

# THE **BetterMe** PROJECT

**Using the lens of  
neuroscience to  
create Better  
Little Humans!**

## **TEACHER ORIENTATION**



A school-based  
program, aligned  
with the Australian  
Curriculum  
General  
Capabilities  
Framework,  
catering from  
Year 4 to Year 10

SAMPLE

THE **BetterMe**  
PROJECT

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SAMPLE



# Why?

Michelle Loch  
CEO and Founder  
Leading Humans

Author of the BETTER  
ME PROJECT



## A Message from the Creator

I've long been passionate about bringing the work I do with adults and school leaders to where it matters most—our kids. Being human is hard enough, and today's young people are growing up in a world that demands more **self-leadership, resilience, and social intelligence** than ever before. Their brains are wired to survive, and that can get in the way of 'thrive'! We can help, and that involves helping them to understand that they can - with awareness - make conscious choices to override some of their 'survival' brain's '**normal, but not always useful**' responses.

The **BETTER ME Project** is built with that in mind. It aligns with Australian Curriculum V9 – General Capabilities, supports your Social and Emotional Learning and Respectful Relationships programs, and is designed for real classrooms with real kids.

### Each UNIT includes:

- ✓ Easy-to-follow, comprehensive teacher guides
- ✓ Student-friendly slides and videos
- ✓ Professional actors delivering key concepts
- ✓ Engaging, hands-on activities
- ✓ Links to curated articles and media
- ✓ Explicit Instruction elements: learning intentions, support and extension ideas.

The success of this program **comes down to you**—the teacher. Your presence, engagement, and willingness to guide reflective conversations will make the biggest difference. Your own vulnerability will play a big part in helping students know that being human is hard, even for adults, and that's ok!

This program has been **co-developed and tested with fantastic teachers** in real schools. Their feedback has helped shape content and structure that we believe is age-appropriate, practical, and powerful.

We're thrilled to have you on board for the journey. **Let's help every student become a BETTER ME.**

*\*VUCA stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous*



# About the project

## What is the BETTER ME Project?

The BETTER ME Project is a whole-school well-being and self-leadership program for students from Year 4 to Year 10. Grounded in neuroscience, it provides students with the tools to understand how their brains influence their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours—and how they can take charge of becoming the best version of themselves.

## Why It Matters

Managing student behaviour and engaging with parents are key challenges for teachers. This program offers a proactive, whole-of-community approach to shift behaviour by first shifting thinking. It helps students (and adults) understand that all behaviour—while normal—is an attempt to feel safe or protect oneself. By recognising this, students learn to regulate themselves and better manage the impact of others and their environment.

## What Students Will Learn

- How their brain develops and affects their actions and emotions
- How to use science-based strategies for self-regulation, communication, and resilience
- How to build self-awareness, management, social awareness and social management.

## Your Role as a Teacher

You are central to the program's success. This isn't just about delivering lessons—it's about modelling the same strategies and mindsets you're teaching. Your vulnerability, consistency, and human connection will set the tone. As you support students, you'll also be growing your own self-leadership capability – this is a life-long project for all of us.

## How the Program Works

- Develops a shared language and shared mental model for being an effective human and contributing to the school and wider community
- Designed to create a common understanding among students, staff, and families
- Supports a culture of reflection, accountability, connection, and growth
- Prepares students to navigate today's VUCA world (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous)

## The Big Picture

This is more than a well-being program—it's a shift in how we understand behaviour and how we teach students to take responsibility for themselves and their impact on others. When students understand the science of being human they are empowered to self-lead effectively and contribute more positively to school and life.



# About the project

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## Key messages

Throughout the Units there will be Unit specific messages and memes. Below are some of the generic message you can start to work with as a school.

### **Your brain is a learning superpower**

You're in one of the most powerful learning stages of your life—your brain is rewiring, pruning, and building new connections faster than it ever will again. That makes this the perfect time to learn how to use your brain well and shape the kind of person you want to become.

### **You can be in control of your brain**

This program is about helping you take control of that process. It's called self-directed neuroplasticity—a fancy way of saying you can shape your brain by what you focus on and how you practise thinking, behaving, and responding.

### **We're building your human AARMA**

We'll be building your Human AARMA—your mental toolkit for navigating life. It's not just about being a “good person”; it's about being a better version of yourself every day. And just so you know—I'm on this journey too. Adults are still doing this work!

### **You are not your brain**

You are not your brain. Your brain is wired to protect you, and sometimes it does that in unhelpful ways. But when you understand how it works, you can lead it—instead of letting it lead you. That's what self-leadership is all about. It's understanding that all human behaviour is 'normal', not just always useful!

### **Is what you are doing or thinking 'Helping or Hindering'?**

A question that students can ask themselves, and teachers can ask students (or themselves!!) , when students find themselves exhibiting behaviour or attitudes that are overly-emotional or generally not useful in dealing with the challenges at hand.



## Key messages

### Explanation not Excuse

Students will learn why their brain directs them to behave in the way they do. The goal is for students to be able to:

- 'diagnose' the drivers behind their behaviour
- 'decide' whether that behaviour is useful or not useful –
- 'direct' their attention to better courses of action or ways of thinking.

Whilst they will be able to explain their behaviour in terms of brain motivation, they will learn that that is not an excuse. They are still accountable for the choices they make.

Over time – from Year 4 to Year 10 – students will develop more self-control (regulation) over their emotions, thinking and behaviour. This must include self-compassion – after all we all make mistakes – even big humans.

What is the most important thing in any situation is what a human chooses to do next? Help them to stay calm, accept, and focus on the 'next wise choice'!

### The most important question

We want the students the adults in the school community to regularly be asking:

**Is the the BETTER ME I want to be?**





# The most important bit!

The philosophy and passion behind the BETTER ME PROJECT is the need to **improve the thinking and behaviour of students** so that they can experience success in, and contribute to society in meaningful ways.

Well-being is on the agenda. Statistics show that our young people are burned out and struggling! This negatively impacts attitude, behaviour and performance at school as well as out of school.

We complain that kids don't care, that they don't know right from wrong. It's more complex than that.

We have learned more about the human brain in the last 30 years than in all of history, and this new science is helping us to **understand human motivation and behaviour in more meaningful and evidence-based ways and provides us new ways to look at challenges and challenging behaviour.**

What we know is that when we teach people (and that includes kids) about how their brain works; how it can work for and against them; that **they can be in control of their brain and how it grows and develops**; and by association that they can access control over their lived experience, they develop higher levels of hope and agency and are more able to make positive changes that impact themselves and others.

It's about providing the opportunity for them to see the world from a different perspective, through a different lens (in this case, a neuroscience or 'brain biology' lens) and reflect about the choices they are making and wish to make.

BUT, in this context, the key is YOU, the teacher, and how you engage with students in your lessons.

This program is written as a support for the conversations you have with students that will educate them in ways that the world will appreciate and start to make your and your colleague's lives better in the school environment.

There is a lot at stake. We ask you to give this work the attention and focus it needs to be successful.





