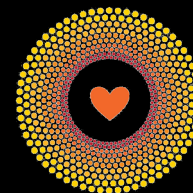




Learnings from 'Finding the Path Forward'

Empowering schools through groupwork to recognise and respond to young people using violence in the home

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**Australian
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Foundation**

**The Australian Childhood Foundation
acknowledges Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander peoples as the
traditional custodians and owners of this
land and waters. 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.**



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Finding the Path Forward Therapeutic Group

- A school-based trauma-responsive therapeutic group for young people at risk of engaging in relational violence in home and school environments.
- Program developed as an early intervention program for young people identified in the school system as at risk or already engaging in externalising behaviours at home or school.
- The group adopts a developmentally appropriate, movement and play based approach to teaching emotion regulation, communication and relationship skills.
- A key outcome of the group intervention is to train the school well-being team in the group delivery, so they develop skills in running the group in their education setting on an ongoing basis.

Finding the Path Forward Therapeutic Group

- Delivered in partnership with primary and secondary colleges in Southern Melbourne 2023-24, Ovens Murray and Goulburn (OMG) regions.
- 8-week duration during school term, 2-hours per week, approximately 8 young people at a time, facilitated by 2 Australian Childhood Foundation Counsellors and 1 School Wellbeing staff
- Regular contact with parents to integrate learnings at home
- Tailor demographics to the needs of school
- Food: helped with buy-in and offered nurturance and connection

Session themes

Session one	Exploring safety + introduction to group
Session two	Safe space
Session three	Psychoeducation: emotions behind behaviours
Session four	Communicating my Window of Tolerance
Session five	Boundaries
Session six	Societal pressures and stereotypes
Session seven	Finding the new path forward
Session eight	Commitment to action

Emotions Behind Behaviours



Safe space



Learnings: Ideal referrals

- Early intervention
- Young people presenting with some externalising and violent behaviours at home or school eg. Yelling, sibling conflict, school incidents, parentification behaviours; or internalising presentations such as depression, eating disorders, anxiety, low risk suicidal ideation
- Young people histories: childhood trauma; exposure to family violence; child abuse; attachment disruptions; community violence; young carers; bullying
- Thorough intake process: Parent and young people intake sessions, risk assessment and safety planning

Benefits for YP	Benefits for parents	Benefits for school
Improved insight and body awareness: emotions, signs of dysregulation	Reduced externalising incidents at home, improved family dynamic	Collaborative relationships between ACF Counsellors – secondary consultations
More respectful social interactions	Improved communication between young people and parents	Upskilling Wellbeing and aides
Healthier emotional literacy and expression, especially of anger and underlying needs	Improved empathy for their young person.	Reframing narratives around young people especially understanding of trauma origins
Increased help-seeking from young people to School Wellbeing and aides	Increased knowledge: co-regulation, meaning behind behaviour, rupture and repair, tracking early warning signs of dysregulation in young people.	Positive changes in how schools managed incidents
Reduced shame and stigma	Social connection with other parents experiencing AVITH, reducing shame	Support for young people where Wellbeing resources are limited
Improved school attendance	Strengthened school–parent connections have led to more parents reaching out to School Wellbeing for support	Wellbeing now able to facilitate with consultation with ACF
Reduced social isolation		
Positive therapeutic relationship encouraged individual counselling		

Feedback from YP	Feedback from parents	Feedback from school
"I am able to tell when I am upset and angry." "I liked coming somewhere safe to be and having people to talk to." "I enjoy school now that I have made some friends in group"	"He is better at self-regulating and not reacting to his brothers when they stir him up... My child and I are communicating more and negotiating about his independence rather than arguing."	"The small group work ACF have done with some of our most impacted students has made significant differences in the engagement and connection these students have with the college and their education. It is a very specialised service and one I would not be able to duplicate in our school without their expertise and knowledge." - School Principal
"I don't get angry as much. I can control myself." "I thought I was just angry but there's more underneath my volcano explosion"	"He has stopped clenching his fists when me and my partner are talking to him about his behaviour. He is able to stay and listen until the conversation is finished, then go to his room to regulate."	"One of my favourite parts of the group was seeing the boys start to connect with each other, especially since many of them didn't feel like they truly belonged at school before joining" - Wellbeing Coordinator
What was your favourite thing about group? "Making friends" "Playing games" "Having fun" "Sharing food"	"My child seems more open. He's talking about his problems and seeking me out to talk things through."	"Many classroom aides have heard about the program from the students and are eager to be considered for the next group"

