

Our Healing. Our Future.



HealingFoundation
Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

Preparing your classroom

Overview

This fact sheet, aims to provide teachers with some general information to help you prepare for lessons about Stolen Generations and includes an overview about:

- Cultural safety in the classroom.
- The Stolen Generations.
- Trauma and healing in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context.

The Stolen Generations resource kit for teachers and students has been developed in close consultation with Stolen Generations survivors, First Nations and non-First Nations teachers and parents, and includes safe, age-appropriate activities. However, some content may cause sadness and distress to students, particularly if they are from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. Please take this into account when preparing your lessons and consider additional classroom support for certain activities.

Knowing the backgrounds of the students in your group and identifying those who may be at risk of triggering (e.g. students currently in or with a history of being in out of home care, descendants of Stolen Generations survivors, First Nations students, students with significant grief and loss histories) is very important.

It is also important to give students the choice to opt in or out of the session.

If they opt out, don't ask them to provide a reason. Just allow them to participate in another structured and meaningful activity (e.g. join another class, library time etc).

When preparing for these lessons, you may want to consider informing parents and carers in advance that you will be working on issues related to the Stolen Generations as part of the school curriculum and that their children may want to talk with them about what they are learning.

The voices of Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants are important when teaching about this history. Additional resources, including professional learning and support tools, can be found on [The Healing Foundation](#) and [Narragunnawali Reconciliation in Schools websites](#).

The Healing Foundation factsheet about [working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people](#) is a useful resource. This was developed in partnership with Professor Helen Milroy, a leading child and adolescent psychiatrist and descendant of the Paluku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia.



Scan the
QR code to
access links
to resources

Creating culturally safe spaces in your classroom

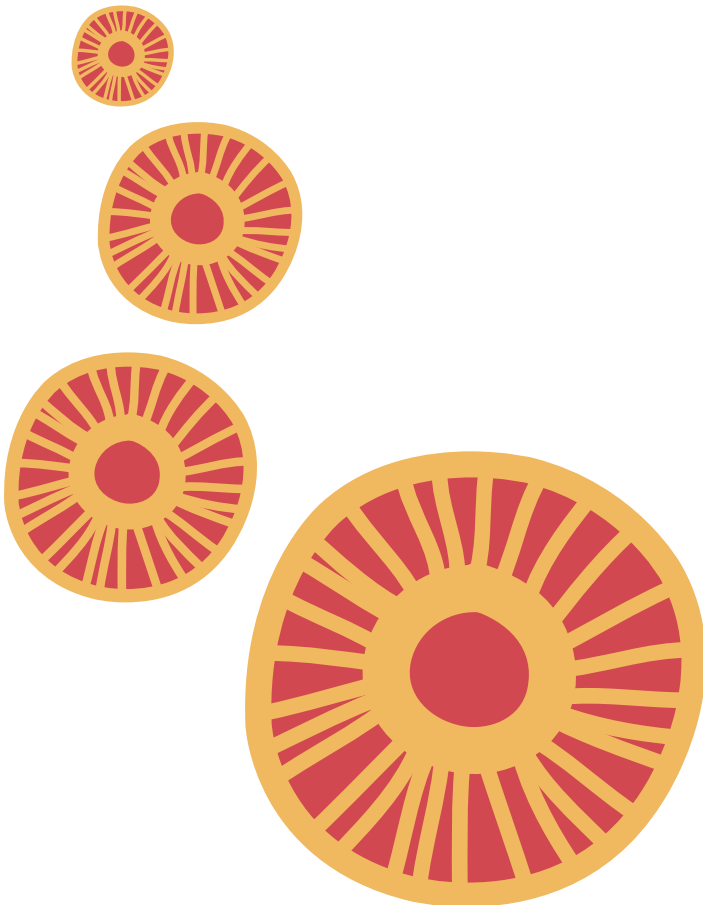
- ☐ Watch Video: [The Story of The Healing Foundation](#).
- ☐ Read: Tips teachers can use when talking about racism ([article](#)).
- ☐ Read information about [yarning circles](#).
- ☐ Items that can be displayed:
 - [Map of Indigenous Australia](#), AIATSIS. Printed copy can be purchased following the link
 - **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags**

When you start the lessons, introduce the topic sensitively and let the students know that this can be a difficult topic to discuss for many reasons. Let them know that they may have strong feelings emerge. Make sure you feel as comfortable and confident as possible leading conversations about the topic. Students will respond and resonate with your calmness and containment.