# Building AARMA

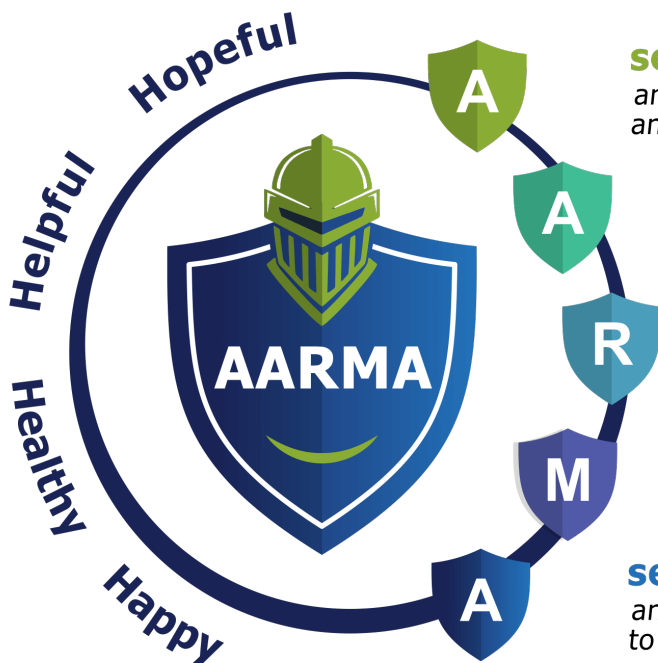


# The AARMA Principles

The **AARMA Principals** form the central framework that feature in all units and is itself, the focus of the introductory Unit – AARMA ME. The Principles focus attention on pathway to achieving the four desired 'human' outcomes: for students to be Happy, Healthy, Helpful and Hopeful, using the five self-leadership AARMA Principles: Awareness, Acceptance, Regulation, Motivation and Accountability.

The framework is described in more detail in the following pages.

Helping students build the  
Human AARMA that will  
protect them and help them  
succeed in the big world!



## **self-AWARE**

and AWARE of your impact on other humans  
and how other humans are impacting you

## **self-ACCEPTING**

and ACCEPTING of other humans and of  
circumstances beyond your control

## **self-REGULATED**

and able to support other humans  
to self- REGULATE

## **self-MOTIVATED**

and MOTIVATED to work and collaborate  
with other humans

## **self-ACCOUNTABLE**

and able to hold other humans ACCOUNTABLE  
to being kind, respectful and reliable



# The AARMA Principles

Throughout all Units there will be a consistent reference to student's building their **Human AARMA**. It is a mindset and skillset that will protect them from the challenges of the VUCA world and help them to protect others.

Building their human AARMA will also help students to be:

- **HAPPY** (as defined by positive psychology, and explored in a number of Units)
- **HEALTHY** (mentally)
- **HELPFUL** (to contribute positively to a better world) and
- **HOPEFUL** (without hope for our future, we don't have much!)

Each **AARMA Principle** has a corresponding **Action Word** as follows:

**Awareness**



I Notice

**Acceptance**



I Respect

**Regulation**



I Control

**Motivation**



I Focus

**Accountability**



I Own

## A BIT ABOUT HUMANS

Humans are amazing but a bit 'hopeless' too. We have this amazing brain and unlimited potential, but our brains were 'designed' to function in primitive times when things were simpler and focused on 'protecting' us from danger – mostly physical like saber-toothed tigers, woolly mammoths and people from neighbouring and not-so-friendly tribes.

The primitive brain is also wired to seek out social connection and protection (explored extensively in the SOCIAL ME Unit, and to get focused when the threat of drought (feeling thirsty), thermal protection from the elements (air-conditioner too cold, or hot days), and famine (feeling hungry).

The modern-day versions of these threats can significantly impact productivity, focus, psychological safety, learning ability and much more. Being able to '**diagnose**' brain state and consciously '**decide**' to '**direct**' attention to more useful places is critical for students (and all of us) to navigate the complexities of our modern-day world.



# Building AARMA

## Awareness



I Notice

## A is for AWARENESS

The human brain likes to work on 'auto' to save brain fuel. We need students to be able to bring themselves into the present moment of awareness before making choices and decisions, particularly in challenging situations. This AARMA Principle focuses on:

- **Self-awareness** – what do I **notice** about what I am I thinking, doing, feeling and experiencing. What is my brain telling me to do right now and is it useful?
- **Awareness of others** – how might I be contributing to this and how is my behaviour impacting others? What do I **notice** about their responses and actions?
- **Awareness of the effect of others on self** – what do I **notice** about how another person's behaviour is impacting me. Is my reaction useful? Am I strong enough to look beyond it or manage my reactions? Can I be a **BETTER ME** in this situation?

We want students to understand that once they **notice** and become '**aware**' of what is happening to them and others they can '**diagnose**' what is happening in a relatively objective way, they can consciously '**decide**' to '**direct**' their attention to more useful and wise choices and ways of thinking. They can take back control of their '**brain**' with their '**mind**'.



# Building AARMA

## Acceptance



### I Respect

## A is for ACCEPTANCE

Modern day media has provided many challenges for us in terms of our personal sense of self-worth. We want students to understand that self-worth is vital for functional well as a human, and it is within their control to develop and maintain it. This AARMA Principal focuses on:

- **Acceptance of self** – I am a good but 'slightly flawed' human – as is everyone – and that's ok. I have personal strengths and talents, and also challenges. It is important to be kind to ourselves - **accept** who we are - and treat ourselves with **respect**. If we don't like who we are, then what would a BETTER ME look like?
- **Acceptance of others** – We are all unique and whole in many different ways, and that's perfect. The world would be a very boring place if we were all the same. We must be kind to others – **accept** who they are - and treat others with **respect**. Everybody has the right to feel respected, safe and valued for who they are. When I find myself finding this difficult I must ask myself 'what would a BETTER ME do?'
- **Acceptance of Circumstances** – Things don't always go my way and sometimes the circumstances I find myself in are not great – particularly when I compare myself to others. I have no choice to **accept** that and choose what I will do next or in the future. Though it can be difficult, I must **respect** the fact that other people have different circumstances – sometimes better, sometimes worse – than mine. The choice that I make about 'next' is far more important than the choices I many have made leading to now. That's where a BETTER ME focuses!

We want students to understand that every human, including themselves, has worth and deserves respect. There are things that are, and are not, in their control. Acceptance is key to helping them to move past bad experiences and be hopeful for a better future.



# Building AARMA

## Regulation



### I Control

## R is for REGULATION

Our protective, primitive brain will prioritise protecting us - fight, flee, freeze, and appease - when challenged physically or emotionally or socially. Sometimes this is useful, sometimes it is not. To be successful students must develop strategies to notice (awareness), accept, and then **control** or **regulate** their brain's protective responses to make sure their choices and behaviours are useful and wise. They must be able to thoughtfully consider short- and long-term consequences in making behavioural choices. This AARMA Principle focuses on:

- **Self-regulation** of emotions that are not useful or that might bias or cloud good choices. Helping students understand that they CAN be in **control**, with practice, and that self-control bring many benefits in the short and long term.
- **Self-regulation** of choices that are not useful, particularly the ability to calm quickly and 'resolve' (apologise, learn from) the consequences of poor choices. Choices are often driven by emotion, so students can be in control of their choices if they are in **control** of their thinking and their emotional responses.
- **Helping friends and family** to self-regulate when they are triggered and not in **control** of their emotional and 'normal but not useful' protective responses. Students can be the helpful, **controlled** BETTER ME in the moment.