Common challenges faced when working in education settings

- Containing YP with externalising presentations and managing group dynamics
- Interpersonal conflict outside of group
- Parent engagement in parent session, mixed
- Safety plans and risk management
- Challenges in working in under-resourced education settings

The ACF 'lockbox' - containing exercise

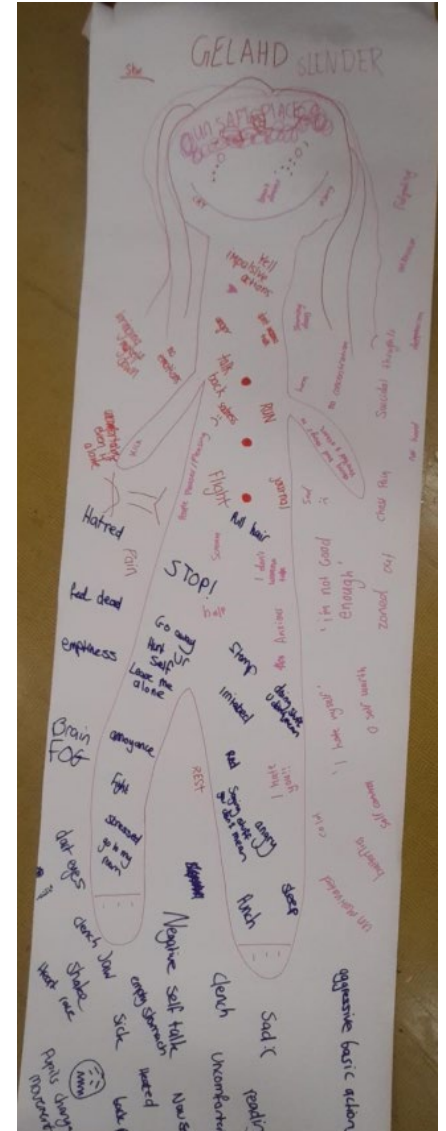
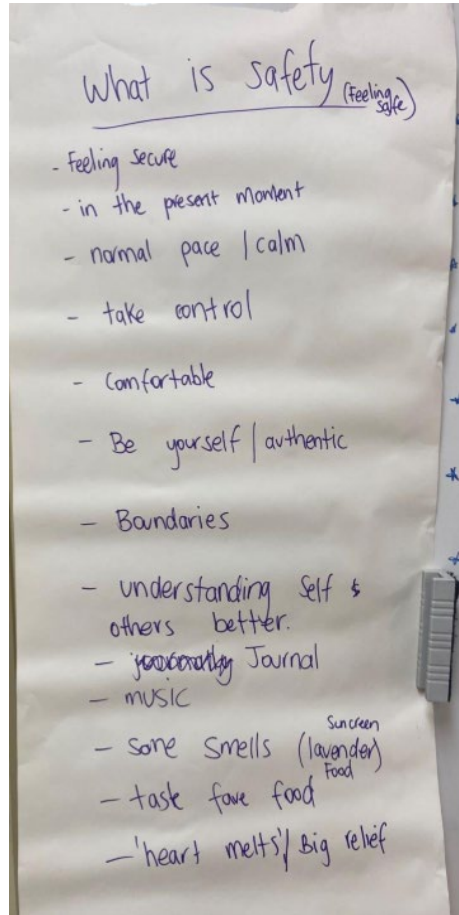


Put it in jar and throw in water
Shred → smoothie → compost
→ Pinata
→ Make Shanna eat paper
→ Smoothie → Banana, Mango
Strawberry, chocolate topping, Sesame seeds, ice cream,
milk, caramel, → Eat one → throw the other
→ Match in a gas tank
• → Shred then plant a tree on top

Key Learnings & Reflections

- Fun & play based – predictability and repetition
- Relational approach
- Working at the group's pace
- Consulting and upskilling school staff – supporting the young people directly and systemically

Questions



Contact

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