/room and check if they are aware of the school's internal supports ie: they know how to access the school counsellor or chill out zone (if available). Checking in with the student can give them agency to let you know what they find helpful.

As a teacher, when we know a child is about to lose an immediate family member, how is it best to support them prior to the loss? Should we be asking them how they are or just following their lead and letting them disclose what they want, when they want?

Following their lead and checking in regularly would be really valuable for the young person. they may like to be at school as a distraction, and/or might really welcome the chance to speak with a trusted adult about what is happening for them. There are a range of [fact sheets](#) available about grief on the Be You website.

Any tips for supporting parents to recognise when their child has mental health challenges, eg not wanting to take their child to seek medical help for fear they will draw more attention to the behaviour.

Trying to create a shared view of the situation or circumstances that might be causing an educator to be worried about a student is an important first step. The BETLS tool, available at <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides> could be a useful way to capture what is causing concern, to then be shared in conversation with parents.

Is it possible to get a hard copy of the community trauma toolkit?

At present the toolkit is designed to be a digital toolkit with videos, presentations, podcasts etc. Some materials can be printed (fact sheets and facilitators' guides for trainers), but these aren't available as hard copies.

If there is a child who you and your school feel you are out of your depth in supporting, who can you contact for support?

It is really important to know what your internal school policy and processes are around who to seek support from, when this is appropriate and what the steps to escalate your concerns are. Ask your leadership team if your school has list of local services that you can contact. There are fantastic online and phone supports available (see infographic below). Also think about contacting your sector office to find out if there are specific supports available.

Any strategies to help boarding students, unable to travel home due to border closures, who are feeling separated and homesick?

Maintaining usual routines can be really helpful, so that students feel a sense of predictability and control. Look at introducing a new ritual to encourage contact with families. Is it possible to set up a nightly (agree on the frequency) video call to help the student feel connected with home? Look at actions you may have done in the past as a boarding house to encourage and promote connection. Ask the students how they might be able to get involved. Be creative and think outside the box!

Mental health services and support



be you

Mental Health Services and Support

<p>Beyond Blue</p> <p>24/7 mental health support service</p> <p>1300 22 4636 beyondblue.org.au</p>	<p>headspace</p> <p>Online support and counselling to young people aged 12 to 25</p> <p>1800 650 890 (9am-1am daily) For webchat, visit: headspace.org.au/eheadspace</p>	<p>Kids Helpline</p> <p>24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services for children and young people aged 5 to 25</p> <p>1800 55 1800 kidshelpline.com.au</p>	<p>1800RESPECT</p> <p>24/7 support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic violence and abuse</p> <p>1800 737 732 1800respect.org.au</p>
<p>Lifeline</p> <p>24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services</p> <p>13 11 14 lifeline.org.au</p>	<p>Suicide Call Back</p> <p>24/7 crisis support and counselling service for people affected by suicide</p> <p>1300 659 467 suicidecallbackservice.org.au</p>	<p>Mensline</p> <p>24/7 counselling service for men</p> <p>1300 78 99 78 mensline.org.au</p>	<p>QLife</p> <p>LGBTI peer support and referral</p> <p>1800 184 527 (6pm-10pm daily) qlife.org.au (online chat 3pm-12am daily)</p>

If you are concerned about someone at risk of immediate harm, call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

With delivery partners:  Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

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