We want students to understand that emotions and feelings can get in the way of wise choices and can have lasting impacts. Students will explore the ideas that ;

- Happiness is not about being happy all the time
- We are emotional beings – we are ALWAYS experiencing some kind of emotion – knowing what it is can help with future choices
- Emotion is data – information – that we can use
- Strong emotions and feelings, particularly of the negative kind - can significantly impact how we see things and can lead to non-useful or unwise choices
- Positive emotions indicate that a 'need' they have is being met. Negative emotions indicate that a 'need' they have is NOT being met.



# Building AARMA

## Motivation



I Focus

## M is for MOTIVATION

Extrinsic motivation can be useful but intrinsic motivation is the key to success. It is difficult to be motivated by something that is not perceived as important or that holds meaning to the student. Our role as educators is to help students discover and direct their attention to what is important and meaningful for them. Sometimes that can be difficult for some and will form a significant part of their school journey. Relating motivation to being Happy, Healthy, Helpful and Hopeful can be a useful place to start. This AARMA Principal focuses on:

- **Motivating** self based on values, beliefs and a desire for success. Self-motivation plays a significant role in personal and life success. The most useful kind of motivation comes from within, but is difficult to achieve if you are not sure of your goals and what is important to you – so we will start there so you know where to **focus** your energy and attention usefully!
- Being **motivated** to assist others to be self-motivated when they are struggling. Helping friends and family to **focus** on what is important and meaningful to them.
- Understanding the role that extrinsic **motivation** can play in reaching goals and using such motivation to **focus** energy, effort and attention.

We want students to understand that they can use motivation – intrinsic (inside-out) and extrinsic (outside-in) motivation consciously and creatively to do the things they want to do and have to do. The brain does not focus by 'focusing' – it focuses by eliminating distraction which is a most difficult thing to do. Students must learn how to notice and reflect on the things that are getting in the way of their ability to be motivated and focused.





# Building AARMA

## Accountability



I Own

## A is for ACCOUNTABILITY

We are, and are held by others, accountable to the choices we make. 'They made me' is not an excuse (and we'll be spending plenty of time helping students 'explain' **why** they let others 'make me do it'), but we won't be excusing it! A functional school community and society requires us all to 'own our 50%!'. That is, understand that much of our lived experience is influenced by our own actions – how we show up and interpret what happens to us. This AARMA Principle focuses on:

- Students being **accountable** for their actions and choices and **owning** the consequences.
- Supporting friends and school-mates to be **accountable** for their actions and choices and **owning** the consequences (particularly for students in leadership roles in the school ie, formal leaders, or senior students in the school – Year 6 or Year 10-12. Also 'calling' the inappropriate choices others make that might impact them.
- Understanding and **owning** their contribution to a situation and taking steps to reframe or refocus in the way that a BETTER ME would.

In the BETTER ME PROJECT we aim to help students to provide a 'scientific' EXPLANATION for the non-useful choices they may make, but not use that as an EXCUSE. We want students to habitually ask themselves

"What is my 50% here?"

"How might I be contributing to this situation or feeling that I am experiencing?"

"How can I think differently (reframe) about this?"

"What can I do differently (refocus) to make the better for me?"

If they can understand and 'explain' and bring awareness to what is often the 'mindless or unaware' approach they took in a challenging circumstance, it can help them to learn and develop BETTER thinking and behavioural habits in the future.



# Program Structure



# Program Resources

The BETTER ME Program is divided into **Units** e.g. AARMA ME, Wise ME, Friend ME, Learner ME, Brainy ME. Each unit is made up of four (4) **modules**\*, and each module can be delivered over multiple lessons depending on the length of the lessons and the variety of activities you decide to engage in around a particular topic – you can go light, or you can go deep.

Each unit comes with ...

- **Comprehensive teacher guide** with suggested activities, discussion points, facilitation tips, and 'critical, metacognitive thinking and discussion questions' to pose to the students along with suggested responses and key messages to draw out.
- Engaging and vibrant **Microsoft PowerPoint presentation slides** and **downloadable student activities** to get students involved and moving around the room.
- BETTER ME module **content videos with professional Australian actors** and animation sequences to deliver the foundational concepts for each module to the students **so that teachers can focus on student engagement, discussion, and reflection rather than being 'experts' in the content**. The gold is in the experience, the debriefing and the application of the concepts into everyday life - not the concepts themselves.
- Downloadable **student workbook** and **activity handouts**.
- **Teacher support portal** with orientation programs and additional learning resources for teachers to expand teacher knowledge base and confidence in working with the neuroscience-based content.
- **School support package** including a personalised onboarding process and on-going support mechanisms via your BETTER ME Program Managers at your school.

*\* The exception to this are the AARMA ME Units (Primary and Secondary) that have seven (7) smaller modules – an introduction to AARMA, a deep dive into each AARMA Principle, and a module focused on application of the AARMA Principles.*



# Teacher Manual

## Module 4

### Regulation Station

The timings indicated are **MINIMUM** times. If you have the time, get creative, change up the space – take the activities or discussions outside, and follow the interest and energy of the students.

A reminder to be creative, have fun, and follow the student interest and energy in the room. There is no 'test'.

Module Outline		
<b>Phase 1 – Taking Charge of Me</b>		<b>~40 mins total</b>
Introduction/Review	AARMA Linking Challenge	5 mins
Present	Introduction to Regulation	10 mins
	Regulation Video Part 1	5 mins
Practice	Regulation Diagnostic	5 mins
	Your Emotional Brain	10 mins
Produce	Guard Dog or Wise Handler	10 mins
<b>Phase 2 – Just Breathe</b>		<b>~40 mins total</b>
Present	Big Belly Breathing	10 mins
	Regulation Video Part 2	5 mins
Practice	Drone Zone	10 mins
Produce	Name to Tame	10 mins
<b>Phase 3 – Pause, Process, Pivot</b>		<b>~40 mins total</b>
Present	Traffic Light Video	10 mins
	Simon Says NOT with Traffic Light	5 mins
Practice	Traffic Light and the Wise Handler	15 mins
Produce	Rewatch Video and Quiz	10 mins
Reflect	Final Regulation Diagnostic	5 mins

Approximate minimum timing of activities to assist in your planning.

Each phase is structured as Present, Practice, Produce. Maps across to I do, We do, You do and other Explicit Instruction approaches.



# Teacher Manual

Note: For your convenience, all instructions also appear on the notes page of the PowerPoint Slides

## Phase 1 – Taking charge of me



### PRACTICE – Regulation Diagnostic (5 mins)

#### Learning Intention

Students will complete a Regulation Diagnostic Test and see what their current regulation habits are like. They will fill out another one at the end of the module and compare the two.

#### Success Criteria

*"I can answer questions about myself that are related to controlling my emotions and behaviour."*

*"I can find at least one part of the test that I want to improve on for next time."*

#### Content and Activities

##### First Diagnostic

##### Activity: Regulation Diagnostic

*"Before we get more into what regulation is and why it is important, let's find out how much you understand right now."*

**SLIDE 16:** Turn to slide 16, and have students open to **page 3** in their workbook.

**SLIDE 17:** Show them the diagnostic on the slide.

*"Put a tick or fill in the circle that best describes your ability to 'control' next to each of the sentences. You will be doing this again later to see if your emotional control has improved so it's important to be honest and accurate this first time."*

*"There is no right or wrong answer."*

? *"If you could choose to improve your score on one of the five sentences the test talked about, which one would it be?"*

*"Circle the sentence that you would most like to improve."*

#### Materials and Slides

- Module 4 Workbook page 3
- Module 4 PPT slides 16-17



#### Differentiation

**Support:** Be ready to field any questions if they don't understand what is being asked. If it is extra difficult for them, go through the diagnostic as a class, clearly explaining each part as it comes if they are confused. Show some vulnerability yourself and explain how you might struggle with some of the actions or thinking outlined.