Recap that at any time if students need to talk about their feelings regarding the subject matter the school has support in place.

Share perspectives and opinions in a safe and respectful way.

Reflect at the end of every lesson, which could include bringing class together for a yarning circle to share takeaways and feelings on the topics covered.



Terms to know

The Stolen Generations

Tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities between the early 1900s and the 1970s.

These children, now known as the Stolen Generations, were removed as part of deliberate assimilation policies adopted by all Australian governments. The children were sent to live in one of more than 480 institutions across Australia or adopted by non-Indigenous families.

The children were separated from their culture, family, land and identity and many of them suffered abuse and neglect. This happened to thousands of children across many decades and the impact is still being felt across the generations today.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are a part of the Stolen Generations refer to themselves as survivors, in reference to having survived this traumatic period of their lives.

Trauma

Trauma affects the way people think and act and overwhelms their ability to cope and engage. It can affect a person for many decades and in many different ways. Common symptoms include fear and anxiety, difficulty with relationships, impulsive behaviour, feeling sad and hopeless, tired and confused. Research has shown that people are not only affected by traumatic events they directly experience. Witnessing or hearing about trauma from a family or community member can also have an impact. Unresolved trauma contributes to many of the social and health problems affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is not just experienced individually but collectively. It is experienced between generations and across communities and has multiple impacts on relationships.

If people don't have the opportunity to heal from trauma, they may unknowingly pass it on to others through their behaviour. Their children may experience difficulties with attachment, disconnection from their extended families and culture and high levels of stress from family and community members who are dealing with the impacts of trauma. This can create developmental issues for children, who are particularly susceptible to distress at a young age. This creates a cycle of trauma, where the impact is passed from one generation to the next. In Australia, Intergenerational Trauma predominantly affects the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.

The first steps to better understanding the full impact of trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and supporting their aspirations for healing is really only just beginning to be understood.

Healing

Healing enables people to address distress, overcome trauma and restore wellbeing. Ways to support healing include reconnecting with culture, strengthening identity, restoring safe and enduring relationships and supporting communities to understand the impact that their experiences have had on their behaviour and create change.

Healing occurs at a community, family and individual level. Healing continues throughout a person's lifetime and across generations.

International best practice in healing involves combining traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural healing practices with western methodologies.

For more information download [The Healing Foundation's Glossary of healing terms](#).



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Additional resources

Classroom conversations have the potential to continue long after the lesson has finished – in our playgrounds, in homes, and across social media.

It may be that these conversations bring on a variety of feelings and emotions for educators, First Nations and non-First Nations students, and have an effect on individual wellbeing, and the wellbeing of families and communities.

Below are some additional resources and places online, by phone and in-person where you can find more information, support and tips that may help you or your students, especially First Nations students and their families.

The Gayaa Dhuwi network

gayaadhuwi.org.au

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Access resources and find help for support services.

Wellmob

wellmob.org.au

Social, emotional and cultural wellbeing online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

R U OK?

ruok.org.au

R U OK? is a public health promotion campaign with resources to assist students as they learn how to support their peers and talk about how they feel.

Kids Helpline

kidshelpline.com.au

A free, private and confidential, telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25.

BlaQ

blaq.org.au

BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation is committed to empowering the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ+SB community through innovation, inclusion, understanding and advocacy.

The Healing Portal

healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au

An online hub for people working in healing, health, justice, education, employment, child protection, community services and family violence sectors. The Healing portal is designed to encourage information sharing across sectors. It brings together best practice healing initiatives and information about why healing is needed, and what is working in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities. The portal includes the latest research, reports, case studies, videos and tools from around Australia to enable people to bring trauma aware, healing informed practices into their organisations and communities.

13 Yarn

13yarn.org.au

13YARN is an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander crisis support line funded by the Australian Government with the support of Lifeline and developed in collaboration with Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia. It is run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

eSafety Commissioner

esafety.gov.au

Online safety resources and training for teachers, schools and communities.



To access the links to resources and videos, or to check you have the most up to date version, visit www.healingfoundation.org.au/schools or scan the QR code.