**Extend:** Ask students why they want to work on the area they have circled. Perhaps start with an example of your own first. Ask them what different it would make to them and others if they could improve.

Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for each phase

What you can say to students – ***"bold blue in italics with quotation marks"***

Preparation guidance

Copy of and reference to slide numbers

Questions you can ask – ***"bold, light blue with quotation marks"***

Support and Extension ideas



# Teacher Manual

## Module 4

### Regulation Station



In this module students will ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>UNDERSTAND</b> strategies to manage and regulate emotions and responses effectively.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>DISCOVER</b> techniques to regulate emotions and actions to make better choices.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>REFLECT</b> on how using regulation strategies leads to feeling more in control and calm.</li></ul>
Teacher preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Read through the entire module to get a sense of the flow and make decisions about student grouping for discussions and group activities.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Think about novel and creative ways to set up group activities.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Choose which activities you will use and hide any slides you will not be using.</li></ul>
AARMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Regulation is the third AARMA Principle, and it is important to truly understand it going forward.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> It's about <b>REGULATING</b> and <b>CONTROLLING</b> emotional responses.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> To regulate, students need to keep being <b>AWARE</b> (the first Principle, Module 2) by constantly noticing things, and they need to be able to <b>ACCEPT</b> (the second Principle, Module 3) through respecting yourself and others.</li></ul>
Three big Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Understand that it is possible to control emotional and behavioural responses using different techniques</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Learn about regulated breathing and how it can enable one to remain objective in difficult situations.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Become familiar with the concept of the Guard Dog and Wise Handler brains and how to switch between the two.</li></ul>
Key messages relevant for my class (after reading through the module, highlight here what you want to focus on for your class)	

All outcomes for modules are expressed in terms of **UNDERSTAND DISCOVER REFLECT**

Overall summary of the module: teacher preparation, key content and big ideas

Notes with reference to school based focus or key outcomes for your class



# Teacher Manual



## EXTENSION MATERIAL

### Regulation Video Discussion

#### Part 1 – Taking Charge of Me

Below are some questions you could use to create further discussion. This could be done in groups, pair and share or 'hot seat' activity.

#### Teacher Guidance for Discussion Questions

##### TAKING CHARGE OF ME

*Key Focus: Self-regulation, emotional control, and decision making.*

**Have you ever felt like saying or doing something in the moment that you later realised wasn't the best choice? What happened?**

"I yelled at my friend when I was frustrated."  
"I blamed someone else so I wouldn't get in trouble."  
"I skipped doing my homework to play video games."

**Key Message to Draw Out:**

We all have moments where we feel overwhelmed or make quick decisions. Learning to pause and reflect helps us choose actions we won't regret later.

**What do you do when you're feeling angry, upset, or stressed?**

"I try to be alone for a bit."  
"I talk to someone about how I feel."  
"I take deep breaths to calm down."

**Key Message to Draw Out:**

Self-regulation means finding helpful strategies to manage strong feelings. It's not about ignoring emotions, but learning to respond with control and care.

**Why do you think it's important to think about the consequences of your actions before you act?**

"It can stop you from hurting someone's feelings."  
"You don't get into trouble later."  
"It helps you make smarter choices."

**Key Message to Draw Out:**

Thinking ahead helps you act in ways that match your values. Self-regulation gives you the power to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively.

In the Appendix you will find extension activities and discussion, with guidance for expected answers or key messages to draw out from the discussion. These additions will be referenced in the main part of the Teacher Guide



# Teacher Manual



<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>"I notice"</b>	<b>Regulation</b>	<b>"I own"</b>
<b>OWN</b> Accepting responsibility for your actions, regardless of the outcome.	<b>NOTICE</b> Being aware of your feelings and the feelings of others around you.	<b>MOTIVATION</b> The drive that encourages you to achieve goals and complete tasks.	<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b> Taking responsibility for your actions and their consequences.	<b>REGULATION</b> Controlling your emotional responses to act more thoughtfully.

For some activities you will need to print and prepare various activity materials for example, snakes and ladders board, bingo cards, station discussion cards, word scramble cards.. In this case, a card sort needs to be printed – one set per student or group and cut up and shuffled. You might like to laminate so you can use next year, or share with other classes. We have provided your Program Manager with a set of PDFs as well for easier printing, but a copy will always be in the Appendix as well.

# Parent Info Sheets

## Parent Information Sheet – Module Two

### What is AWARENESS?

Awareness is the first step in the AARMA journey. At its heart, it means **noticing**—noticing how we feel, what we think, how others act around us, and what's happening in our environment.

For students, developing awareness means they start to tune in to:

- Their own emotions and thoughts
- How other people's words and actions affect them and how their choices affect others
- What's going on around them - both big things and small details

Awareness is about **paying attention**. That might mean recognising they're feeling anxious before a test, noticing that a classmate seems upset, or even realising someone needs help or that something isn't quite right in their surroundings.

Awareness



### Why is AWARENESS important?

Awareness gives students the ability to:

- **Make better decisions** - because they understand what they're feeling and why
- **Respond rather than react** - by noticing situations before jumping in
- **Show empathy and respect** - by picking up on how others might be feeling
- **Build stronger relationships** - through better communication and emotional understanding

Put simply:

**"If you're not aware, it's hard to care or to be fair."**

Awareness is the foundation for being thoughtful, kind, and emotionally intelligent. It helps young people become more reflective, responsible, and connected to others.



### How can you support this at home?

There are a lot of things you can do, including:

- **Ask** your child how certain situations made them feel—and what they noticed in others
- **Encourage** quiet reflection or mindful moments (even 2 minutes of "pause" time)
- **Model** awareness yourself by "noticing out loud" (e.g., "I noticed you seemed tired after school today—was it a big day?")
- **Praise** your child when they show signs of noticing something important, especially if it helps someone else.



### What is the focus of this module, overall?

We're encouraging students to slow down and observe, to take note of how they feel, what others are experiencing, and what's happening around them. Just noticing is sometimes enough—because awareness helps them build emotional insight, social understanding, and thoughtful behaviour.

By strengthening this skill, students are laying the foundation for empathy, fairness, and good decision-making—all essential to becoming a **BETTER ME**.

Awareness



I Notice



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## Parent Information Sheet – Module Two

Each module comes with a PDF Parent Information Sheet that you can send home, or use some of the wording in your Parent Newsletters.

# Facilitation Tips

## Start powerfully with novelty!

Start the lesson powerfully by finding novel ways to get the attention of the collective student brain (so to speak). This is particularly useful with more senior secondary students who may not prioritise these lessons because 'there is no test'.

We have tried to start each phase with simple and fun activities or a quick brain fact or riddle or game to get students focused and to add a bit of fun and get them in a 'reward' brain state to begin the lesson. There are slides for this included in the slide decks where relevant. Of course feel free to substitute ideas of your own.

The main things to remember are:

- **the human brain will pay attention to novelty** - use novelty wisely and strategically, and don't overdo it. Try to start each lesson a different way, unless the class will benefit from a consistent approach to the start.
- when **a human is doing the talking and/or the thinking, they are, by definition, engaged**. Get students talking and thinking as quickly as possible and for as long as possible and follow their interest. Remember the key idea here – curriculum wise – is for students develop mindset and skillset strategies for their personal capability in terms of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management.
- having student brains **focused and in a 'reward state' (positive and calm)** is important if you want them to engage and learn and make new connections. The brain cannot (literally) learn when in a 'threat' brain state ie, rushed, emotional, unfocused, tired.
- **planning entry to the room** is great opportunity to introduce novelty. For example, have a list posted at the door of the room giving each student a number or colour, or have them select from a bucket. This can then be used for groupings ie, all reds are in one group for this next exercise. Now make sure your group has no SAME colours - form multi-coloured groups.



Figure 1: Personal and Social capability elements

Sometimes a simple question can be a powerful start such as 'who made a silly decision this week?' This might be an appropriate start for a lesson about making wise decisions.

# Facilitation Tips



## Encourage Growth Mindset language

Two powerful words from Carol Dweck's 'Growth Mindset' framework are 'yet' and 'experiment'. Encourage students to use the word 'yet' after expression of challenge ie, "I haven't figured it out yet!"

## Devise Experiments using the TRIFECTA

After each lesson, try to end with what we call the TRIFECTA of questions. These three questions are:

- **NEW THINKING:** What is NEW in your thinking from today? What is one thing you learnt today that you liked? How is your thinking about XXX different after what we've done today?
- **NEXT STEPS:** Starting now, what will you do differently? What will we experiment with between now and tomorrow and report back on (this could be in class, in the playground, at home)? What specific actions will you experiment with?
- **NO EXCUSES:** How will you make sure you do this? How will you remind yourself? How will you make sure you are ready to share the outcome of your experiment in the next lesson?

## Reward everything

The student who says - I didn't do anything - is likely to have thought about it or noticed something different. Be comfortable with silence as you encourage students to contribute and share. Of course, many students will find sharing in plenary uncomfortable so think about the small group sharing (pair and share) but set it up in a way that all must contribute. If you consistently expect that sharing and utilise the TRIFECTA questions students, and if there are no negative consequences to sharing, students should soon be more willing to contribute.

You may like to set up '**CHAT CODE**' with students – a co-created list of Do's and Don't's that students agree to during times of sharing and reflection.

Of course, your ability to share and be appropriately vulnerable will encourage and make the space safe for students to do the same.

# Facilitation Tips



## Start with what they know

It is frustrating for any human to be told stuff they already know, not to mention disempowering. When introducing new ideas, start by finding out what students already know about the topic or let them do a timed Google Search to see what they can find out.

For example:

***“Get into groups of three and come up with a definition of ‘wisdom’.”***

***“We’re about to talk about Accountability. What do you think that word means? Can you put it in a sentence?”***

***“We’re going to explore a brain science idea today called neuroplasticity. In pairs, you have 5 minutes to find out as much as you can about it doing an Internet Search.”***

## Engage with ‘future searches’

Humans are the only species that can imagine – and if we can imagine, we can create and achieve. After all, someone at some point imagined the iPhone (probably Steve Jobs!).

Take students minds into the future to mentally experience a positive benefit or outcome. For example, “Imagine what it would be like to be able to control your emotions better? What would that mean for you? What would it help with? How would it make you a BETTER ME?”

Perhaps tell a story from your own experience. The human brain loves stories, and showing the students that ‘you are human’ helps to build the trust between you and the students. It’s cool when students find out that ‘teachers do/did silly stuff too!’

## Go ‘off piste’

‘Off Piste’ is the term used for skiers who deviate from the assigned ski slopes and ‘groomed’ ski runs. Give yourself permission to deviate from the traditional approach, or even from the documented lesson. Follow the students interest and energy provided it leads back to the key messages and focus.

Be creative with your own activities and PLEASE THINK ABOUT SHARING YOUR GREAT IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES WITH US so we can share with other schools or even include in our updates to programs (we will, of course, credit you!)

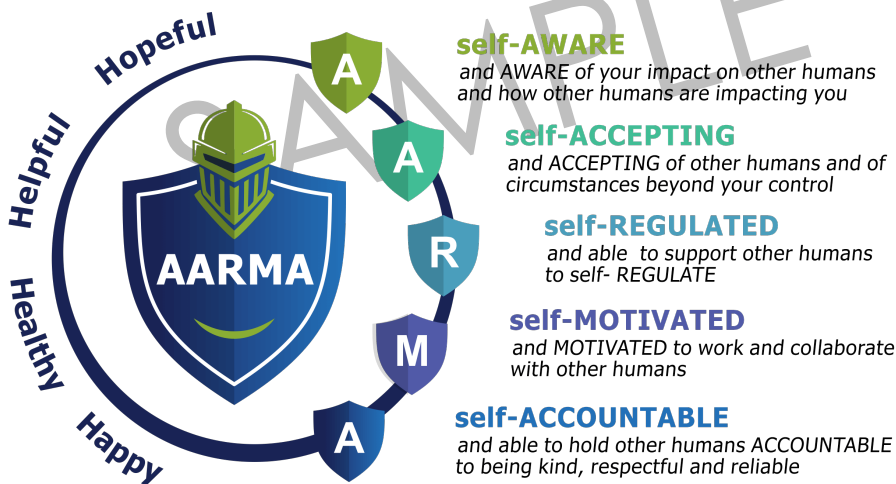


# Facilitation Tips

## Change thinking to change behaviour

Humans won't change behaviour unless they change their thinking. In the reflection activities engage students in discussion that helps them to think differently about themselves and others in productive and useful ways.

Connect new self-awareness and self-acceptance to self-regulation, self-motivation and self-accountability. Discuss what students should now expect from themselves and each other. Where possible connect everything back to the AARMA Framework.



Encourage students to reflect on challenges or issues using their AARMA Goggles or run their thinking through the AARMA Filter.





# Finishing Powerfully

## Connect the dots and finish each lesson, module and unit powerfully

It is important to finish each module and the entire unit powerfully. We have provided a number of options for you to use to support the **REFLECT Process**:

- GLEAN,
- TRIFECTA, and
- LEARN (**see the Teacher Facilitation Slide Pack**)

and you will find a slide for these in the **Teacher Facilitation Slide Pack** pack that was provided to your Program Manager. Of course, feel free to use your own session wrap process if you prefer. These can be used both at the end of a lesson, or a module.

It's a good idea to set a timer to allow at least 5 minutes, preferably 10 at the end of the lesson to **CONNECT** the dots from the activities and discussion in the lesson. Missing this process increases the risk of students not thinking about the learning outside of the lesson and misses an opportunity to strengthen the new wiring created in the lesson and connect it to their 'real world'.

## Find the meaning and value

Questions and discussions that enable students to connect the module concepts to their own lives and experiences helps them to find value and meaning in the idea of becoming a BETTER ME.

## Link to wider groups, family and community

When the students are ready, widen the connections to impact relating to friendship groups, family and community - particularly their school community.

Help students at all stages to self-determine what they now **EXPECT** of themselves and their classmates in terms of attitude, behaviour and action.





# Memes

Below are some of the memes you will see throughout the modules.

**MINDFUL  
not  
MINDLESS**

**USEFUL  
VS  
INTERESTING**

**INTENTION  
VS  
IMPACT**

**NORMAL  
not  
USEFUL**

**EXPLANATION  
Not  
EXCUSE**

**CHOICE  
=  
CONSEQUENCE**

**HELPING  
or  
HINDERING**

**WEIRD  
VS  
WACKY**



# Pre-lesson Checklist

## Notes

Am I clear on my intention for the lesson is ie, the content and activities I intend to cover and the response from students I am hoping to achieve.

- ☐ Have I prepared – have I read into the responses and am clear on the key messages I want to extract.
- ☐ Have I adjusted or re-ordered the slides and activities to fit the time I have
- ☐ Have I thought about how I will get the attention and focus of the class in the first few minutes (see the ideas we have provided a bit further on in this guide).
- ☐ Have I thought about groupings for group work or discussions.
- ☐ Have I thought about potential 'threats' students might experience and catered for that by adjusting the format of the lesson (see the ideas about managing threat responses a bit further on in this guide)
- ☐ Have I printed and gathered the resources necessary for interactive activities.

# Do's and Don'ts

## DO

- ❑ Take **this program** and the General Capabilities curriculum as **seriously** as you would other areas of curriculum. Without this, you are not offering a holistic education.
- ❑ **Do the work to be prepared for your lessons.** The program materials give you everything you need including, in some cases, the 'answers' to the discussion questions we suggest you ask of the students. Focus on the HOW and the LOGISTICS of the lesson. Think about what will work and what won't.
- ❑ **Reframe what a 'successful' lesson is.** It is NOT how much you get done in the lesson. It is the level of engagement, sharing, vulnerability and AHA moments the students have. It is the level of trust built between you and the students, and between themselves. It's the creation of real interest in the topic and student willingness to connect it to their real lives and make changes in their perspectives and behaviour.
- ❑ Consciously **role model and make links** to the concepts and behaviour the students are learning in other subjects and contexts. Use the topical **language** where ever possible (without overdoing it!). Being a BETTER ME is situation agnostic!

## DON'T

- ❑ **Rush.** The 'gold' comes when students start to slow down and reflect deeply. There is no curriculum to 'get through'.
- ❑ **Feel you must stick to the guide or plan.** Follow the energy and interest of the students. Throw in your own questions and activities (and send the ones that work to us so we can share with other school communities – and we will credit you).
- ❑ **Always allow the same groups or deliver the program in the same room or with the same structure.** Find simple, novel (remember the human brain LOVES novelty) and creative ways to 'change state and environment' ie take the lesson outside. Be creative and fun in allocating groups. Change up the order of content and activities or leave some out, or adjust them, to suit your class. Sit in a circle not behind desks.
- ❑ **Feel alone.** Check in with other teachers for ideas and suggestions. Two brains are better than one! We are keen here at Leading Humans to build a supportive community as well, so look out for our dial-in's and join our BETTER LITTLE HUMANS socials.
- ❑ **See yourself as 'teacher'.** See yourself as another human and the facilitator of thinking and reflecting on this most important education work. Bring yourself and your personal relevant stories to the discussion. Role model the power of vulnerability and learning from life's experiences.



# Student as Teacher

We encourage you to avoid the temptation to do all the work. Whilst you may feel you need to be the 'expert' on human behaviour and neuroscience, and whilst in some ways it's easier to be that expert deliverer of information, relieve yourself of the pressure of being 'teacher' and move to 'facilitator' mode. Your role in the room is to facilitate useful and reflective thinking.

If students become interested in a concept, get them into groups and set them a mini-research task. Create a few questions to be answered (or have the students create the questions they think need to be answered!), have students find the answers and present back to class.

If your school has specific learning or thinking structures it uses (ie, Harvard Thinking Routines or has a current focus on literacy), use and adapt to those. For example ... you might ask students to think of the research questions that would interest them or help to find the answer to the questions they have and then have them do the research – ie, (stealthily) teaching them the skill of finding the 'right and useful' information online.

Find creative ways to use this work as an opportunity to build other skills you know are useful and age-appropriate. Interweave the learning across the curriculum!

You will see that some of the activities, particularly in the secondary school units are set up for students to 'create' the activity and then run the activity and then debrief the activity like scavenger hunts. Give them as much ownership as possible so that they are showing up and learning how to teach themselves!

Time is with you in this work!



# Student Discussions

Here are some creative strategies to encourage student interaction and get even shy students engaged in discussions.

**Think-Pair-Share:** Students first think about a question individually, then discuss their thoughts with a partner before sharing with the whole class. This gives shy students time to formulate their thoughts and gain confidence through smaller interactions.

**Talking Tokens:** Give each student a few tokens (e.g., coins or pieces of paper) that represent their opportunity to speak. They use a token each time they contribute, ensuring everyone gets a turn. This encourages quieter students to use their tokens while balancing more talkative students.

**Speed-Dating Discussions:** Arrange students in two rows facing each other. Each pair discusses a question for a short time before one row moves down to the next partner. This method encourages multiple one-on-one interactions, which can be less intimidating.

**Gallery Walks:** Place discussion prompts or questions around the room. Students walk around in pairs or small groups to discuss each prompt and write their thoughts on large paper. It gets them moving and talking in a less formal setting.

**Hot Seat:** Choose a few students to sit in the "hot seat" as characters or experts on a topic. Other students ask them questions. This can be a fun, role-playing exercise that helps students speak up in a playful way.

**Small Group Jigsaw:** Divide a topic into sections and assign each student a part. They become "experts" on their section, then teach it to their peers. This empowers shy students by giving them a specific role and ensures everyone has something to share.

**Conversation Starters Jar:** Write prompts or questions on slips of paper and put them in a jar. Students pick a slip and have to start a discussion based on the prompt. This random element can reduce pressure on students who are hesitant to share their own thoughts.

**Role-Playing Scenarios:** Give students different roles or perspectives in a scenario related to the discussion topic. It allows them to express ideas as their character rather than themselves, which can be less intimidating.

**Interactive Digital Tools:** Use platforms like Padlet, Mentimeter, or online polling tools where students can submit their thoughts anonymously before discussing them as a group. This helps shy students share their ideas without the pressure of speaking up directly.

**Four Corners Debate:** Pose a statement and assign each corner of the room a response (e.g., Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Students move to the corner that matches their opinion and discuss with others in their group before sharing out. This physical movement can help ease into speaking. Then ask students to go to the corner they don't agree with, but then present the 'for' arguments for that response ie, pretend they DO agree.

These strategies can help create a more inclusive discussion environment where all students feel comfortable contributing.



# Class Starters

**Scenario Prompt on Entry:** As students enter, they pick up a scenario card or question card related to the day's lesson. They sit down and write a quick response, which primes them for discussion and gets them thinking about the topic.

**Creative Seating Arrangement:** Set up a unique seating plan where students must find a specific seat or group based on something unexpected—like a character name, historical figure, or concept from the lesson. This encourages interaction and prepares them to collaborate on the day's topic.

**Colour-Coded Partner Match:** Hand out coloured tokens at the door. Each colour corresponds to a group or partner, so students must find their “match” before the lesson starts. This is a fun way to mix up groups and pairs while keeping things fresh.

**Mystery Item Reveal:** Place a covered item at the front of the room related to the day's lesson. Students enter, observe clues, and write down or guess what it might be. The reveal at the start creates excitement and a sense of discovery.

**Quick Poll or Prediction Wall:** As students walk in, they encounter a poll or statement related to the day's topic (e.g., “Which strategy would work best in X situation?” or “Agree or disagree?”). They vote or jot down predictions on sticky notes, setting up instant engagement with the topic.

**Riddle or Brain Teaser Warm-Up:** Place a riddle, brain teaser, or thought-provoking question related to the lesson on each desk or board. Students sit down and start solving it, activating their minds and sparking curiosity about how it connects to the day's content.

**Music Clues – Soundtrack of the Day:** Play a song or sound clip related to the lesson's theme. As they settle in, students guess the topic based on the song's tone or lyrics. For example, see next page for examples. ChatGPT can be most helpful for this.

**“Entry Pass” Question:** Hand each student a question on the lesson's theme as they walk in, which they need to answer briefly before taking their seat. It gets students thinking immediately and prepares them for the topic.

**Random Role-Play Assignment:** Assign students a quick role related to the topic (like a character from literature, a historical figure, or a specific professional role). They respond to a short prompt as their assigned character, setting the stage for engagement with the day's material.

**Silent Whiteboard Wall Response:** Set up a silent “question wall” where students jot down quick answers or drawings related to an open-ended question on the board. This activity can prime their thinking and provide varied perspectives as a springboard for the lesson.

Each of these starters is designed to make entry activities interactive, allowing students to engage with the day's content and connect with each other right from the beginning!



# Using Music

On the previous page we mentioned using music to connect to the themes. Here are some examples from a quick ChatGPT search. This is a great way to show students that these themes are universal and contemporary and explored by the cultural poets of our time (and hence, perhaps suddenly cool and worth reflecting on)!

## AARMA Me – Theme: Accountability

**Song:** “Man in the Mirror” – Michael Jackson

**Lyric clue:** “If you wanna make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make that change.”

**Why it fits:** This song is all about taking personal responsibility for creating change—perfect for discussing the AARMA principle of **Accountability**.

**Guessing prompt:** “What do the lyrics suggest about the power we each have to change things?”

## Wise Me – Theme: Making Good Choices / Critical Thinking

**Song:** “Hall of Fame” – The Script ft. will.i.am

**Lyric clue:** “You could go the distance, you could run the mile, you could walk straight through hell with a smile.”

**Why it fits:** This track is inspiring and ties into the idea of wise choices and long-term vision—how what you do now shapes who you become.

**Guessing prompt:** “What kind of mindset or thinking is this song encouraging?”

## Social Me – Theme: Respecting Others / Digital Citizenship

**Song:** “Where Is the Love?” – The Black Eyed Peas

**Lyric clue:** “People killin’, people dyin’... Can you practice what you preach?”

**Why it fits:** This socially conscious song highlights global and social responsibility—great for discussing empathy, online respect, and how our digital actions impact real people.

**Guessing prompt:** “What kinds of issues or behaviours do you think this song is challenging?”

## Better Me (General) – Theme: Being a BETTER ME/ Growth

**Song:** “Try Everything” – Shakira (from Zootopia)

**Lyric clue:** “I won’t give up, no I won’t give in, ‘til I reach the end and then I’ll start again.”

**Why it fits:** This upbeat song connects to the idea of **growth mindset**, motivation, resilience, and learning from failure—great for almost any personal development theme.

**Guessing prompt:** “What kind of attitude or belief about yourself does this song promote?”



# Meta-cognitive Questioning

You will notice throughout the program, in the Teacher Guide, and in activity debriefs and student activities, we provide questions for you to ask students, and for students to ask themselves!

We believe strongly in the power of meta-cognitive questions that facilitate 'insight'. We know that humans won't change their behaviour unless they change their thinking, and humans don't change their thinking just because something tells them to. They need to be supported to think things through for themselves, make sense of information and ideas in ways that make sense for them and their brain. Only then will they be self-motivated to make changes or experiment with different ways of thinking and behaving. When humans do this, they are much more likely to be self-accountable for making these changes.

We use three kinds of questions:

**CONTENT QUESTIONS** – simple questions that make sure that the key message of a stimulus has been processed. For example, "What happened in the video?"

**COGNITIVE QUESTIONS** – 'thinking' questions that require students to stop and think. For example, "What message do you think the person in the video was making? What did they want you to think about? What does this make you think about that you wouldn't normally think about?"

Any questions that causes students to stop and reflect and think is a Cognitive Question and will engage the parts of the brain that will help them to learn and process information in more useful ways, and set up the brain for moments of insight.

**CONNECTION QUESTIONS** – questions that connect the key messages to their reality. For example, "How could this be useful for you when ....? What could you now experiment with? How might that provide a benefit for you? What does this new idea or information mean for your life and how can you take advantage of it?"



# Building Trust and Vulnerability



TRUST

# Minimising 'threat' responses in the classroom

## Understanding the Brain State Continuum and Threat and Reward States

The human brain operates along a continuum between "threat" and "reward" brain states.

In a **threat state**, cognitive resources shift towards self-preservation, shutting down openness, creativity, and productive risk-taking.

In a **reward state**, students feel safe, connected, and ready to explore new ideas and behaviours. Ensuring the classroom experience and atmosphere leans toward reward state for students encourages cognitive flexibility, curiosity, and genuine engagement.

In the context of building students' human AARMA (Awareness, Acceptance, Regulation, Motivation, and Accountability), understanding how social triggers impact engagement is crucial. Social triggers can activate a "threat" or "reward" response in the brain, impacting students' openness to participate, share, and be vulnerable in a well-being program and in any learning context.

When students feel 'threatened', they're likely to shut down, disengage, or resist participating. Feelings of safety (in this context, psychological safety) can lead to openness, exploration, and deep learning.

TRUST

# Minimising 'threat' responses in the classroom

## The INSPIRE™ Framework: Understanding Social Triggers

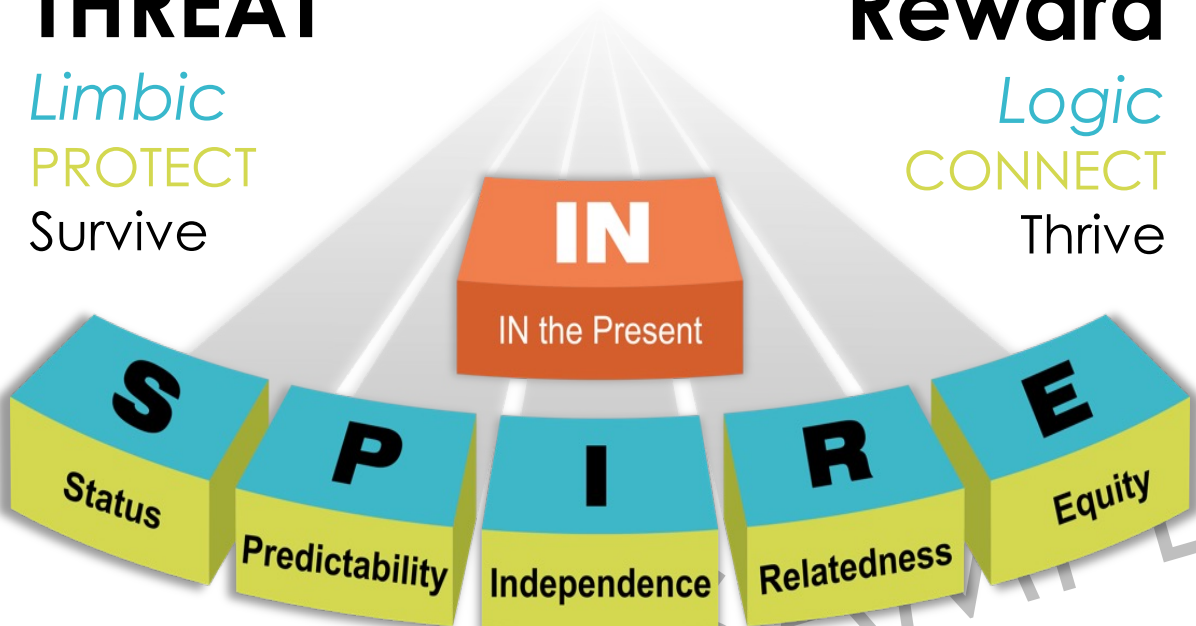
The INSPIRE Framework helps teachers be mindful of these social triggers and navigate classroom activities to avoid social threat responses. Our aim is for students to also become aware of and familiar with this framework so you will see it introduced in the Primary School year Units and become more formalised in Units the Secondary School context.

### THREAT

*Limbic*  
**PROTECT**  
Survive

### Reward

*Logic*  
**CONNECT**  
Thrive





TRUST

# Minimising 'threat' responses in the classroom

*By managing these social triggers thoughtfully, you can cultivate a safe space where students feel supported to explore their AARMA, share openly, and deepen their self-reflection and personal growth.*

Let's unpack the framework.

## IN - Be in the Present and Notice

The IN in INSPIRE involves teachers being mindful of their students' current emotional states and subtle signals, promoting an environment of psychological safety and encouraging students to be and stay in the present moment so they can train themselves to notice their mental and physiological responses and make conscious, useful choices. This is the first step in helping students to self-regulate - take control and reframe and refocus on useful things.

**"Let's pause and get present so we can figure out what's really going on here"**

## NOTES



# Minimising 'threat' responses in the classroom

## INSPIRE: Social Triggers (social domains)

### Status – feeling valued and respected

Feeling **valued and respected** within the group is essential. If students sense that their contributions are undervalued or they rank lower in the social hierarchy, a threat response can emerge, leading to feelings of insecurity or frustration.

**Minimising the risk of a Status threat trigger:** Encourage and acknowledge individual contributions without comparison. Create a culture of respect where each student's voice is valued. Rather than highlighting differences in abilities, emphasise the importance of each unique perspective. If you know that students will purposely or unintentionally laugh or be critical of another student's responses – knowing that you are embarking on a discussion that is personal or sensitive – take the time to set that up. Perhaps have students co-create and agree to something like a Rules of Engagement. They can give it a name such as ...

Chat code  
Brain Reward Board  
Friendship Framework  
Behaviour Basics  
Team Talk Tips  
Kindness Code  
Respect Rules  
Playtime Promises  
Harmony Handbook  
Playground Pledge

### NOTES





# Minimising 'threat' responses in the classroom

## INSPIRE: Social Triggers (social domains)

### Predictability – feeling certain about what is going to happen

A lack of **predictability, certainty, or unclear expectations** can cause students to worry about the unknown, especially if they're uncertain about upcoming activities or their role in them. Feeling "in the dark" often leads to anxiety, closing off cognitive engagement and negatively impacting performance.

**Minimising the risk of a Predictability threat trigger:** Set clear, consistent routines and give a brief overview of each activity. If something is new or different, explain why. Giving students time to mentally prepare reduces anxiety and helps them focus on the activity rather than worrying about what might happen next. This is particularly important in group work and when you are requesting students to speak and/or share. It's all in the set up. For example, ***"We are going to get into groups now and discuss. After that I am going to ask one person from each group to share some of the things your group talked about. It will be the person with the longest hair in the group."***

### NOTES



# Minimising 'threat' responses in the classroom

## INSPIRE: Social Triggers (social domains)

### Independence – feeling of choice and control over my environment

Students need a sense of **control and autonomy** over their actions. When they feel forced into participation without any **choice or influence**, it can trigger feelings of powerlessness, reducing their willingness to share openly or engage deeply.

**Minimising the risk of an Independence threat trigger:** Offer small choices, such as how they'd like to participate (e.g., sharing in pairs versus with the whole group). Allow students to reflect privately before sharing if they need it, giving them some autonomy over their engagement. Help them feel in control of the HOW. For example, ***"I will be asking you to share your thinking about this. You can choose to write something down and read it out, or just talk about it, or go to one of the flipchart pages on the wall and write your ideas."***

## NOTES



# Minimising 'threat' responses in the classroom

## INSPIRE: Social Triggers (social domains)

### Relatedness – feeling like others are 'friends' not 'foes'

A sense of **belonging** is crucial for a reward state. If students feel excluded, singled out, or perceive others as "foes" rather than "friends," they may withdraw – and that includes the teacher. Belonging fosters trust and openness, while exclusion triggers a threat response and defensiveness.

**Minimising the risk of a Relatedness threat trigger:** Use structured groupings to foster inclusive dynamics. For example, create groups with diverse personalities and skills, building in exercises to help students get to know each other. Encourage peer support and positive feedback to enhance feelings of trust and belonging. You could ask students to share something one of their group members said that thought was a good idea or useful. You could ask the group to collectively come up with 3 ideas that come from the whole group discussion. You could pair students (a quiet and a not so quiet) and ask them to prepare to share their thoughts to the whole class together.

## NOTES



# Minimising 'threat' responses in the classroom

## INSPIRE: Social Triggers (social domains)

### Equity – feeling that things are fair

**Fairness** is a powerful motivator. If students feel something is unfair, it can provoke frustration or resentment. Perceived inequities in feedback, group dynamics, or opportunities can lead students to disengage or even act out. Note that there is difference between equity and equality and you may need to discuss this with students. Note also that just because there is a perception of unfairness, it may not be the case. Ask questions to understand WHY students think something is unfair, and fill in the gaps for them if necessary.

**Minimising the risk of an Equity threat trigger:** Be transparent with expectations and apply them consistently. Make sure students understand the purpose behind group assignments or any decisions affecting them. Seek feedback on whether students feel the environment is fair, showing a commitment to equity. Humans do have a tendency to connect with others who think and act like them. Teachers are not immune to this, so do notice and check if you are showing favouritism or giving more energy or using a different tone with those students you may not naturally connect with.

### NOTES



TRUST

# Thank you!

Thank you for the role you are playing in educating this generation to be functional, purposeful and positive contributors to society.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this guide. I hope it was useful and will help you in making the delivery of this work easier and more powerful!

ONCE AGAIN ...

I am keen to create a supportive sharing community amongst schools who are engaging with the BETTER ME PROJECT. Please consider sending us your great ideas and activities that you try that work for different capability levels and class personalities so we can add them in as extension materials, or write into future versions. We will, of course, credit you. You can do that via your Program Manager or simply email directly to us at [info@better-me-project.com](mailto:info@better-me-project.com)

(and please let us know if you find any typo's or errors!)

THANK YOU

**Michelle Loch  
and  
the BETTER ME PROJECT TEAM!**

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ME PROJECT



SAMPLE



SAMPLE